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A Pre-Requisite for any Dialogue in Kashmir

Sandeep Pandey

While the Indian security forces were busy tackling the internal protests in Jammu & Kashmir in which over 80 civilians have been killed since 9 July, 2016, the most recent victim being a 11 years old Nasir Shafiq Qazi who died of pellet injuries, a surprise militant attack has taken place from across the border killing 17 Indian soldiers in the biggest such incident so far in the history. Clearly, things are going out of the hands of government at the centre whose problem is that after the making of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan, it cannot engage in a full-fledged war with Pakistan, howsoever provocative the Pakistani infringement might be.

India is also losing international support by recently denying access to United Nations Human Rights Council in J&K. The question that will be asked is if the Indian claim about Pakistan instigating violence in Kashmir is true then why doesn't Indian government let the UNHRC unravel this truth by conducting an enquiry there? The world will not miss the contradiction that a democratic India is preventing UNHRC from visiting J&K

whereas a not-so-democratic Pakistan is letting it have access to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. What is India afraid of? Is the difference between Indian and Pakistani Kashmirs the use of pellet guns by Indian forces against the recent round of protests by people? India will probably face more flak for preventing the visit of UN team rather than the human rights violations that its security forces are responsible for.

India's problem is compounded because of its inability to conclusively prove that the terrorist attacks from the across the border, whether it was Mumbai in 2008, Pathankot in 2016 and now Uri are actually sponsored by Pakistan because Pakistan denies its role in any of these. On the contrary it challenges India to provide evidence of its involvement. On the other hand the human rights violations in Kashmir, especially because of the unrestrained powers the army enjoys under Armed Forces Special Powers Act, are something that cannot be hidden.

India has recently queered the pitch in its relationship with Pakistan

when Narendra Modi talked about insurgency in Balochistan, Gilgit, Baltistan and PoK during his Independence Day speech. Even though Pakistan blames it for doing this in order to divert attention from human rights violations in Indian Kashmir, the reality is that suffering of people in J&K doesn't reduce by India raising the stakes in such a manner. During the regime of previous central governments at least a semblance of democracy was observed in J&K but the present regime in its over-enthusiasm of dealing with the problem in Kashmir with a tough hand, has completely overrun the state government. It wants to directly control things in Kashmir. It might as well impose Governor's rule there. But its approach is clearly failing. It is inviting more violence from inside the Kashmiri society as well as from across the border. Democracy is a direct victim of violence. People of Kashmir are the ultimate sufferers in this.

In response to the Pakistani Prime Minister having decided to send 22 parliamentarians as representatives to as many capitals of the world to intimate the world leaders about situation of Kashmir and seek their support in the United Nations, the Indian government has decided to send Rajnath Singh to US and Russia in a counter move.

The India-Pakistan relations have been marked by tit-for-tat policy. Hence it doesn't come as a surprise that India is following the Pakistani approach to mobilize world opinion.

But if India is genuinely concerned about Kashmir and the Kashmiris then it would have been better for it to first win over the

Kashmiri people before trying to seek support from outside. If India were confident that the Kashmiri people were with it then it would not have to go around the world to seek support.

The fact is that in spite of offering all kinds of package to J&K and even to potential immigrants from Pakistan occupied Kashmir and the Home Minister going to Srinagar for dialogue the people of Kashmir are not happy with the Indian government. They don't feel that the Indian government is showing sensitivity towards them. For example, while continuing to urge people to give up violence, there was no let down in violence, what to talk of withdrawing of the by now infamous pellet guns, by the security forces before the Home Minister went for dialogue. Does the government actually think that it can continue to use pellet guns on one hand and expect people to show up for dialogue on the other? Any dialogue is a war like situation is preceded by cease fire.

A lot of right wing people are alarmed at the possibility of Kashmir becoming independent of India. For them it is a prestige issue. They ask, 'Can we just let Kashmir go like that?' It is a matter which can be decided by Kashmiris alone. People from outside Kashmir, whether in India or Pakistan have no territorial rights over Kashmir. This is a feudal mentality often masqueraded as nationalism.

We must introspect. If the government of India has to keep Kashmir under military rule for so long, it is not a normal situation. Same is true about some areas of Northeast where Iron Sharmila has just ended her decade and a half

long fast to demand repeal of AFSPA. The government must withdraw AFSPA first and later the Army itself if it is serious about normalcy returning to Kashmir. Army's role must be limited to border areas. It is only then that we can think of any dialogue.

Only high flown statements like 'fully engaged in normalizing the situation as soon as possible' or that 'Indian democracy has all that it requires to address legitimate grievances,' will not suffice. This withdrawal of AFSPA and army must be discussed with people of Kashmir as a confidence building measure. It would be better if the government were to invest time and energy in this direction. No solution to the problem of Kashmir is conceivable without first restoring conditions of democracy and respect for human rights.

