

BOOK REVIEW

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Neighbours at Odds

by
Avtar Singh Bhasin

**Blooms Bury,
India**

**Pages: 514
Price: Rs. 599.00**

J. L. Raina*



Writing about Indo - Pak relations is a task full of pitfalls wherein you may get involved in platitudes, swayed by emotions, carried away by 'nationalist sentiment' to the extent of jingoism. The uneven graph of relations, with its highs and lows does not present a coherent picture. As such, it is really worth appreciation that Avtar Singh Bhasin has taken upon himself to

undertake the task of presenting a history of Indo-Pak relations. He begins with an optimistic note for India, but with that of uncertainty for Pakistan.

He writes that "While the new India as the successor to the United India, happily inherited its legacy and composite culture. Pakistan remained in denial and groped in the dark in search of its legacy, since it distanced itself from what was a common inheritance. Pakistan was nothing more than a geographic entity on its birth and remained in search of its new legacy, inheritance and culture.

"Pakistan failing to drop the baggage of the past drifted apart and two newly born countries found themselves mired in controversies that determined the discourse for subsequent years, making the sub-continent an area of tension and conflict". [Preface VIII]

"After seven decades of its existence, in confrontation with India, Pakistan has only undermined its own institution, India may have to a

**Jawahirlal Raina is Editor, Weekly, Kashmir Trends, New Delhi.*

great extent succeeded in sensitizing itself from Pakistan baggage, but its growth and development did not remain unaffected either." [Epilogue P-427]

The author has worked with Ministry of Defence and also Ministry of External Affairs and had also a stint with National Archives of India. He was also associated with Indian Council of Historical Research. He has published an annual series on "India's Foreign Relations" (2002-2013). The authenticity of the events and documents mentioned by him are highly credible, because of his being closely associated with the higher Indian Institutions. But the nature of the story of Indo-Pak relations is such that he has often to go back and forth, to make his point clear, though he has made best efforts to be chronological.

To begin with, as he rightly says 'the ideological differences, imbalance in size and resources, the trust deficit and the events that took place on both sides of the divide immediately following Partition created a sense of insecurity amongst Pakistan leadership. Pakistan's negativity towards India went beyond the issues of Hyderabad, Junagard and Kashmir, However, Kashmir remained the biggest hurdle towards developing a

harmonious relationship between two countries. Pakistan had convinced itself that New Delhi had gained state's accession surreptitiously". According to author "The story of Kashmir's accession is simple and not so complicated. While all princely states had acceded to either of the two dominions, Kashmir dithered and the ruler Maharaja seemed to be 'nursing an ambition for independence'. He had signed Standstill Agreement with Pakistan, but India had not responded to it. Having signed the Standstill Agreement, Pakistan was obliged to respect the territorial integrity of the state. But Pakistan thought otherwise. Pakistan sent raiders, civilians from tribal areas, fully backed by Pakistan by providing them transport and modern weapons. Faced with the hostile situation, Maharaja sought help from India, which sent its armed forces to tackle the aggression, and as such signed Instrument of Accession.

The Author writes that in the beginning, Nehru made two tactical errors of judgement in handling Kashmir question... "The Instrument of Accession made by the Maharaja offered unconditional accession and acceptance by the Governor was unconditional too. Governor General Mountbatten had simply recorded on Instrument of Accession "I do hereby

accept the Instrument of Accession." It was only in the letter to Maharaja dated 27th October 1947 that Governor General referred to *ascertaining the wishes of the people*. There was no offer that it would be under the UN auspices. But later, Nehru made another tactical error of committing himself to the UN." However, the cease-fire was established through a formal Resolution on 1 January 1949. But the Security Council avoided branding Pakistan an aggressor by side tracking the Indian complaint. Instead, it adopted resolution that put forth the aggressor and aggressed on par. Taking advantage of the Indian voluntary offer to ascertain the wishes of the people of the state as to their future, UN resolution made New Delhi accountable in the conduct of plebiscite. India had the option of rejecting the resolution, since it had gone beyond its reference. New Delhi's acquiescence in accepting UN administered and supervised plebiscite was a fatal mistake. As it is, at the end of the war, two-fifth of the state had been occupied by Pakistan. But thanks to cold war politics and Nehru's mistake, Kashmir had become an international issue. After the cease-fire, the stage was set for a diplomatic and political battle. Article 370 was introduced in the Constitution, as a temporary provision to give it a special status, and not to integrate it

fully (as per Nehru's wish). Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah had been installed in the state as the Prime Minister, as he was then called. But differences had begun on land reform, on which Nehru expected Sheikh to consult Centre, but Sheikh was recalcitrant, and he challenged Centre on this. To settle the matter, meetings were held in New Delhi and Delhi Agreement – 1952 was executed, granting the state a special status allowing Head of State to be elected, land reforms programme, limited jurisdiction of Supreme Court to specific issues, and no financial integration, the state-legislature to define and regulate the privileges of permanent residents of State. To give effect to Delhi Agreement Indian Constitution was amended by inserting Art 35A through Presidential order 1954. Nevertheless, despite Delhi Agreement, Sheikh Abdullah remained "sullen, unhappy and hostile".

