

The Times of India Sep 21, 1996

Autonomy Abused

Sir,

This refers to the letter 'J&K Autonomy' by Prof Arun Bose (September 9). The major portion of Professor Bose's letter devoted to rhetoric extolling the virtues of freedom – or shall we say freedom after freedom – in justification of greater autonomy for Kashmir, which hardly needs to be commented upon. Professor Bose seems to think that the instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh was different from the ones signed by the rulers of other states. This is not correct. The form of the Instrument of Accession was the same for all states and if Maharaja Hari Singh had acceded for only three subjects so had all the other Princely States. While further integration of other states was done with the consent of their respective rulers, in the case of J&K it was brought about in accordance with the wishes of the elected representatives of the people, as the Maharaja had abdicated by then.

To say now that the integration ratified by the J&K Assembly is not valid because elections to it are alleged to have been rigged, is to say the least, preposterous. If this rule is applied to other states in India where elections were alleged to have been rigged, laws passed by assemblies of most states would lose their legitimacy. In any case, if the elections were rigged in J&K as alleged, the rigging could have been more due to the unbridled autonomy that the state government was then enjoying – free from the jurisdiction of the Indian Election Commission, than due to lack of it.

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