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Between the Lines**Uri is Only a Symptom****Kuldip Nayar**

Baluchistan in Pakistan is like our Kashmir, an integral part but still rebellious after almost 70 years of Maharaja Hari Singh's accession to India. However, in India's case first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave an undertaking to hold a plebiscite as soon as things had settled in the valley. He could not fulfill the promise.

Nehru found out that things will be reduced to a slogan, Gita versus Koran, and people would be so driven by religious sentiments that they would not be exercising their franchise. When the acclaimed leader Sheikh Abdullah joined the Union, he conceded the point that a popular verdict had been obtained and it amounted to a plebiscite and, with it, the accession was complete.

What happened in Uri is a symptom, not the disease. The disease is that the youth which is now leading a movement want a country of their own. In the same way, Baluchistan wants to secede from Pakistan and have an independent country. That, if granted, would be another Islamic country on our border.

I told the Kashmiri students during my recent visit to Srinagar at their invitation that the Lok Sabha would be in no mood to endorse anything like what they wished. They said it was "your problem how you bring about the change." The demand by the youth for an independent sovereign country is in contrast to what leaders like Yasin Malik and

Shabbir Shah had wanted some years ago. It is another matter that Yasin has now joined the chorus.

Pakistan has now become relevant for the people in the valley because they, too, have changed their demand from autonomy to an Islamic independent country. The attack on the Indian soldiers on the border is the culmination of their anger. Pakistan, too, has found the climate somewhat suited to it and has increased the number of infiltrators into the valley.

But this is not the first time that Pakistan has sent infiltrators into India. Nor will it be the last occasion. There have been several such instances, including the attacks on Indian Parliament, Mumbai and Pathankot. After every such incident, a war-like cry was heard in the rest of the country to retaliate. So immense was the pressure this time on the government that it had to assure the public that "retaliation would take place at a place and time of our liking."

But people want action on the ground even at the expense of a war. I recall what happened soon after the attacks on Parliament, Mumbai or Pathankot. Our reaction then was in the shape of stationing troops on the borders for almost one year or beyond. This time, the anger is deeper and wider. Yet the government is showing restraint, though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured that the perpetrators would not go unpunished.

However, we also know the limit to which the elected rulers can go in the two countries since both possess nuclear weapons. But what I fail to understand is why Islamabad had been reluctant to take action against terrorists who have been identified living in Pakistan. Whatever it has done so far against the terrorists, it is not on India's request but on Washington's word.

In India, except for a few warmongers, there is a realization that there is no option to peace. It is also time for the politicians of the two countries to introspect their conduct. Even if they do not talk about war, their speeches and the body language is far from friendly. They appear to run with the hare and hunt with the hound. Why are they stoking the fires of hatred when people on both sides are surcharged?

France and Germany had fought for more than hundred years. Today they are the best of friends. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah gave me this example when I asked him before partition that Hindus and Muslims would jump at each other's throat once the British had left. He said we would be the best of friends. I have no doubt that one day this would come about. Former Prime Ministers Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh have said many a time that the destiny has thrown India and Pakistan together and they cannot but be good neighbours.

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A Reality Check on Jammu and Kashmir

Pushkar Raj

Jammu and Kashmir is again in news for violence and counter violence. Again, several solutions are proposed. Any such exercise, however, need to be informed of a reality check if peace is to return in the state in a foreseeable future.

The present unrest began after killing of Burhan Wani, a local commander of Hizbul Mujahidin, an organization that vows to liberate Kashmir by unleashing suicide bombers in Kashmir (*Times of India*, 4 September 2016). The unrest is restricted to the Kashmir valley comprising 7.1 percent of land and 54.9 percent of population of the state numbering 6.8 million (Census of India, 2011). In a fresh round of bloodshed over seventy people have died and thousands are injured.

To defuse the situation, one of the solutions being offered is merger with Pakistan and other 'freedom' from India. The third solution - the status quo, is supported by the major political parties, though with differing caveats.

Merger with Pakistan

The merger with Pakistan is incongruous for a simple reason that Kashmiris will be an additional minority group in Pakistan that has a disturbing record towards its ethnic and sectarian minorities including Mohajir, Baloch, Pashtun, Ahmadis and Hazaras. Many of these people are forced to seek refuge in other countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees' latest figures, Pakistanis are the sixth largest group seeking

asylum in Europe following Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis. Australian immigration report 2013-2014 also reveals that largest number of people who sought humanitarian visa on arrival came from Pakistan (Elibritt Karlsen: 2014, Parliament of Australia).

Pakistan's human rights record on Baluchistan has also been disconcerting. Since the last decade about 18,000 people have allegedly involuntarily disappeared in the province. According to the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, 157 mutilated bodies were found and 463 people disappeared in the state in 2015. (*Balochwarna News*, 3 January 2016). The prime suspects in these incidents are the security forces.