Providing historical details, Author writes that Sheikh Abdullah continued to create problems for Nehru. Meanwhile, US and UK had started building pressure in favor of Pakistan. Pakistan bellicosity and pressure from the West had compelled Nehru to adopt a stern attitude on Kashmir. In July – August 1953, India – Pakistan summit level talks on Kashmir were scheduled.

But situation within Kashmir was causing trouble. Nehru was anxious that Sheikh Abdullah be propitiated before the summit talks. Sheikh complained of violation of the terms of accession, as reflected in Instrument of Accession. "In July, Bakshi and Mirza Afzal Beg came to Delhi and Beg conveyed Sheikh Abdulla's "final views about the desirability of declaring Kashmir's independence." Sheikh Abdullah in his speech (31 July 53) accused New Delhi of breaching the agreement on accession, and on 7th August, BBC reported Sheikh's speech on Martyrs day, in which he had said that if by remaining independent, Kashmir would be well off, he would not hesitate to raise his voice in favour of complete freedom. So finally situation became so unpleasant that Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed and arrested on 9th August 1953, and Bakshi Ghulan Mohd installed as Prime Minister.

The talks with Mohammed Ali, Prime Minister of Pakistan were held on 17-20 August 1953 in an amicable atmosphere. Nehru appeared willing to go further and hold plebiscite, of course the option of independence for Kashmir was rejected. The Author bluntly points out that "The talks represented continuing dichotomy in Nehru's thinking". Soon the two countries differed on the

appointment of Plebiscite Administrator, as Nehru rejected the name of Admiral Nimitz, who was an American citizen. In the meantime there were reports of Pakistan's eagerness to receive and US willingness to provide military aid to Pakistan, which Nehru felt had changed the 'very basis of India-Pakistan narrative.' New Delhi in official conversations and correspondence made Pakistan aware that plebiscite was as good as dead. General Ayub Khan's accession to power in October 1958 started a period of coups and militarization of Pakistan. He (Gen. Ayub) in press conference insisted that Pakistan must have a satisfactory solution to Kashmir, and if faced Pakistan could adopt extreme measures. Kashmir was uppermost in Ayub's mind when Nehru came to Karachi in September 1960 to sign Indus Water Treaty. He sought to establish Pakistan's 'locus standi', on Kashmir. Nehru repeated his earlier apprehension and warned Ayub Khan that any change in status quo would have an upsetting effect not only in Kashmir itself, but also in India. He felt that interfering with status quo in any direction would make the position of Muslims in India untenable. The Author comments that "It is unfortunate that Nehru repeatedly sought to link the fate of Indian Muslims to the Kashmir issue,

thereby exposing the fragility of Indian secularism". Nevertheless, Nehru insisted that the only practical and feasible course was to allow matters to rest where they were". Ayub – Nehru talks in London on the sidelines of Commonwealth Conference did not bring the countries any closer. Ayub Khan turned to United States for help. Being disappointed earlier, he tried his luck when Kennedy became the President of U.S. Kennedy took up Kashmir with Nehru to see the line of settlement that would be acceptable to both. Nehru continued to press for status quo, with minor modifications. Interestingly, it was the then U. S. Ambassador in India Galbraith who asked whether, while the two parts of Kashmir remained, a much more relaxed access could be arranged from one side of Kashmir to other. It was a novel suggestion and it got implemented after almost four decades later in trans LoC trade and travel agreement in 2005. President Kennedy had suggested mediation and suggested the name of Eugene Black, who had helped in finalizing the Indus Water Treaty. But Nehru refused to accept saying any idea of arbitration or mediation would be resented in India. General Ayub was seeking a session of Security Council. Nehru had invited Ayub Khan for talks, but he rejected it. Meanwhile Chinese Aggression in 1962 and

precarious military situation changed the whole context of Kashmir issue. Pakistan was trying to take maximum advantage of the situation. In spite of American advice, Ayub Khan did not give up his belligerent attitude. Soon China announced cease-fire. Since emergency was over, Washington and London tried to work out some solution to Kashmir. As a consequence there were series of meetings between India and Pakistan on Kashmir. The author writes that according to Nehru's biographer, Nehru was keen on mediation, provided Britain and US would persuade Pakistan to adopt a neutral attitude in conflict between China and India. But Pakistan had its commitments to Peking (Beijing) and was not willing to accept it. The talks could not produce an acceptable solution. Kennedy once again proposed mediation. But this could not mature, as President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963.

