

Kashmir And Neighbours

Tale, Terror, Truce

BY

Türkaya Ataöv, Ashgate, England

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Kashmir — ‘the heaven on earth’ has been a centre of attraction for scholars, travelers, spirituals and saints for thousands of years. The literature on Kashmir abounds for it is a rare area which has found a place of pride in travellogues, memoirs and histories compiled over hundreds of years during the last more than a millenium. This beautiful land has been witnessing militant violence during the last more than twelve years now resulting in death and devastation. More than thirty thousand people have been killed and property worth millions of dollars have been devastated. About half a million people, Hindus and Muslims, have been forced to leave their herths and homes. During this period, a great deal of literature in the form of books, analyses and articles have appeared on Kashmir nationality and internationally. Prof. Turkaya Ataov’s ***Kashmir and Neighbours: Tale, Terror, Truce*** is the latest scholarly contribution to this literature.

At the outset it may be mentioned that it is a creative and a refreshing perspective on Kashmir. Turkaya Ataov provides an indepth analysis of not only Kashmir, but provides the glimpses of history, geography, culture and strategic developments of the entire sub-continent. This perspective has enriched the scholarly value of the compendium.

Turkaya Ataov’s work is centered around Kashmir. However, he has drawn a larger historical and cultural mosaic of India and placed Kashmir within the framework of this mosaic. This approach greatly facilitates the understanding of complexities of Kashmir. The cultural and political evolution of Kashmir and its relocation in the cultural and political history of Indian sub-continent, the vivisection of the sub-continent in the name of religion, the emergence of Pakistan and the complex issue of nation building in India and Pakistan projects the problem of

Kashmir in its right perspective. This perspective clearly brings forth an interface between secular nationalism and religious nationalism and its consequences on Kashmir.

Introducing the subject, the book highlights the physical features of Kashmir and records the developments leading to formation of Jammu and Kashmir State as one political entity. The author while placing Kashmir and Kashmiris within the larger and diverse cultural framework of India concludes that the core Kashmiri cultural value of tolerance and respect for diversity converged with the basic Indian ethos where “willingness to respect diversity has been a persistent feature of Indian consciousness”. (p. 16) The confrontation between secular-democratic forces and communal and fanatic monsters is the constant refrain of Turkkaya Ataov’s work. He has analysed the different phases of Kashmir history. In the analysis on Kashmir’s struggle for freedom from autocratic, feudal rule of Maharaja (ruler), the author provides a rationale for the proximity of popular Kashmiri leadership and the leadership of Indian National Congress. The antipathy of Muslim League and its leadership towards Kashmir’s struggle for freedom based on the clash of ideologies leads to the conclusion that Kashmir’s logical partnership lied in a diverse and pluralistic society rather than in a theocratic social order.

The author has highlighted the role of most popular Kashmiri leader Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who stood firm like a rock against communalism and led his people and the state towards the accession with India. The role of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the great leader of India’s freedom struggle and the first Prime Minister of India, in Kashmir’s integration with the Union of India has been a subject of debate and discussion. But the analysis offered by the author is very convincing here. “For Nehru, Kashmir was not merely an ancestral home. It symbolized India’s succession to the British Raj no less than the legal justification of accession; it was of strategic importance for the defence of the sub-continent; it was also, in the words of Romesh Thappar (a prominent political scientist) a *powerful lever for secular sentiment* (emphasis added) (p. 58). The author provides a rationale for Pakistan’s claim on Kashmir in these words: “For Jinnah, its (Kashmir’s) adherence to Pakistan would have been a sanction of the two-nation theory. The idea of an ‘Islamic State’ would be greatly imperiled if Kashmir remained Indian”(p. 58).

It is a well documented historical fact that having realized the futility of efforts in persuading the ruler of Kashmir to accede to the newly created dominion of Pakistan, the latter launched a tribal attack on Kashmir to wrest it through force which has remained a constant Pakistan policy on Kashmir for the last 54 years. Thus Pakistan succeeded in annexing a part of the territory of the state in 1947-48. India subsequently took the matter to the UN. The author has documented these developments in detail. However, he has touched on two important issues regarding the Kashmir

tangle. One pertains to Kashmir's accession with the Union of India. Addressing the issue, the author observes that "the Security Council or the Commission never having questioned the legality of Kashmir's accession to India, the state was practically cut in two, and the military situation reached a stalemate. The United Nations avoided any consideration of the juridical aspect of the accession, which was according to Joseph Krobil, a member of the UNCIP, 'a perfectly plausible procedure under Article 96 of the Charter, authorizing the Security Council with the right to request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion on any legal question'. Although neither party asked for an advisory opinion, it was perhaps more striking that Pakistan also did not raise the issue" (p.59). Pakistan was well aware about the legal and political validity of Kashmir's accession with the Union of India, hence it did not remain a preferred approach for her to reach Kashmir.