Pakistan-administered Kashmir is no better. Of \$38 bn proposed investment in energy sector under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Gilgit-Baltistan has not received any allocation as against other provinces (*The Dawn*, 12 May 2016). On the contrary, planning minister of Pakistan warned the protesting farmers of the region that the terrorism act would be invoked against them if they obstructed the project (*Times of India*, 18 August 16).

Freedom

The option of freedom for J&K is equally fraught with problems. If freedom is a demand for all the five regions of the state, then it seems a non-starter given the Indian and Pakistan position on it; and if it relates

only to the Indian part then without taking into consideration the views of the people of Jammu and Ladakh region it is unlikely to move any farther.

The demand of freedom for only the valley of Kashmir is fraught with a moral dilemma in the light of about a half a million Kashmiri pundits' virtual exile from the region. Besides, freedom for Kashmir will have a ripple effect in Muslim majority districts of Poonch and Rajouri and Kishtwar and Doda, separated by Hindu majority districts of Jammu and Udhampur, which will further add to the instability in the region.

Another difficulty to the freedom for Kashmir is use of violence and terrorism as a method to achieve it. Contemporary history shows that a violent movement does not produce a sustainable democratic state as is seen in many African countries which were inspired by various violence based ideologies.

And finally, there are reports that mosques are used for mobilization of people and ISIS flags are waved in rallies in Kashmir. (*Indian Express*, August 21, 2015). Successful culmination of such a movement can only lead to a theocratic state that would be against the spirit of 'kashmiriyat', which has already suffered considerable erosion in the valley.

Way Forward

The central government owes it

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Religious Bigotry and Corruption in the Contractor Raj

K. S. Chalam

For about three decades, we have been reading and listening to catchwords like License-Permit raj, rent seeking public servants, inefficient public sector units and unworkable socialist policies were operating in India. Strangely, there are no such debates or discourses now in the public realm, though the country is slipped into the same drift under a corporate-contractor-bureaucrat raj. Is the situation different from what some experts envisioned?

The socialist thinkers, both Marxist and no-Marxist groups, considered religion, faith, beliefs and the institutions built on them in traditional societies, are largely grounded on economic base. The metaphor base and super structure was eminently fit in to the first generation of upper caste English educated leftists to feel a sigh of relief not to be apologetic for ignoring the Indian realities converging only with the western thought. (M N Roy and Lohia were exceptions, but they succumbed to mainstream thinking and Ambedkar was an untouchable). Some of them have even ignored the traditional Indian materialistic traditions of Lokayata and Buddhism in their anxiety or scheme of finding solutions to inequalities. The above theory or analytic is broadly based on the experiences of the West, though Joti Rao Phuley a contemporary of Marx was deeply involved in exposing the bigotry of Hinduism or Brahminical conspiracy against the illiterate farmers in India during the same period. The parallel between Marx and Phuley clearly

indicate that there are fundamental differences between the experiences of European nations which are by and large nation states and India which is a multicultural, multiethnic (settlers) complex society regulated by a wily fulltime occupational group for ages. It seems that there is no other country or faith in the World where God's marriage and nuptials are ceremoniously celebrated and the devotees are made to listen to with apt attention (without knowing the meaning) the vulgar act narrated in the devotional songs as if the devotees get instant *mukti*. We are not sarcastic here as we respect the sentiments of believers if they are told or know the meaning of the recitations and crave for *mukti* in the real sense of the term. (As I explained in one of my articles earlier, other faiths in India are not immune to this bigotry. All of them have accumulated huge properties.) The devotees are not ordinary people, most of them are scientists, judges, Harvard returned scholars claiming to be capable to run the economy as a solon. If we go through the writings of Phuley, Periyar, Ambedkar and others, we realise how they perceived the drift. But, Marxists like Kosambi (taken just for example) down to some of the present day radicals never considered Hinduism and the Bhats, to be a precarious and cunning to survive attempts to reduce their importance, and could compromise with forces that are publicly declared as adversaries, like the beef eating Americans. This is really baffling for those of us who are followers of materialistic interpretation of history

and the mode of production approach in arriving at successive stages of socioeconomic formations in India. How it is that capitalism and religious fundamentalism are hands in glove? We may get some answers if we sincerely reflect on the writings of Phuley, Sankalia, Bhandarkar and other Pune based intellectuals and not necessarily Kosambi who ignored them (and others who sincerely followed him or made to follow).