New Delhi foiled various pressures on Kashmir, but internal situation had got disturbed, with the theft of 'Moei-e- Muqaddas' - the Holy Relic, from Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar. The situation calmed when the holy relic was found. Nehru, recovered from ailment and was keen to bring normalcy in Kashmir. He released Sheikh Abdullah from

BOOK REVIEW

detention and the case against him was withdrawn. Nehru asked Sheikh to visit Pakistan to explore the possibilities of finding a way to resolve Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah went to Pakistan with broad contours of the solution in mind. But within three days of his arrival in Pakistan Nehru passed away on 27 May 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister, and he appointed Swaran Singh as Minister for External Affairs. Zulfikar Bhutto, Pakistan's Foreign Minister suggested to new External Affairs Minister that "since every one of the draft resolutions put forward by UN representative had been accepted by Pakistan and rejected by India, it was now for India to suggest an equitable solution". It was a clever strategy and subsequent developments clearly established that Pakistan had ominous intentions. Border incidents showed a marked increase after June 1964 when Pakistan troops made raids across ceasefire line in Uri, Poonch, Mendhar, and Nowshera sector. It seemed that Pakistan was exploring a military option, and it saw an opportunity to test India's military strength and preparedness in Rann of Kutch, a desert marshy area on Sind-Guajarat border. It started in the beginning of 1964 with Pakistan's intrusion in Kanjkat in Gujarat. Exchange of notes failed to resolve the issue. The conflict escalated.

Shastri was determined not to allow Pakistan to get the upper hand, because it would give it a false sense of confidence. Pakistan received full support from China and advised India to 'shun expansionism'. British Government's intervention was to enable the two countries to come to a settlement. An agreement was finally arrived at, on 30 June, 1965. But this time, Shastri was unhappy with Soviet response. In his meetings with Premier Kosygin, he expressed his disappointment with Soviet Russia for not referring to Pakistan's aggression in Kutch. Pakistan, inspite of settlement of Kutch, went ahead with its plans to extend Kutch experiment. New Delhi was horrified to get reports of large scale infiltration of Pakistan's irregulars in Kashmir Valley and surrounding areas. Pakistan insisted that infiltrators were indigenous freedom fighters, who had taken up arms against tyrannical Indian rule. The conflict escalated into a full-blown war between the two countries. Kosygin appealed both leaders to de-escalate the conflict. Shastri told him that the four thousand infiltrators were backed by Pakistan army. But Ayub Khan did not listen even to UN Secretary General U. Thant's appeal. Providing graphic details, Author writes that the Indian army had come under heavy pressure in Chamb-Jaurian sector in Jammu. To retrieve the pressure,

India attacked Pakistan's soft belly in the Lahore sector. However, after efforts made by US, Britain, and Soviet Russia, a cease-fire was announced on 22 September. Soviet Union was keen on a post-cease fire settlement. Kosygin in identical letters to Ayub and Shastri repeated the proposal of good offices and suggested that both leaders meet in Tashkent and if desired Soviet Union would also participate in it. So, peace was given another chance at Tashkent. Ayub Khan accepted Tashkent Declaration, even if it offered nothing on Kashmir. All measures in declaration were for restoration of normalcy. However, the occasion struck with tragedy due to Shastri's death on the night the declaration was signed.

According to the Author, the next phase in Indo-Pak relations started in 1971. East Pakistan – now Bangladesh- was in revolt. The ethos of two regions was different. They did not share a common history, language or common culture. Religion was the only basis on which Pakistan was constructed. The West rode rough shod over the people in the East. And when it became insufferable, they were forced to tell their counterparts that enough was enough. On 30 January 1971, Indian Airlines plane on a flight from Srinagar to Jammu was hijacked to

Lahore. The passengers and crew were returned, but the plane was destroyed at Lahore airport.

