

REKINDLE KASHMIR'S LOST AND REAL CONNECT

As New Delhi continues to reflect on strategies to win hearts and minds in Kashmir, it would do well to revisit the past

In the din as well as the deathly silence to mark a year since the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir and the abrogation of its special status, another anniversary — almost a historical vignette today — has, not surprisingly, been forgotten. But it carries today deep poignancy as New Delhi continues to reflect on strategies to win the so-far elusive victory over the hearts and minds of the people, beyond the triumphalism that has accompanied the constitutional integration.

Foiling 'Operation Gibraltar':

It was on August 5, 1965 that two Kashmiri Gujjars helped to thwart one of Pakistan's most devious conspiracies in the Valley. At Darra Kassi, near Gulmarg, Mohammed Din, and Wazir Mohammed at Galuthi in the Mendhar sector, reported the Pakistani infiltration (to, respectively, the Thana at Tangmarg and the headquarters of the infantry brigade at Poonch) that was intended to spark an uprising in Kashmir, as part of its insidious 'Operation Gibraltar' relying on a ready-to-rebel fifth column within the Valley. Nothing of that sort happened, as other Kashmiris too reported on the presence of the infiltrators, who were soon flushed out. In short, 'Operation Gibraltar' failed, as did every other attempt by Pakistan because of the fundamental belief of Kashmiris in the goodness and greatness of India.

Mostly forgotten and unsung, Din and Mohammed, stood for and reinforced the idea of India in Kashmir, with the courage of their conviction and often at the cost of their lives — like thousands of other Kashmiris over more than the seven decades since Independence. Today is a day to recall and remember some of these Kashmiris; each deserving a fulsome tribute; for ultimately the real test of the decisions made a year ago will be the people.

Consider, for instance, the story of Baramullah's Maqbool Sherwani. It was Sherwani, in 1947, who helped delay the Pakistan-backed tribal invaders march to Srinagar from Baramulla before the arrival of the Indian armed forces. The tribal invaders eventually found him out; tortured him, shot him and crucified him, but not, as I wrote once earlier, before he cried out one last time, "Muslim Sikh Etihad, Zindabad (Victory for the unity of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims). This, said Mahatma Gandhi at his prayer meeting, later, "was a martyrdom of which anyone, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or any other, would be proud."

A principal with principles:

But there were other Sherwanis too! In 1965, as the Gujjars discovered the infiltrators, there was one formidable educationist, a legendary principal of the local women's college, Ms. Mehmooda Ali Shah, who faced a minor act of rebellion. She heard that one of her students had shouted "Pakistan Zindabad!" on the college grounds. Dressed as always in a handloom sari, Ms. Shah (both a Gandhian and a Fellow Traveller) marched down the grounds, with hundreds of students and staff watching her, and confronted the student.

The legendary principal slapped the delinquent student hard, admonished her and went back to her office amidst pindrop silence. For nearly two decades as principal, Ms. Shah exemplified through her personality, and through her word and deed, not just the quest for the empowerment of Kashmiri women but her ability to stand up for the ideas that endeared India to the Kashmiris.

The power of the Soviet bond:

At the height of the Cold War, in 1955, when the Anglo-American bloc (it is often conveniently forgotten these days) was arm-twisting New Delhi to hold a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and the Premier Nikolai Bulganin, visited India. Nehru insisted that they visited Srinagar where they watched the genius, Dina Nath Nadim's opera: '*Bombur Taa Yemberzal* (The Narcissus

and the Bumble bee'), an allegorical reference to the clash between Imperialism and Socialism. So deeply inspired were they by the visit that Khrushchev and the Soviet Union recognised Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India soon thereafter, and continued to cast its veto to block any attempt by the United Nations Security Council to intervene in Kashmir.

If it was Nadim who brought the plight of Kashmir to the world, and the justness of India's cause, it was the extraordinary art of Ghulam Rasool Santosh that revealed Kashmir's unique syncretic culture. Santosh's paintings reflected not just the unity of the cosmos, but also the glories of Sufi and Tantric thought. The larger fusion of the diversity of India within Kashmir's multiple streams is reflected in Santosh's art.

The Bangladesh war:

What greater testament to India's rights, freedoms and democracy could be there than the brilliant Editor and later parliamentarian, Shamim Ahmed Shamim. Shamim's satirical prose on the pages of his newspaper, Aaina (Mirror) did more for Indian democracy than any speech by an Indian diplomat in the United Nations. It was Shamim's stirring words in the Lok Sabha, in 1972, to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the Bangladesh War that found real resonance with the people of the Valley and across the world. "Madam," he said, "leaders have changed the course of history, but rarely has anyone changed geography."