Ever since the NDA government or the so-called parivar or the extended family rule came to power with absolute numbers in 2014, tricks are played to show that they are above corruption. The media houses mostly of the corporate bodies or the ones that depend upon their ads keep on telling us that there is no corruption in the Modi government and everything is transparent. Yes, it is transparent for the select few business houses and their nominees in the bureaucracy who prepare documents of policy for the government on the basis of the dictates of the corporates to whom they owe their allegiance. We have been listening to the kind of skirmishes between chief minister of Delhi Mr Kejriwal and the alleged Ambani nominee as Lt Governor of Delhi Mr Jung. Interestingly there is absolute agreement between the previous government and the NDA in matters of economic policy and the issues that follow. In fact the NDA is sincerely implementing what the UPA had been doing for decades with every important Congress man got involved in some scam. The

difference is: Modi and his masters have selected some contractors and corporates only as their nominees to carry the business, while the Congress used to talk about secularism and go to Ayodhya up to Hanuman feet. Happily the BJP / RSS direct its groups to indulge in all kinds of petty mafia activities of lynching dalits, Muslims and others to divert the attention of the common man about the economic plunder. The voices of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch are very feeble. One can notice that there will be an orchestrated social tension created by the cohorts of parivar whenever a serious contract of transferring huge public resources is involved. The nexus is never analysed and understood by our public intellectuals.

People in the South allege that whenever Modi or Naidu of Andhra Pradesh go out on foreign tour, they take an entourage of corporates and the bureaucratic clique along with them to get agreements signed not for the country or people but for the chosen corporates. Once the papers are ready, a signal goes to the headquarters to create issues of diversion in the form of social tension or display huge festival or a yagna to divert the attention of the gullible people and in the melee displayed by the media, the agreements would be signed. Now, the budget is going to be introduced along with the Railways in February hinting that the government departments are ready for transfer to private companies. They brought in, it seems, some Business economists who were advisers to corporate entities to do the exercise of privatisation and kept them in the Yojana Bhavan and called it NITI Ayog. Their job, it is reported by the workers' unions, is to identify the units, resources that can be given

to the corporates. It is alleged by the unions that around 20 public sector units are going to be handed over to private corporates. The NITI experts do the exercise with the help of their paid experts or intellectuals. One important example is that of one of their members has produced a study report as to how to privatise Railways and submitted it to PMO and now the time has come to operationalize it through the budget?

It is under this background, several incidents are happening in the name of agreements and policy changes involving not billions but trillions of rupees worth of public sector resources. Now Adani is considered to be the most efficient person than hundreds of trained executives in making Coal and Oil sectors productive. Therefore, it is reported (*Times of India*, 21 September) that Indian Oil Corporation and GAIL is going to invest in Adani's Dhrma project in Orissa worth Rs 5000 crores. If Adani had any problem with capital adequacy or incurring losses in his ventures, public sector units are there to come to his rescue and by intelligently showing his prowess both in financial and government loyalty to him, he would expand his empire. In all the tours of Modi, it is alleged, the Gujarati Banias are following (whispers of opponents in the corridors of power). Another important business deal initiated by the Steel ministry is that of Laxmi Mittal of UK who is in trouble will be given the responsibility of promoting SAIL through merger or joint ventures.

It is strange that no one is raising the issue of corruption that involved direct cabinet Ministers in the case of Orissa, Mr Pradhan of Petroleum Ministry and Mr Singh, Minister of

Steel in the above two issues. It is without shame that the parivar functionaries talk about corruption of others while their own members are deeply involved in the above economic operations that involve trillions of rupees. It would be known later that these mergers or investments had been under the direct control of the corporates transferring public properties and resources like BALCO, VSNL, 2G, and CIL under UPA. How is it that it is not named as corruption even if the news is moderated by the media?

The kind of transfers and handovers of government companies and peoples resources to individuals is much deeper now than before. The corrupt labelled Congress is silent on the issues as it was they who brought all this muck and may be some of their business cohorts or contractors are behind some of these operations with tacit understanding with NDA, if not shifted to the party yet. One needs to expose this cheating in day light by the NDA government. How is it that one individual like Adani or Ambani is more intelligent than the whole system of government? It is simple sham? Let the intellectuals expose the nexus for a debate!

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to the constitution of India to restore civil liberties by withdrawing the laws like AFSPA from civilian areas, ensure accountability for human rights violations, secure transparent governance, launch de-radicalisation programs and identify a genuine leadership in the valley for a dialogue. Nationally, toning down the saffron nationalism might greatly assist. It is the only way forward for a humane and democratic Kashmir.

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 –Kashmir Times

March of the Marathas

Bhalchandra Mungekar

The Devendra Fadnavis government in Maharashtra has been taken aback by lakhs of people belonging to the Maratha community taking to the streets, unprecedented in the socio-political history of the state since it was formed in 1960. This has happened after the murder of a Maratha girl in Kopardi village of Ahmadnagar district on July 13. More than 150 incidents of atrocities were committed against Dalits, some brutal murders, in Ahmadnagar district in the last four-five years. Yet, not a word of protest was uttered by any section of society in the state, let alone the Maratha community, other than the Dalits. This once again underlines that community sensitivity or conscience even in the crime of rape is determined by one's caste. This time, four Dalit youths have been accused of the crime.

