

Let us move forward

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01. With the two neighboring countries showing distinct signs of a thaw in their long-frozen relationships, the people of the sub-continent especially Jammu & Kashmir, have heaved a sigh of relief, in the hope that the windows of dialogue and doors of diplomacy may open up after a long, dark period of tumult and tragedy. Undoubtedly, the swing from a futile hostility to an upsurge of rising expectations, in both the countries, reflects an undercurrent of peace and Co-operation, at the ground level, in both the countries. The need of the hour is to grasp the opportunity and sustain the momentum.
02. Over two years, back, our party came out with a set of suggestions to the Government of India during what came to be known as “Ramzan Cease-fire” demanding gradual reduction in the size of security forces, involved in internal security; fair and prompt trial to all the detainees, languishing in jails and release of all those, against whom no evidence had been found; substantive relief to the victims of violence, irrespective of their affiliations and facilitating the return of youths desirous of leading peaceful lives, to their homes from the other side of the LOC. We also appealed to both the Governments of India and Pakistan to create conditions, conducive for the people living on both sides of LOC, to meet each other, without undue hurdles, by evolving a mechanism for an easy travel, besides encouraging and ensuring exchange of cultural groups and teams between the two countries. We also pleaded for reopening of the two roads between the two countries, namely Jehlum Valley road via Baramulla-Uri from the Valley and Suchetgarh-Sailkote road from Jammu via R. S. Pora. We had also addressed an appeal to all the political parties/groups, particularly APHC and such other platforms to raise their voice against the killings of innocent, unarmed, uninvolved and political activists of all the shades and initiate steps for the dignified return of Pandits to their homes. We understand that the above suggestions have not lost relevance, even today and deserve serious consideration even at this point of time. This however, is not to lose sight of the new experiences gained during the interregnum.
03. Kashmir continues to be in deep trouble. The ongoing terror and counter-terror, now for the last 14 years has left deep scars on the psyche of the entire generation. Men and women are being

deprived of their dignity, the children of their innocence. The daily dance of death continues to this day. The traditional social fabric is torn apart. There is massive erosion of values. The infrastructure remains devastated and the local economy in shambles. Lacs of jobless youth are in for a dark and bleak future. A sense of political uncertainty looms large on the minds. How long can we endure this?

If we have to come out of this morass, we need to create a movement of peace and reconciliation, with a potential to bring the people of sub-continent closer, for which we have to be sensitive to their requirements, their present and the future. For this the leadership in J&K and the entire sub-continent has to move beyond symbolisms and stated positions. In fact an autonomous voice must emerge from our multi-regional state, rising above narrow, partisan considerations. This no doubt requires the acceptance of hard realities, which may be enumerated as under:-

- a) Kashmir is not a plot of land, sans the will and aspirations of its people, nor a commodity to be divided;
- b) An acute sense of political uncertainty pervading in the state, cannot be simply wished away but need to be addressed in a serious and forthright manner;
- c) Kashmir problem cannot be solved so long as India and Pakistan remain on a war path;
- d) Will of the people of the State, in accordance with the aspirations of its heterogeneous regions has to be the basis of a just, honourable and practicable settlement of the issue; same applies to the other part of Jammu and Kashmir;
- e) There is no alternative to the path of dialogue, howsoever pains-taking and time-consuming it may be. Arms and confrontation have failed to achieve anything, it has only brought miseries and hardships;
- f) No cut and dried formula or a ready-made participation can put as a solution to the issues. Any settlement has to come out of a process.

In order to carry forward such a process, and to open up fresh space for the substantive negotiations, leading to settlement of issues, our party in addition to the above suggestions puts forth the following demands.

- (i) Constitution of High Powered Commission of Enquiry to unravel the atrocities committed upon innocent civilians in the State, the sources and instruments employed during the last 14 years, alongwith recompense to the aggrieved;
- (ii) The Governments of India and Pakistan to take confidence-building measures in order to create a conducive atmosphere for resolution of issues. For this concrete steps will have to be taken to foster economic co-operation, cultural exchange and people-to-people interactions at various levels between the two neighbours;
- (iii) Both the Governments to take serious measures to bring about a visible decrease in the level of violence in the State and gradual reduction in the size of their armed forces in the area;
- (iv) A comprehensive composite and a meaningful dialogue at all levels for the solution that would be just, honourable, peaceful, practicable and acceptable to all the parties concerned;
- (v) Ensuring improved respect for human rights of all the people living on either side of the LOC;
- (vi) Revitalization of ruined economy and devastated infrastructure, especially gainful absorption of unemployed youth must be the primary responsibility of the Government of India, with the aid and co-operation of the present State Government, which needs to be encouraged to implement the Common Minimum Programme in letter and spirit;