Meanwhile the situation in East Bengal was deteriorating. Pakistan army was ruthlessly consolidating its position and gradually fanning out in the country side. The arrest of Mujib-ur-Rehman, Awami League leader, his declaration of independence, General Yahya Khan's response with Martial law, the army's repression, the stream of refugees flowing into India, Pakistan's attack on Indian cities in Punjab provoking India into war, set the stage for geographic split of Pakistan. The war ended with surrender of about 90,000 Pakistani soldiers in eastern sector on 17 December, 1971 to joint command of Indian army and Bangaldeshi Mukhti Bahini. In West Pakistan, the civilians from east Bengal were put in concentration camps. The diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan had been snapped and over flights suspended in February 1971. There was hectic activity on several levels to enable India and Pakistan to resolve differences and to allow for return of normalcy. In Pakistan, Yahya Khan had handed over Presidency to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto's priority besides release of prisoners, was for post-war settlement with India; so parleys were

BOOK REVIEW

held and ultimately a meeting was scheduled at Simla. Moscow had conveyed to India that Islamabad was prepared to settle the Kashmir issue on the basis of cease-fire line. But the message Bhutto gave to his people on the eve of his departure for Simla was different. It again harped on right of self-determination for the people Jammu and Kashmir. The talks began as per schedule, and were spread over six days. There were meetings between two full delegations. Bhutto was reluctant to come to any final settlement on sensitive issue of Kashmir. He did not want to link it with the release of prisoners. Bhutto had succeeded in persuading Mrs. Gandhi to put her faith in his assurances, without writing them down on paper. The Author maintains that at the end, Bhutto carried the day. The final agreement did no more than call for respecting the line of control, emerging from the cease-fire of 17 December 1971, without prejudice to recognized positions of either side, and pledging neither side shall seek to alter it. and Pakistan was right in its assessment that it lost the war but won the peace.

The next stage of Indo-Pak relations began in 1989, when infiltration of armed and trained militants from across border began arriving in Kashmir. Mujahideen who had been rendered jobless at the end of Afghan

war took advantage of the porous borders and sneaked into Kashmir and parts of India, conducting acts of terrorism. The militants created a situation of turmoil in Kashmir. Pakistan's Senate passed a resolution demanding an end of repression in Kashmir, withdrawal of Indian army, release of political leaders and negotiations for final solution of Kashmir and involvement of resistance leaders in negotiations. The coming of NDA government lead by A B Vajpayee marked another phase in the relations between India and Pakistan. Mr. Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, who had earlier returned to power, did the unexpected. First India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998, and within same month Pakistan retaliated with its own tests. Indian nuclear programme was pegged to China's but Pakistan made it known that its programme was retaliatory to India's tests. India pledged 'No first use' of such weapons, but Pakistan has not committed itself to 'No first use' policy.

The proposal for a bus service between New Delhi and Lahore was in the pipeline, and Mr. Vajpayee declared to take this bus in its inaugural run and travel to Lahore (1999). Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reciprocated by travelling from Islamabad to Lahore to greet Mr.

Vajpayee at Wagah border. It was a successful visit, and ended with signing of three important documents i) Joint statement ii) Lahore Declaration iii) Memorandum of understanding. Both agreements stressed that environment of peace and security was in supreme national interests of both countries and the resolution of all outstanding issues including Jammu and Kashmir was essential. However, the ecstasy over this did not last long. The good will generated by visit was not only washed away in one stroke, but led to a major clash of arms. The Pakistani regulars and irregulars masquerading as "Kashmiri freedom fighters" infiltrated across Line of Control (LoC) in Kargil sector, a sensitive area in Ladakh region of J&K. In the ensuing conflict, India resisted any mediatory role. It was made clear that until Pakistan elements had completely withdrawn from Indian side of LoC, as established by Simla Agreement of 1972, there would be no talks. Nawaz Sharif knocked on the door of President Clinton for help and he provided the fig leaf for face-saving that peace was restored. Within a few months, Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in a military coup by his army chief – General Musharraf. Within days of taking over, Musharraf in his policy speech showed little sign of better relations

with Delhi. It was during the last days of 1999, that Indian Airlines flight K-814 was hijacked to Kandhar in Afghanistan by Pakistani terrorists with the help of Afghan Taliban. After the hijacking was over and passengers had been brought home, New Delhi asked US to declare Pakistan a terrorists state, but US refused and asked India to go for dialogue process. Gen. Musharraf was talking big on commitment to peace and need for better relations with India. To put him to test, Mr. Vajpayee proposed a summit meeting at Agra which he accepted. While India tried to build a climate of peace and confidence, Pakistan was obsessed with Kashmir. Prime Minister took the initiative by his desire to fill the gap on trust deficit. Musharraf's perceptions seemed to be that India's quest for peace was prompted by deep wounds that terrorism had inflicted on India. Mr. Vajpayee had, however, warned that no one should think that India lacked the resolve or strength to resist terrorism and violence. Pakistan's not taking this message seriously and its insistence on 'Kashmir first' led to failure at Agra. Pakistan admitted that talks broke down on the question of relationship between settlement of Kashmir question and progress on normalization of relations. But if there was any chance of revival of talks, it was ended by December

BOOK REVIEW

2001 terrorist attack on Indian Parliament.

