

Solving Kashmir issue pivotal for all three regions

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Abid Bashir

Srinagar, June 17: Experts from Kashmir and Jammu regions on Sunday agreed that the problems at the regional and sub regional levels can be addressed once the bigger problem — Kashmir is resolved with stakeholders from all three regions on board.

SRINAGAR, June 17: “Sharing sovereignty has transcended to sharing of power,” said Professor S.D. Muni on the concluding day of the two seminar on “Jammu and Kashmir and the Federal Models of Shared sovereignty” here in Ghandi Bhawan, here Sunday .

The two-day seminar was organised by Department of Political Science in collaboration with Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation, New Delhi.

Delivering the key note address on the inaugural day, Prof Muni, who is Visiting Research Professor in National University of Singapore, said that shared sovereignty and power are different and should not be equated.

However, he cautioned people that to have shared sovereignty “ground should be conducive for it.” He said, “Power sharing has to be distributed equally so that a consensus can emerge.”

Prof Muni, who was India’s Special Envoy to Southeast Asian countries on UN Security Council Reforms (2005-06) and served as India’s Ambassador to Lao PDR (1997-1999), said that while discussing federalism one cannot escape from the tag of identity. He said that there are people who demand the latter on the basis of their identities. “Identity,” said Prof Muni to rapt Gandhi Bhawan audience, “has over the years emerged as a powerful tool to define federalism.”

Saying that consensus making is a challenge, Executive Director of CDR, Sushobha Barve, in her speech said, “The two day seminar will help us to discuss many things and come closer to some consensus.”

Acting Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof M A Sofi in his presidential speech said that rising decibel levels will not resolve any issue.

“Some materialistic scholars are beating war drums for the benefit of few and mankind is consistently looking for saviours, not war mongers,” said the acting VC.

Head, Political Science, Prof N A Baba while welcoming the guests in the inaugural session said that federalism was not seen a solution but a problem.

Earlier, National Conference senior leader and Finance Minister Abdul Rahim Rather, presenting his party’s point saying that his party has always advocated autonomy and continuation of dialogue.

Chairman, National Commission for Minorities, Wajahat Habibullah, who was chairing the first session on the second day, said that people should express their grievance and pursue government for the redressal of grievances.

People’s Conference, chairman, Sajad Gani Lone, while addressing the audience said that this

‘Achievable Nationhood’ is amalgam of various models practiced in the modern world. He said his document covers everything and is best suited in present conditions.

Reacting to earlier speeches made by the other speakers in the seminar, Communist Party of India (M), leader, M Y Targami, advised to them that Kashmir has to be kept on the priority.

Others who spoke on the occasion included Justice (Retd) Bilal Nazki, Prof Rekha Chowdhary, Prof Sidiq Wahid, Sheikeh Abdul Rehman, Asgar Karballai, and other eminent persons from different regions of the State.

The faculty members, scholars and students of Political Science and other faculties also participated in the two day seminar.

Assistant Professor, Political Science, Aijaz Ashraf Wani was the coordinator of the two day seminar.

Federal Model of Shared Sovereignty organized by department of Political Science, Kashmir University in collaboration with Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation, New Delhi. The session was chaired by (rtd) justice Bilal Nazki.

In his address, Samajwadi Party President, Sheikh Abdur Rehman said he supported the autonomy resolution in 2000, but the National Conference lacked the seriousness in pursuing implementation. “At the same time, the blame lies on the Government of India, which in 2000, without discussing and even without reading it (autonomy) cold shelved the document. I tried my best to persuade the then government to go through the document -but to no avail,” said Rehman.

He said the two countries, India and Pakistan, have no choice but opting for the federal system. “Had Pakistan implemented the federal system, Bangladesh would not have born,” he said.

Rehman also criticized the existing panchayat raj system stating that the process is still incomplete despite. He said Chenab valley was being ignored and the only way to address the grievances of the people of the belt is to form regional and sub regional councils on the pattern of Ladakah Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC).

CPI (M) State Secretary M Y Tarigami said while talking about federal models, two things need to be kept in mind, identity and the context. “Kashmir has been grappling with the problem of identity as it has been put under isolation. The relation of Jammu and Kashmir has been well defined by virtue of article 370. So when we talk about JK’s relation with India, there is definitely a context,” he said.

Tarigami said after partition, two nations were formed, but the war of partition is still on. “Historic perspective of Kashmir is very important. JK is getting very much inferior treatment if compared with the rest of the States,” he said. The

MLA Kulgam said while finding the solution to the vexed Kashmir issue, South Asian context has to be kept in mind.

