

AZAD KASHMIR

Revisiting Karachi Pact

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Many people wonder why Azad Kashmiri leaders spend so much of their time away from Azad Kashmir. And why don't they do something positive to rehabilitate earth quake victims, many of whom are still living in tents and harsh winter is just around the corner. Also why don't they visit their brothers in Gilgit and Baltistan who have been left at the mercy of Pakistani bureaucracy since 1947?

In order to answer this question one has to go back into the history of that time and see who did what. History of that time has been tarnished and changed by Pakistani writers and propagandists to suit their national or political needs; hence many young Kashmiris and even Pakistanis are not aware of the facts.

Area known as Azad Kashmir which is not Azad (independent) by any stretch of imagination is part of former State of Jammu and Kashmir. After the legal division of British India new countries of India and Pakistan came into being. Both countries were 'liberated' from the British imperialism; and soon after gaining independence they ventured to take away independence of people of Jammu and Kashmir, not to mention independence of other smaller Princely States.

It must be noted here that the British Raj consisted of two units: British India and Princely States. The division based on the Two Nations Theory, which Pakistani governments have sabotaged and drowned in the Bay of Bengal, was only applicable to the British India.

This Theory whatever its value now did not apply to the Princely States and that is why Mohammed Ali Jinnah supported Kashmiri peoples' right to become independent. Also he accepted accession of state of Junagar to Pakistan even though it had two third non Muslim majority, and if the Two Nations Theory was applicable to the Princely States then this state should have automatically gone to India.

Both countries, India and Pakistan had their own plans to get Kashmir and the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir wanted to maintain his independence (after the lapse of British Paramountcy, legally and constitutionally the State had become independent, and equipped with this power the Maharaja concluded *Stand Still Agreement* with a sovereign government of Pakistan and invited government of India to do the same as well).

The people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially Muslims were not happy with policies of the Maharaja, and they started a campaign against him. Some enthusiasts established a Provisional Government on 4th October 1947. It was quite possible that the Maharaja and the people of Jammu and Kashmir could have reached some kind of

agreement as to the future of Jammu and Kashmir, its government and relations with neighbours.

When Government of Pakistan realised that the Maharaja had no intention of acceding to Pakistan they manoeuvred a 'Tribal attack' to punish him and to get Kashmir. In doing so they reorganised that provisional government on 24th October and appointed their trusted man, Sardar Ibrahim Khan, who served them till his death.

Sensing that Pakistan perhaps has out-manoeuvred them government of India put its own plan in action. Clash of interests of two sovereign neighbours of Kashmir resulted in loss of life and destruction and forced division of Jammu and Kashmir.

After this forced division Pakistani government told its puppet government in Azad Kashmir to sign on the dotted line, and Karachi Pact came into being in 1949. Areas of Gilgit and Baltistan were separately 'liberated' and the Karachi Pact gave Pakistan to rule these areas with an iron fist and use them as its colony. These areas still have no legal and constitutional status and they are ruled by bureaucrats of Pakistan, and enjoy no social and political rights.

It is interesting to note that leaders of Azad Kashmir who signed on this controversial document, Karachi Pact, had no legal or moral right to do so. They had never visited these areas and their Party-Muslim Conference did not have any branch or even a member in these areas; and one wonders what right they had to write away future of these people.

It is true that Azad Kashmiri leaders were puppets of Ministry of Kashmir Affairs of Pakistan and they were installed and dismissed by them. The main task of these leaders was not welfare of the people or unification of the State, but to look after the interests of those who installed them and who were their God fathers. Unfortunately this relationship still continues.

It will be interesting for some to know that in early 1990s when militancy was at its peak and many thought that 'independence' was just around the corner. Because of militancy and presence of thousands of militants and displaced people who crossed the LOC, the role and influence of Azad Kashmir government also increased. At that time an 'elected' Prime Minister of this area wished to visit areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, and he requested the relevant authorities to grant him permission to visit these areas.

He was snubbed, and told off that you are Prime Minister of this small area-Azad Kashmir; and you have no business to travel to Gilgit and Baltistan. He was told that if he was bored with Islamabad (where he stays most of time) or Azad Kashmir, he could be allowed to go abroad or visit other cities of Pakistan.

This gentleman made this request not because he felt love or affection for these people, but because he sensed unification of the state, and he wanted to be a leader of the whole state. He forgot that Gilgit and Baltistan do not fall under his jurisdiction, and his role was to look after interests of Islamabad government, and by visiting Gilgit and Baltistan he could have created a few problems. He also forgot that his predecessors have signed away future of these people, and he and all others before him

turned a blind eye to the plight of these people. And in view of this he was not welcome there.

It should also be noted that all Kashmiri leaders from across the LOC who have hitherto visited Pakistan and Azad Kashmir have not made any attempt to visit Gilgit and Baltistan. They were very keen to visit cities of Pakistan but showed no interest in visiting these areas which are part of their motherland.

After the elections in Azad Kashmir a new government of Muslim Conference has taken charge. President of Pakistan General Musharaf was on a long visit abroad, and with him entourage of about 90 important people including senior ministers also travelled. As there was not much happening in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan Sardar Attique Khan also decided to go on a long visit, only a few days shorter than the General Musharaf's visit.

His father Sardar Qayyum Khan was also away on a separate visit. His son Usman Khan also had to shoulder his responsibility so he was on a separate visit too. These three trips have only cost the Kashmiri people 90 lakh rupees, and in view of some this money is well spent as they have 'highlighted the Kashmir cause' and promoted General Musharaf's peace endeavours ~~████████~~