I visited the village on July 26 and met the girl's parents, both poor brick-workers. With no words of consolation, I met some villagers. It was gratifying that despite being about 2,000 in number, the Maratha community collectively decided on a policy of restraint towards the Dalits, numbering about 150 to 200, as they were not collectively responsible for the crime. This is contrary to what normally happens in the northern parts of the country. It was equally gratifying that the entire Dalit community demanded, I was told by the chief of the Dispute-Free Village Community, that the guilty must be hanged.

Now, nearly a month after the gruesome incident, the Maratha community has started the protest marches, mobilising lakhs of people, including doctors, engineers, lawyers,

professors, teachers, university and college students and even housewives, the last being unconventional so far as the community is concerned. Second, the participants in the protest marches belong to all political parties — Congress, NCP, BJP and Shiv Sena — and include their MLAs, MLCs and MPs, to show solidarity with the community and ensure that its political fortunes are not harmed. Third, the OBCs in the state are not allowed to join these protests, the reason being that they are the beneficiaries of reservations.

Fourth, these protest marches were so far organised mainly in Marathwada and Western Maharashtra, but are now spreading to the Vidarbha and Konkan regions. It is understood that about 25 lakh of these protesters from across the state will be marching to Mumbai in October.

The community has three main demands: Punishing the guilty of Kopardi, scrapping the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (POA), and getting reservations to the community in education and public employment. Let me deal with each of these demands.

First, it is not only the demand of the Maratha community, but of all sections in Maharashtra, including the Dalits, that the guilty be punished. The state government must hasten the process. Second, as regards reservations, Article 340 of the Constitution empowers the president to constitute a commission to look into the difficulties of the "socially and educationally backward classes" (SEBCs) in the country, and on the

basis of the commission's recommendations, the government may suggest suitable measures for their advancement. This was the case of the Mandal Commission that has provided 11 criteria, that is, four each that are social and economic in nature and three educational. If the Maratha community wants reservations as the SEBs, commonly known as the OBCs, they should be ready to be seen to be socially on par with the OBCs, who are lower in the social hierarchy. Further, they need to qualify the majority of the criteria, as prescribed by the Mandal Commission. If not, the government needs to find some appropriate alternative method within the framework of the constitution, because this demand of the Maratha community has been pending for the last 20 years or so. Again, the present system vis à vis the SCs, STs and OBCs must remain unaffected. The Fadnavis government should take the call at the earliest.

Third, the demand for scrapping the POA is totally unjustifiable. The POA was passed by the Parliament in 1989 and extends to the whole country, except Jammu & Kashmir. It is the prerogative of the Parliament alone to amend it, if necessary. Thus, it was amended in 2015 to make it more effective. But no state has been implementing it with a sense of commitment and honesty, mainly for political considerations. Maharashtra is no exception — out of a total 7,345 cases of atrocities brought for trial in the state in 2014, only 59 persons were convicted, making the conviction rate 0.8 per cent of the cases. Of 36 districts in the state, only three have special courts, the least in the country. The bogey of misuse of the POA is

unfounded. Yet, in cases where this happens, it is the state government's responsibility to punish the offenders instead of making it an argument against the law itself.

The true remedy is the creation of an atrocity-free society where the POA is rendered irrelevant. But all said and done, I would suggest, the Dalits in Maharashtra must resist being provoked for many reasons. In the end, I must come to the real genesis of the story that is forging unity among the Maratha community in the state.

The Kopardi incident is just the immediate cause. Though the Maratha community has been ruling the state since its inception in 1960, irrespective of the ruling party or parties and irrespective of who was the state's chief minister, the ordinary, poor and resourceless of the same community could not avail themselves of any special benefits over these years. Their hardships were the same as those of the other poor except their so-called higher social status (next only to Brahmins). They remained away from the real power centres comprising the cooperative sugar factories, thread mills, banks, trade and commerce, construction industry and private educational institutions controlled by their elite fraternity. They, and particularly the educated among them, are also victims of the growing unemployment, and have been suffering from the unaffordable fees charged for professional courses, thanks to the uncontrolled privatisation, nay, commercialisation of education. Hence the demand for reservation.

The demand has been pending for nearly 25 years. The state government must act sooner rather than later in the interest of the socio-political stability in the state.