Steps needed:

By almost common consensus, the most effective police chief in the history of Jammu and Kashmir, was the barely school-educated Kashmiri, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, who broke the back of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and the Kashmir Al-Fatah. It was his professionalism combined with a huge intelligence network of informers which was able ensure that no Pakistan-inspired operative had a free hand in Kashmir. In the legacy of leaders such as Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah and Ms. Mehmooda lies the future of New Delhi in Kashmir and the future basis of Kashmir's faith in India. Executive decisions and even constitutional amendments are not the challenge; Article 370 had lost much of its potency even before the decisions made last year. The real challenge has remained the emotional integration of Kashmir within the national mainstream. For that to happen, Jammu and Kashmir has to move beyond the control exercised by its Kafkaesque bureaucracy, who rely more on astrology than common sense, and must discover its new generation of leaders, across professions, who will truly be the pillars of a future Naya Kashmir. Clearly, restoration of Statehood and the early conduct of fair elections are essential first steps in that journey.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **rekindle** (verb) – revive, renew, restore.
- ❖ **connection** (noun) – link, relationship, relation. ('connect' is more commonly used as a noun in some regional areas).
- ❖ **reflect on** (verb) – think about, consider, review, mull over, contemplate.
- ❖ **hearts and minds** (phrase) – used in reference to emotional and intellectual support.
- ❖ **din** (noun) – uproar, outcry, clamour, commotion.
- ❖ **mark** (verb) – indicate, represent, signify, signalize, be a sign of.
- ❖ **vignette** (noun) – description, portrayal, representation.
- ❖ **abrogation** (noun) – abolition, repeal, cancellation (of a law/agreement).
- ❖ **deep** (adjective) – intense, heavy, serious.
- ❖ **poignancy** (noun) – painfulness, sadness, distress, sorrowfulness, pathos.
- ❖ **elusive** (adjective) – difficult to find, difficult to achieve; indistinct/intangible.
- ❖ **triumphalism** (noun) – an attitude or a belief that a particular doctrine, religion, culture, social system is superior to and should triumph all over others.
- ❖ **accompany** (verb) – be present with, appear with, be connected with, be linked with.

- ❖ **foil** (verb) – prevent, stop, defeat, thwart, obstruct.
- ❖ **operation gibraltar** (noun) – Operation Gibraltar was the codename given to the strategy of Pakistan to infiltrate Jammu and Kashmir, and provoke the locals in starting a rebellion (rioting) against Indian rule.
- ❖ **gibraltar** (noun) – Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory and headland, on Spain's south coast.
- ❖ **devious** (adjective) – deceitful, dishonest, disreputable, unethical, fraudulent.
- ❖ **conspiracy** (noun) – (unlawful) plan, intrigue, collaboration/deception, deceitful strategy.
- ❖ **valley** (noun) – a low area between hills or mountains typically with a river running through it. Valley is a metonym of Jammu & Kashmir in this context (Metonym is used as an alternative for something else with which it is closely related/associated).
- ❖ **infiltration** (noun) – intrusion, incursion, trespassing, penetration.
- ❖ **infantry** (noun) – foot soldiers; soldiers engage in military combat on foot.
- ❖ **brigade** (noun) – (army/military) unit, contingent, battalion.
- ❖ **spark** (verb) – cause bring about, trigger, prompt.
- ❖ **uprising** (noun) – insurgency, rioting, rebellion.
- ❖ **insidious** (adjective) – tricky, subtle, deceptive, dishonest, indirect (with very harmful effects).
- ❖ **rely on** (phrasal verb) – depend on; resort to, have recourse to.
- ❖ **fifth column** (noun) – a group of people (saboteurs or spies) who undermine a larger group from within, usually in favour of an enemy.
- ❖ **infiltrator** (noun) – intruder, spy/agent, saboteur, informer.
- ❖ **flush out** (phrasal verb) – compel someone to leave a hiding place.
- ❖ **in short** (phrase) – briefly, in essence, in sum.
- ❖ **unsung** (adjective) – unacknowledged, uncelebrated, unpraised.
- ❖ **stand for** (phrase verb) – support (a cause or idea).
- ❖ **reinforce** (verb) – strengthen, fortify, bolster up, underpin.
- ❖ **conviction** (noun) – belief, opinion, view, thought.
- ❖ **at the cost of** (phrase) – by sacrificing/losing/ giving up something.
- ❖ **decade** (noun) – a period of ten years.
- ❖ **fulsome** (adjective) – generous, lavish, abundant, substantial.
- ❖ **tribute** (noun) – praise, commendation, acclamation.
- ❖ **crucify** (verb) – condemn, criticize severely, censure/rail against.
- ❖ **invader** (noun) – attacker, intruder; a person invades a country.
- ❖ **martyrdom** (noun) – death/suffering of a martyr.
- ❖ **formidable** (adjective) – impressive, strong, powerful, mighty.
- ❖ **legendary** (adjective) – very well known; famous, notable.
- ❖ **rebellion** (noun) – defiance, disobedience, dissent, nonconformity, subversion.
- ❖ **confront** (verb) – oppose, challenge, resist, defy.
- ❖ **delinquent** (adjective) – (of a young person) badly behaved, disobedient, lawbreaking, offending.
- ❖ **admonish** (verb) – censure, rebuke, criticize.
- ❖ **amidst** (preposition) – amid, in the middle of; during.
- ❖ **exemplify** (verb) – typify, epitomize, represent/illustrate.
- ❖ **in word and deed** (phrase) – in what somebody says and does.
- ❖ **deed** (noun) – the act of performing; activity, action.
- ❖ **quest** (noun) – pursuit, search.
- ❖ **empowerment** (noun) – authorization, endorsement, entitlement.
- ❖ **stand up for** (phrasal verb) – talk or act in support of something.
- ❖ **endear** (verb) – inspire, attract, cherish/charm.
- ❖ **bond** (noun) – relationship, partnership, association.

