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# Rising Kashmir

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## Maturity, not muscle is the need of hour

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***A solution to the problem can be sought only through innovative and spiritually valid ways***



Swami Agnivesh

What is Kashmir? The answer to this question depends on who you are, and why you ask. If you are a politician, it is no more than an election milch cow. We cannot understand aright the statements issuing from political quarters, except in this light.

Geography, history, patriotism, professions of humanitarian concerns, and commitment to human rights: all are invoked as icings on the cake of power.

We have reached a point of severance between the craft of governance and the art of ensuring people's welfare, which alone is the legitimate purpose of the science of politics.

Given the contrived hyper-sensitivity of the Kashmir issue, one incurs serious risks of being misunderstood in addressing it.

Thanks to the increasing and exclusive faith reposed in violence, the margin for impartial thinking on this vexed issue is shrinking.

So, we have conflicting agendas espoused and pursued with increasing desperation, with a whole people caught in the crossfire.

I believe this to be contrary to the spiritual genius alike of the tradition of Kashmir Sufism - distinguished for its eclectic spirit and its sublime creativity- and of the Vedas, as also of the shared spirituality of humankind.

All of these insist on our irreducible duty to seek and stand by the truth. I also believe that those who are enemies of truth cannot be friends with human beings.

To me, commitment to truth is the litmus test of a person or party. It is also the basic guarantee for ensuring freedom and justice to the people.

I believe with Gandhiji that truth is God. But truth is nothing unless affirmed and made to prevail. Mere academic truth, that stays self-gagged for whatever reasons, is a covert and cowardly way for disowning truth.

Well, there is this other thing that I passionately believe in: violence is the problem, not the solution.

Sadly, both sides to the Kashmir imbroglio bank wholly on violence. All of human history bears witness to the fact that violence lends itself to no lasting achievements.

It is tragic to see, especially, the youth of Kashmir being tied to this juggernaut of pointless dearth and those who persist with this are perpetrating and perpetuating an avoidable atrocity.

The fact that this seems today to be the only feasible option is something to be embarrassed about; for this is a measure of the mess created.

It is regrettable that this very sad failure is now sought to be re-invented as a rationale for muscular patriotism, custom-designed to assuage the disenchantment of the people of Jammu with the BJP.

It is a clear give away that Mehbooba's *'soft'* approach is contrasted to the *'hard'* line that, we are told, will be resorted to, as though that is going to heal the much-wounded state and to win the hearts and minds of the affected people.

I hope very fervently that, posturing and pronouncements for public consumption notwithstanding, good sense will prevail; for human life is too precious and sacred to be wasted in the service of cynical power-garnering.

The BJP entered into a marriage of convenience with the PDP mainly with the intent to display to showcase saffron spreading even into Jammu Kashmir: a statistical feat regarding the number of states under the BJP's belt.

The same partnership is terminated, similarly, to ensure that saffron does not fade in Jammu region. The hardline now espoused is connected umbilically to general elections 2019.

If so, the people of Jammu Kashmir and the rest of the country are made party to the pursuit of the political gains of a party dressing it up as a stroke of resurgent patriotism.

Because I am a Hindu in the Vaidic sense of the term, I cannot see anyone as an enemy. If vasudhaivakutumbakam is my spiritual vision -and if Advaita is still valid, our shared sense of humanity has to count for more than any superficial label.

The fact that the Muslims or members of Semitic religions in general are exclusivists, and have conducted themselves abominably in the past because they believed erroneously in violence, cannot define and distort my spiritual or philosophical vision.

I have no option but to stand steadfastly on the unique and universal spiritual light that the seers and savants of this sub-continent evolved over millennia.

That is because I believe it to be an incomparable treasure that I cannot disown it for partisan, fleeting gains.

What a terrible self-goal it will be, if we, provoked by the misdeeds and crudities of others, disown our own spiritual heritage and become caricatures of their religions, which were, after all, caricatures of their own spiritual lights!

The present crisis in Kashmir highlights the near extinction of the civil society. Not everything needs to be adjudicated by the state.

Disappointing too is the apathy of the religious leaders in this country, who prefer to stay confined to their comfort-zones, turning a blind eye to the burning issues of our times.

The religious agenda then gets reduced to cultivating the good will of the state to one's own profit. The '*peace*' that spirituality affords needs to be real not only at the individual level but also at the collective level. Peace cannot be taken piece-meal. Nor should it be retailed at a profit.

I have incurred the displeasure of the hotheads of patriotism by my eagerness to make justice and peace prevail in Jammu Kashmir. I have endeavoured to convince my brothers and sisters in the Valley that a solution to the problem can be sought only through innovative and spiritually valid ways.

The use of force, stone-pelting by the youth and militancy by the radicals needs to be renounced. I am willing to intervene, unmindful of cost and risk, to help secure a just and honorable solution for this bloody, vexatious issue; if only both sides would create the leeway for it.

A solution is possible; but that calls for a change of heart, a new vision. That vision for peace in Kashmir, if evolved, will have a beneficial spin-off for the rest of the country as well. The sooner this happens, the better.