—*The Indian Express*

A Living Experiment in Communal Harmony

Tahmina Lashkar
Sandeep Pandey

Living amidst hundred percent Muslim population is Dr. Kush Kumar Singh. Dr. Singh is a vegetarian and a very religious person. Is it not an interesting combine? In an age when people refuse to rent out houses to someone from a different religious belief than their own this creates curiosity. In our society many baseless rumors do rounds among Hindus and Muslims which affect the relations among a larger part of the population. In such circumstances Dr. Singh's decision to reside amidst Muslims gives rise to many questions and answers them as well. Dr. Singh stays in Gaffar Manzil with Faisal Khan in Delhi's Jamia Nagar area. Dr. Singh met Faisal Khan in Apollo Hospital. He was on his duty and Faisal Khan was on his social duty. Faisal has redefined social work. It was not a surprising thing that a non-Muslim has a negative image of Muslims in general. Dr. Singh also had such a mentality. Then he chatted with Faisal Khan and got to know about his organization, Khudai Khidmatgar. These conversations continued for a long time. Dr. Singh spoke on many failings of the Muslim community openly with Faisal Khan. Dr. Singh used to think that Muslims are fundamentalists in matters of religion and they do not listen to any other point of view. He thought the community never opens up to other communities. But as he spent more time conversing with Faisal Khan his original thoughts started to get altered. But this change of attitude was only limited to Faisal Khan, he was yet to have a favourable view

of the community. Faisal Khan too was more interested to speak about social issues than religious ones. Dr. Singh then thought that if he were to probe his thoughts and notions he needed to live amongst the community. Dr. Singh decided to live with Faisal Khan in the Khudai Khidmatgar office itself which doubles up as Faisal's home. Given the present conditions, to decide to live in a locality having dense Muslim population was nothing short of a revolution. He took that chance however. He then started living with Faisal Khan. This was quite challenging for him but still he considered it like a spiritual mission and went to Jamia Nagar for this social experiment. May be many had then questioned Dr. Singh on his decision, yet it did not deter him from making an effort in understanding religion, dedication, love and sacrifice. As on today he already has lived for about three years here. All kinds of preconceived notions that he had have cleared in this period. His peaceful and dedicated presence also helped Muslims to dispense some of their doubts. A lot of Muslim friends who came to Faisal Khan would see and meet Dr. Singh, this helped in the community realizing its own shortfalls and removing their doubts about non-Muslims. Dr. Singh is an educated man who lived his life in such an exemplary way that he became an ideal for many. We are speaking of this precious friendship between a Hindu and a Muslim because it would freshen up the stale air of communalism that is

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Reminiscences of Frontier Gandhi and his Khudai Khidmatgars

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

The inspiring narrative by Dr. Sandeep Pandey and Tahmina Lashkar on a unique legacy of Khudai Khidmatgars observed in Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, has prompted me to record my reminiscences of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan aka Frontier Gandhi and Badshah Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars. Like millions of Indians I am an admirer of Frontier Gandhi who was a unique figure during the entire freedom struggle. I had the privilege of having his darshan at Allahabad Jn. station in 1946 when he was accompanying Bapu either to Bihar or Noakhali. Major Gen. Shah Nawaz of INA fame was also accompanying the two Gandhis. The second time I saw him was at the Meerut Congress on 23 November 1946. The other members of the Congress Working Committee were staying in well furnished tents near the venue of the session in Pyare Lal Sharma Nagar, but Badshah Khan stayed in a tent with his Khudai Khidmatgars three miles away where four groups of volunteers were lodged: Congress Sewa Dal, INA, All India Students' Congress leaders and workers and Khudai Khidmatgars. Badshah Khan used to dine with his Khudai Khidmatgars - big sized rotis, dal and vegetables. Frontier Gandhi was an epitome of simple living and high thinking. He normally had only two pairs of Khadi long kurtas and salwars of 'militia' cloth. He used to wash his clothes daily and wear them without ironing. His grandson (regretfully I forget his name), who was the President of the NWFP Students' Congress, was also putting up there and we became friends. The President of the AISC, Ram Sumer Shukla, was staying elsewhere with Poornima Banerji (younger sister of Aruna Asaf Ali) but the members of the Working Committee of the AISC like Raj Narayan Singh, Prabhu Narayan Singh, Dr. Ram Chandra Shukla and other important student leaders like Jang Bahadur Singh (am not sure if Anandeshwar Prasad Singh was there or not) and less important workers like me were staying in those camps. I remember Major Gen. Shah Nawaz and Dr. Ram Chandra Shukla, C-in-C of the AISC Volunteer Corps in their glittering uniforms taking salute at the national flag hoisting ceremony there. I was totally impressed by the personality of Frontier Gandhi who performed the miracle of turning Pathans from dreaded armed men into true believers in non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi. This is an incredible event in world history ignored by Western historians. Frontier Gandhi was among the three leaders who had opposed the partition plan at the AICC meeting in Bombay in 1946. He told his colleagues that they were throwing the people of the NWFP into the mouths of wolves. When he visited many important places in India on the occasion of the celebration of Gandhiji's birth anniversary in 1969 he expressed his anguish at the role of many top leaders of the Congress at the time of the Partition. My former colleague, Sri V. Kalyanam, who was steno or secretary to Gandhiji in Noakhali and worked later as Asstt. Commissioner for SC & ST in early 1950s at Madras, met Frontier Gandhi at Madras, he often talked of his memories of Gandhiji and Frontier Gandhi and showed me hundreds of letters/ notes written by Gandhiji on scraps of paper including the reverse of used envelopes. I don't know what happened to that priceless treasure. In December 1946 I also had the privilege of meeting the Presidents and General Secretaries of all the PCCs called by the Congress President Acharya JB Kripalani at a special camp of the top national leaders at Allahabad. They included, among others, Dr. Khan Sahib, Premier of the NWFP and brother of Frontier Gandhi, Abdus Samad Khan, the Balochi Gandhi, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, President of Punjab PCC (who had presided over the historic Jallianwala Bagh meeting in Amritsar), Jairamdas Daulatram and Choithram Gidwani from Sindh, Seth Damodar Swaroop from UP, Saadullah from Assam. etc. Those were intoxicating days of the last days of the freedom struggle. Today we salute the memories of those noble souls who sacrificed their lives in the service of the motherland.