The Author writes that the 9/11 attack on Twin Towers in New York stirred the world's conscience generally and New Delhi's warning stood vindicated. The attack brought about a change internationally. In the light of American demand, Pakistan was quick enough to realize that its game in Kabul was up. It not only dropped Taliban regime in Kabul, but announced measures to modernize its own society. But on Kashmir Musharraf pledged his 'moral, political and diplomatic' support to Kashmiri people. In the light of reports of Pakistan's support to terrorist activities, it banned over land - flights, Lahore-Delhi bus service and also train services. About a million Indian troops were mobilized all along Indo-Pak border. Following terrorist attack on Kalachule (Jammu) in May 2002, New Delhi warned Pakistan of a decisive battle. However, it was SAARC summit in 2004, that provided the breakthrough, when Musharraf assured Mr. Vajpayee that he would not permit any territory under Pakistani control to be used to support terrorism. The NDA government had to demit office in 2004, though it had extracted a historical commitment from Pakistan at highest level. Under the UPA

government there was no improvement in people to people contacts, other issues including Siachen and Wullar barrage made little progress. India's firm stand on Kashmir made Pakistan to feel the need to change its track. General Musharraf, identifying the seven regions of the state (JK), he proposed their demilitarization and change in status. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reacted positively saying the redrawing of boundaries was not possible, but all measures that could bring people of both sides together including increase in transport linkage to facilitate greater traffic of people and trade across border in LoC would be considered. General Musharraf agreed to pursue further measures to enhance cooperation and interaction. Musharraf's visit also marked the introduction of Srinagar - Muzaffarbad bus service. In an interview with NDTV on 5 December 2006, Musharraf elaborated his four point formula - that Pakistan would give up its claim on Kashmir, if India accepted i) no change in borders ii) self-governing autonomy for regions but no independence iii) demilitarization in a staggered manner iv) a joint supervisory mechanism of India, Pakistan and Kashmir representatives. These proposals remained the template in which Track-II diplomacy worked and made suggestions. Prime Minister

Manmohah Singh indicated that these were acceptable to India. However, Gen. Musharraf had to make way for different set of leaders. Parallel to these developments, terror attacks kept up their momentum. Between 2005 and 2014 India suffered seventeen terror attacks. Indian Prime Minister's commitment to peace remained unswerving. The terrorist attack on Mumbai on November 26, 2008, closed all channels of communication including composite dialogue. During the present BJP government dialogue process remained suspended. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives, first inviting Nawaz Sharif to his own swearing-in ceremony – later sudden stopover in Lahore on his way back from Kabul, were opportunities to mend fences. The entire dialogue process continues to be in a coma. The concluding comments of Mr. Bhasin need to be reproduced here, so that readers are apprised of the situation.

“Whether India likes it or not, Pakistan has come to regard Jammu and Kashmir as the core issue. If the problem has come to this pass, India has to shoulder much of responsibility. The state had acceded to India unconditionally, but Nehru's decision to seek people's wishes as to its future, taking the issue to United Nation, and then agreeing to hold the

plebiscite and making UN responsible for its conduct, gave Pakistan a toehold in the state ... UN resolutions mandated that Pakistan would withdraw its regular army and irregular fighters from the state before the process for a plebiscite could be put into motion. India, instead of asking Pakistan to fulfil its obligations in the first instance started looking for an alternative to plebiscite, and let Pakistan off the hook..... India's biggest failure in Kashmir lies in the fact that in last seven decades it allowed alienation among vociferous sections of population to seep in. The free educational facilities produced a big vibrant and young educated class, but without corresponding employment opportunities.

In final conclusion it may be mentioned that the Author has done a commendable job by collating and consolidating the events and developments of the last seventy years of India – Pakistan relations. This huge task deserves appreciation. This volume provides a guide to researchers and scholars to carry on their work to analyze varied aspects of India – Pakistan relations. However, the Author, while maintaining objectivity, has made comments and observations which are debatable. Pandit Nehru's actions and responses have to be discussed in special

BOOK REVIEW

contexts and circumstances. Same is the case with regard to Jammu and Kashmir issue. They may not be viewed in isolation. The Volume under review is a valuable addition in the literature on the subject. ■