The second issue relates to plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people which was underlined in the first Security Council resolution on Kashmir. It is again a well documented fact that Pakistan created impediments and played hide and seek in implementing the resolution. The author provides the rationale for this attitude: "Apart from the sad memories of the tribal invasion, the people would vote for India, if need be, as long as the popular Sheer-e-Kashmir (The Lion of Kashmir) i.e., Sheikh Abdullah was at the helm of administration. Pakistan realized that a plebiscite at this stage would probably mean the total loss of Azad Kashmir (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and the rest, especially when some Indian troops would still be there. With the feeling in the valley on account of arson, looting and rape by the invaders, an early plebiscite would probably go against Pakistan" (p. 62)

The author provides graphic details of developments in Kashmir in the post-independent period. These details would enable a student of history and international relations to understand the nuances of Kashmir's position in a democratic framework of India. The author also highlights the features of special status given to the only state of Indian Union, i.e., Kashmir, in deference to the wishes of the people.

The author has touched upon the burning topic of our times in his chapter on 'Tryst with Terror'. Dealing with the definitional aspects of 'terrorism' and establishing its linkages with narcotics globally, the author concentrates on 'Violence in Kashmir'.

Tracing the history of long insurgency in Kashmir, the author maintains that "Violence in J&K commenced with the entry of Pakistani units into the land on the grounds that the place of this Muslim majority state ought not be in India" (p. 125). The author has taken the pains of analysing

the political developments and Pakistan's machinations in creating instability in Kashmir which ultimately led to terrorism in the state. He has graphically detailed out the events, brutal assassinations of public figures, renowned Kashmir Poets and Islamic Scholars and average Kashmiri Muslims at the hands of Pakistan trained and armed militants. He has discussed the situation in Kashmir in 1989 when the public grievances against the State and Union governments had increasingly accumulated and maintains that "The circumstances in late 1989 and the beginning of 1990 transformed Kashmir into a dreamboat for Pakistan, which was interested in seeing political instability in these neighbouring lands since 1947". (p. 130) He also critically assesses the responses of Indian authorities to the problems in Kashmir and blames them for creating impediments in the free flow of democratic processes in Kashmir and using excessive force in curbing public anger, thereby creating a room for Pakistan's interference. He is not off the mark in his assessment.

In his objective analysis, the author points out that having realized in one year that the grievance redressal process was being hijacked and appropriated by Pakistan sponsored terrorists, peoples' support to violent movement waned in 1991. Thus, by 1991, as author points out, "Pakistan had to revive what was now missing – the people's backing" (p.132) He further maintains that "While Islamabad diverted more funds and arms to pro-Pakistan factions, there were growing symptoms of disillusionment among the people, who now yearned for a return to normality, that is, an end to violence, and a flow of income from tourism". (p 133) The author records different phases of militant violence in Kashmir until the year 2000.

The author, deeply analyzing the turmoil in Kashmir during the last more than a decade, observes that the phenomenon could be described as mercenarism blended with terrorism. He goes into history, in ancient Rome and in the Middle Ages to trace the roots of 'mercenarism'. Then he locates the phenomenon in international law and rightly observes that mercenaries have been declared illegal entities in international relations. He concludes that "compiled evidence urges one to assert that Pakistan promoted militancy in Kashmir by providing training, arms and sanctuary to insurgents, some of whom are mercenaries". (p.145) One is horrified to note that "Islamic mercenaries, partly funded by the exiled Osama Bin Laden, cross from Pakistan or Afghanistan and establish bases in the Kashmir Valley. They bring the *Jehad* of the Saudi millionaire to Indian controlled Kashmir".

The author has enlarged the scope of the study by incorporating a chapter on the shift in the stances of Great Powers on India and Kashmir. He has summarized the US stance towards India from the days of J. F. Dulles until Bill Clinton.

Taking a larger view of agitations and turmoils which pose endemic dangers to India's diversity coupled with India's potential for reconciliation through accords, author has discussed the problems in North-East, Punjab, Bengal and Tamils in detail.

Concluding his thesis on Kashmir, the author has stressed the option of formalizing the status quo "leaving with India the portion it now administers and allowing Pakistan to hold whatever it has". According to him this would lead to better India-Pakistan relations.

Turkkaya Ataov's contribution is of interdisciplinary and scholarly value in understanding the problem of Kashmir in the diverse and plural sub-continent. This contribution brings forth the dreadful potential of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism in destabilizing societies and creating larger conflicts. The perspective of international relations further enlarges the scope of this compendium on Kashmir. The author has conducted indepth research on varied aspects. He has travelled to Kashmir which lends great authenticity to his work. This work will serve as a reference book on Kashmir and India-Pakistan relations.