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suffocating us these days and it will have an impact on our collective conscience as well. We spread evils fast but don't make efforts to spread

the good word. Dr. Singh himself says that people belonging to the majority should live amongst the minorities to understand their

problems, fears and concerns and to accept them as their own. Then only a beautiful India is possible. He also advises the minorities to engage

themselves with the rest of the population and avoid walking the path alone. The minority should also learn to judge a person by his deeds rather than his/her religion. He goes on to add that more minorities should get educated and become open minded so that a beautiful India can be envisioned and realised.

Dr. Kush Singh works in the Metropolis Lab in Mohan Estate. His Lab had a tradition of distributing sweets on Diwali. Realising that 18-20 staff members out of 60-65 were Muslims he got sweets distributed on Eid too this year. For his Muslim colleagues as well as his administration this was a welcome surprise. The Lab administration has now taken the responsibility upon itself to distribute sweets on Eid every year in addition to Diwali.

Dr. Singh is part of the national core team of Khudai Khidmatgar now. He is involved in day-to-day activities of Khudai Khidmatgar. He is also been made a trustee the Khudai Khidmatgar Trust. He believes other organisations like Khudai Khidmatgar should go among people and conduct dialogues and meetings for culultural exchanges between communities without any delay so that misunderstandings between the communities can be removed. He thinks extremism is rapidly spreading among educated youth. He says, 'I am a doctor and I know that when we are among our own community how vicious and vile we get.' Earlier when his friends used to say things against other communities he used to be perplexed as to what extent people can go to hate each other. He used to answer his friend that even if we agree that people in our country are bad it's us only who can take

them towards goodness, it's our duty. He says, 'Religion now a days is in the hands of opportunistic people who use it to serve their own agendas. Religion is meant to make a person a better soul and to elevate humanity to higher pedestal.' He appreciates the fact that Khudai Khidmatgar instead of rejecting religion has presented the human face of religion. He adds that Khudai Khidmatgar highlights messages of harmony on both Prophet Mohammed's birthday as well as Ram Navmi and this is why it is winning hearts and making a secular space among communities. He thinks both Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi also used this strategy for peace and brotherhood during their times. He says, 'The time I spent

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I admired the courage and commitment of people, however small in number, lighting candles at Karachi or taking out a procession at Lahore some years ago in memory of those who had died in the Mumbai attack. This is the time when India needs understanding. This is also the occasion when faith in good relations between India and Pakistan is tested.

But at the same time, Pakistan should understand and appreciate India's anger. Those who attacked Mumbai or Pathankot might be the Al-Qaida and the Taliban who are playing havoc in Pakistan as well. These are the organizations which are helping, training and arming them. Why have such extremists remained beyond the pale of law? Even when some of them were "detained" after the attack on India's Parliament, they were practically free to preach and spread poison. India suspects that

with Khudai Khidmatgar was a practical experiment which has removed many misconceptions that I had earlier. We all should live together in harmony and give time to understand each other with love and sacrifice. Then only a stronger, beautiful and development oriented India would emerge which was dreamt of by our forefathers. May our children play and rejoice in this beautiful and smiling India for which we are putting in our efforts.' He narrates that whenever he mentions to his office colleagues that he lives in Jamia Nagar they stare at him for a while in disbelief and this surprise sometimes leads to meaningful conversations. Dr. Singh is a mirror to the society, a ray of hope, light of love.

those arrested after the Mumbai carnage would have the front door of their house shut while the back door was open.

No world power, except Germany, has directly accused the Pakistan government for the attacks on Mumbai. Investigators believe that all attacks on India are linked to members of one terrorist group or the other in Pakistan. Whatever evidence that had India provided in the past Pakistan has failed to prod Islamabad.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is probing into the recent Uri incident, was set up with a fanfare in 2009 to assuage public anger over a similar series of failure leading up to 26/11. They were entrusted with cases but the result so far has been dismal. What the NIA will do in the present case is to be seen. The nation is waiting for a retaliatory action.