- ❖ **at the height of** (phrase) – at the most crucial/serious part of something.
- ❖ **the Cold War** (noun) – The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc (the United States and a group of countries) and powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and a group of countries).
- ❖ **bloc** (noun) – alliance, association, union.
- ❖ **arm-twisting** (adjective) – forceful persuasion; coercion, pressure, compulsion.
- ❖ **plebiscite** (noun) – public vote, ballot, popular vote.
- ❖ **allegorical** (adjective) – symbolic, metaphorical, figurative, representative.
- ❖ **imperialism** (noun) – an action that involves a country (usually an empire or a kingdom) extending its power by the acquisition of territories.
- ❖ **Socialism** (noun) – it's a state-controlled economy in which the state controls the means of production: factories, offices, resources, and firms. Since the government controls almost all of society's functions, it can make better use of resources, labours and lands.
- ❖ **cast** (verb) – assign, give, allot, put.
- ❖ **veto** (noun) – an official right/power to reject a decision/proposal (by a governing body).
- ❖ **plight** (noun) – difficult situation, trouble/difficulty, quandary.
- ❖ **justness** (noun) – fairness.
- ❖ **syncretic** (adjective) – relating to the union/combining of different religions, cultures, or beliefs.
- ❖ **cosmos** (noun) – universe, world.
- ❖ **glory** (noun) – fame, honour, eminence, reputation/recognition.
- ❖ **sufi** (adjective) – relating to Sufism (a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that emphasizes the inward search for God and shuns (avoids) materialism).
- ❖ **tantric** (adjective) – relating to or involving the beliefs or principles of the Hindu tantras.
- ❖ **fusion** (noun) – combination, joining/merging, integration.
- ❖ **diversity** (noun) – the state/condition of having many different types of people.
- ❖ **stream** (noun) – group.
- ❖ **testament** (noun) – witness/evidence, proof, testimony.
- ❖ **satirical** (adjective) – mocking, ironic, sarcastic/ridiculing.
- ❖ **prose** (noun) – essay; ordinary/plain writing.
- ❖ **diplomat** (noun) – envoy, consul, ambassador.
- ❖ **stirring** (adjective) – stimulating, inspiring; spirited, emotional.
- ❖ **geography** (noun) – region.
- ❖ **consensus** (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group, agreement, concurrence.
- ❖ **break the back of** (phrase) – overwhelm, defeat, triumph over.
- ❖ **professionalism** (noun) – competence, skilfulness, capability, efficiency, ability (to do a certain profession).
- ❖ **intelligence** (noun) – (military) information.
- ❖ **legacy** (noun) – something received from a predecessor or from the past.
- ❖ **potency** (noun) – efficacy, efficiency, effectiveness, power.
- ❖ **mainstream** (noun) – something (certain beliefs/ideas/activities) which are accepted or recognized by most people as a normal or typical.
- ❖ **Kafkaesque** (adjective) – complex/complicated, difficult, frightening/confusing situation.
- ❖ **bureaucracy** (noun) – officials (in the administration, government, the establishment) as a group.
- ❖ **statehood** (noun) – the condition of being an independent state.