“Even Siachen can provide a relief to the Kashmir,” he said. To a query whether it was possible for him to work together with his party leaders at New Delhi to evolve a common consensus to build pressure on the GoI to resolve some common issues regarding Kashmir, Tarigami said he would be glad to do so. On the United Resolutions, he said the UN has become a tool at the hands of some international powers. “What are they doing in Iraq and Iran and even Afghanistan.”

Professor Sidiq Wahid, director Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir, while speaking on the occasion said, “When we talk about regionalism and sub-regionalism, and autonomy, I find it

confusing. In the case of JK, when we talk of federalism, we come across autonomy. Historically, 1952 agreement was not about the quantum of autonomy, but the quantum of sovereignty,” he said.

Senior Journalist, Syed Shujaat Bukhaari, said, “When we talk about the issues of regional and sub-regional federalism, we all agree on one point that these problems were brought to the fore only when Kashmir situation turned volatile.”

He said whatever happened in last 10 years can’t be overlooked.

“Kashmir has been the epicenter of armed struggle. In spite of the fact that violence has come down to a great extent, which GoI agrees, but the footprints of security forces still remain high across the state,” he said. “The struggle is against New Delhi. We had a plebiscite movement and the 1975 Accord, but the political discontent always continued.”

He said ongoing wave of peace is fragile and celebrating high tourist numbers as a sign of normalcy will be naive. “This peace is fake and fragile. It may not be sustainable. People definitely do not want to go back to the 2010, to loose money to the tune of crores and see education of their children suffer,” Bukhari said, adding that, “We should not try to misconstrue this peace as permanent normalcy. GoI purely sees Kashmir problems as a problem of law and order and security.”

Bukhari said the problem is that stakeholders doesn’t want to admit the fact that youth are completely alienated. “You talk to an ordinary youth on ground, how he feels, about being part of the larger federalism. He is far away from the rosy picture,” he said.

Stating that for 120 killings in 2010, not a single constable was booked. “If the system of delivering justice would have been made possible, Major Avtar Singh Singh would not have committed suicide. Justice Bilal Nazki did his best to get Major Avtar located,” Bukhari said, adding that “But he was forced to retire in Orisa high court.”

On regional and sub regional issues, Bukhari said, “I think regional and sub regional problems are tools to divert the attention from larger political problem. I am not saying we should ignore the complaints of people of regions and sub regions. Even after addressing these grievances, the larger issue will remain.”

In his address, Advocate Hussain Sidiqi of Poonch district of Jammu, said, “I am of the firm opinion that the larger issue is hanging for 60 years, sometimes it is grave and sometimes is at the lower level. There are internal regional issues which require debate and discussions so that they are addressed.”

Noted columnist, Zaffar Chowdhary said there was need to see how to identify the solution to the core issues. “At the same time we need to see the key challenges.”

He said it is very important to understand the peculiarity the Kashmir. “Even if we look at the 500 years of history of Kashmir that would be enough to understand the peculiarity of Kashmir. In 1947, Kashmir was entirely different,” he said. “In last 25 years, Kashmir witnessed a sea change.”

He said problems at the regional and the sub regional level are the offshoots of a larger problem.

Discussion and Debate

Sushobha Barve, Executive Director, CDR said the ideas for creation for regional and sub regional councils, was a new one. “Pakistan is developing Gilgit and Baltistan as a separate province. The three regions in JK has been interconnected administratively since 60 years. Hill development council was first tried in Darjeeling, but it didn’t work,” she said. “In Northeast, two councils, did not show good results. So I am of a firm belief that there has to be devolution. Those who are demanding that they need

to have regional councils, should study why have some HDCs worked and why some have failed.” Professor Rekha Chowdhary, who teaches political science in Jammu University, said all agree that Kashmir is a core issue which needs to be resolved.

“Kashmiris are basically the suffers and relief should come to them. All the stake holders should have a right to say. They need to have a say in the resolution of conflict. We need to have a spirit of dialogue to solve Kashmir first then form councils,” she said. “We need to debate Azadi. We have not even debated autonomy, let’s engage the people to debate Azadi and Autonomy.”

Dr javaid Iqbal, a prominent columnist, said for a new kind of music, tips from old music are must. “So, we are forced to talk about 1947. Let Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh discuss about their future jointly. After all we have been living together since 1847,” he said.