Bhumi Adhikar Andolan-II

End caste based discrimination and ensure effective implementation of the SC/ST Act: The resource struggle is also inherently a caste and class struggle and Dalits and Adivasis have been at the receiving end. The caste based violence and systematic elimination of the rights and dignity of the community is being done in collaboration with the political and caste elite leading to their further impoverishment and disempowerment. The inability of the system to ensure justice to victims of the caste-based violence on every count has ensured its continuation without fear of any impunity. This is condemnable and unacceptable. Supreme Court and Higher Courts must take suo-moto cognizance of these offences and ensure fast tracking of the cases on line of the violence against women cases. This will not only ensure justice but also prevent future attacks on the community.

Bhumi Adhikar Andolan reasserts and reaffirms its faith in the reservations provided for the SC/ST communities by the Indian Constitution as a way to address the historical injustice. The ongoing attempts to subvert that by some political forces and caste groups in the name of economic justice is not acceptable and any heed to that by the governments and political parties is primarily based on vote bank calculations.

Withdraw all fabricated cases from the social and cultural activists, tribals, dalits, farmers and students: a number of activists have been framed on numerous false charges and incarcerated. In the current political climate, the targeting of

activists has increased manifold and thus their victimisation as well. As Bhumi Adhikaar Andolan, we extend support and solidarity to the activists and movements facing police oppression and support the effort to establish a people's commission to defend the rights of the activists.

Repeal AFSPA and Stop increased militarisation in conflict regions: Recent judgement of the Supreme Court has validated the long term demand of the movements for withdrawal of the AFSPA from J&K, and many of the North East states. Under AFSPA, many heinous crimes have been committed without any prosecution often feeding in to the vicious circle of continuing violence. The continued unrest is also due to

heavy militarisation within these areas, which often leads to hardships for the citizens of those areas.

Assert democratic rights of association, freedom of expression and raise voice against any incursion: A climate of fear and intimidation is being promoted specifically targeted at muzzling dissent, restricting freedom of association, assembly of citizens to criticise anti people policies of the government and control or close down any democratic spaces available for free speech and gathering. These attempts by the State and vigilante groups are not acceptable in the largest democracy of the world, and are completely violates the ideas and principles enshrined in the Indian constitution.

Socialist Party (India)

National Committee of the Socialist Party met at Delhi on 15-9-2016. Girish Kumar Pandey, working president was in the chair. Prominent among those present were Pannalal Surana, Sandip Pandeyy, Satish Agrawal, Faisal Khan, Rajshekharan Nair, Shriniwas, Harminder Singh Mansahia, Sachidanand Singh, Renu Gambhir, Neeraj Kumar, Shashank and Janakiprasad Goud. The committee took the following decisions:

1. As Jayanti Panchal had tendered resignation from the post of treasurer, Neeraj Kumar was elected as the treasurer.

2. Neeraj Kumar and Adv. Shashank were authorized to form national committee of the SYS.

3. National Conference of the

Party will be held on 12 and 13 November, 2016 at Chediram Dharmashala, Lucknow. Three delegates from every such district in which party members are enrolled so far will participate in the National Conference. State Secretaries should communicate their names and postal addresses to Janakiprasad Goud, President, U.P. State before 20 October, 2016.

4. Mobilise party organization to contest Assembly elections in U.P. Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Goa. Membership enrolment drive to be concluded by 31 December.2016.

5. Chairman of the Central Parliamentary Board will appoint Election Committees for U.P. and Punjab very soon.

–Pannalal Surana

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Appeal

Dear Friend

Hindi medium school for children of migrant labourers coming from Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Nepal: This school was started two years ago in order to provide education to the children of labourers so that they do not work as child labourers. Children of this school are taught in Hindi language. Today this school is running from two different areas of Mundra taluka, namely, Mundra and Samagoga, catering to the educational needs of more than 700 children. The education is provided free of charge to these children. Besides, they are provided with bus facility, uniform, books and mid-day meals. The school has also got recognition from the Gujarat government for classes 1 to 8 of these schools.

We need your support in our effort to provide education to these children. We are requesting you to sponsor atleast one child, at a cost of Rs. 2000/- per child per annum. Our target is to raise sponsorship for 500 children.

The donations to the YMC are tax-exempt under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Your Cheque/Draft may please be drawn in favour of "Yusuf Meherally Centre" and sent to the following address:

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Dharmendra Kumar

The Project coordinator
Yusuf Meherally Centre

At+post –Bhadreshwar,
Tal-Mundra, Kutch,
Ph-02838282375,

Email-yumeher@rediffmail.com

The donations can be sent to us by way of bank transfer too. Our bank details are:

Name of the Account: Yusuf Meherally Centre

Account No. 071510003139, Dena Bank, Branch: BHADRESHWAR

IFSC Code: BKDN0330715 (used for RTGS, IMPS and NEFT transactions)

Branch Code : 330715, Mundra, Kutch, Gujarat, India