



Kashmir is About History that Cannot Be Ignored

The power of history is grossly underestimated. What feeds this under-estimation is the idea that the past should not define the future. Today's man feels insulted from the idea that the past should determine his present and future and wants to rebel against it for the idea of the past defining the present and the future for him is against the idea of choice, the ability to define his own future, to take his own decisions in the present.

But the past defining the future is wrongly misconstrued as being against the idea of choice. The past is an input to the process of choice. When deciding today we look at our past and see whether a situation arose where similar decisions were made, if yes, what were the consequences. If no, why were similar decisions avoided in the past. What were the consequences? So history is a guide, a teacher. But history is more than that. Perhaps the most powerful influence of history on us, is that it defines who we are. It is our first identity. It is our first impression of "us". It is "me" as I first knew myself. This is true for nations as well as individuals.

We can of course discard history. For the present and the future is about choices of today's generations not that of the past. We can also discard our old identities for history only defines our first identity. Eventually we choose our own identity based on our intellectual convictions.

India, Pakistan and Kashmir is about history. Muslims of the Subcontinent decided that they cannot live under Hindu rule for it is unjust, oppressive and unfair. They wanted a state where sovereignty belonged to Islam and its laws and where authority belonged to Muslims. In their demands these Muslims were inspired by history as well, the history of Muslim rule in the subcontinent for centuries.

Many of the struggles which Pakistan faces today is about history and how it informs our choices. Should Pakistan follow the Western European historical experience and adopt secularism as a state ideology? Should Muslims follow their own glorious history and demand the re-establishment of Khilafah (Caliphate)? Many of these struggles are interlinked.

Kashmir is about history, the struggle of Muslims to carve a separate state for themselves. But Kashmir is also about history of Western Europe. For it is upon us how do we view the issue of Kashmir. Through the secular lens of Pakistani statehood or from the Islamic lens of Muslim brotherhood. If we go with the former we have a choice, peace with India, we keep Azad Kashmir and condemn the Muslims of Jammu to Hindu rule. If we go with the latter, we have no choice. For a Muslim does not abandon his brother no matter what. There can be no peace if Kashmir bleeds and there can be no compromise till Kashmir is liberated, the whole of it.

History can never be discarded. For history is not deterministic. It does not force us to do anything. It just helps us make our choices. And it is eventually our choices not history which defines our present and the future.

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