

**Indian Express (Chandigarh) May 27, 1992**

**Azadi to Kashmiris**

Sir:

In his article on J&K (IE May 19) Mr. BG Verghese seems to suggest that the Indian government should have no hesitation in endorsing any proposition that seeks to grant “azaadi” to Kashmiris within India. He has not specified what type of “azaadi” he has in mind. He is probably suggesting the grant of greater autonomy to J&K than is enjoyed by other states of the Indian Union. However, neither Mr Verghese, nor the other protagonists of greater autonomy for J&K, have ever tried to answer some of the awkward questions that their proposition tends to raise.

The basic question that arises is why this “azaadi” for J&K only and not for other states. Is it because J&K is a Muslim-majority state and as such deserves special treatment under a particular interpretation of secularism or is it to be granted as a reward for violence and terrorism? Moreover does J&K mean Kashmir only? What about Jammu and Ladakh. Would not “azaadi” for Kashmir mean “ghulami” for Jammu and Ladakh?

Apparently, the Indian intelligentsia is beginning to wilt under the pressure of militancy and is now seeking an easy way out. It has to be realised that appeasement can never lead to lasting solutions to difficult problems. The lasting solution lies in convincing the Kashmiris that their freedom is already guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and the Congress-National Conference alliance that caused them so much disgust was petty politics and not a product of the Constitution.

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