

The Kashmir Times July 6, 2001

To cut the Gordian knot

Dear Editor

Of all the speculative articles on Vajpayee – Musharraf meet that have appeared in the media lately, Kuldip Nayar's "To cut the Gordian knot", (KT July 4), is perhaps nearest to reality. This is essentially so because instead of indulging in wishful thinking as most others have been doing, he has tried to build the future rationally on the basis of the experience of such meetings in the past. And who could be better qualified to do this than Kuldip Nayar who, as a journalist, has witnessed the proceedings of all the Indo-Pak summits in past, from close quarters. Even then one may not agree with his surmise that Pakistan could not implement the agreements reached in the past because no headway could ultimately be made in solving the Kashmir issue. It must be understood that Pakistan wishes to settle the issue only on its own terms and as such cannot abjure the use of force. As a matter of fact Pakistan has been entering into agreements with India not with the intention for settling the Kashmir issue, but only for using them as means for extracting itself out of sticky situations. So once out it is back to square one.

The real cause behind Pakistan not fulfilling its part of the agreements in the past is that there was nothing that could compel it to do so. Political scientists would tell us that any agreement that is not backed by some enforcing agency is not worth the paper on which it is written. All Indo-Pak agreements thus far stood doomed, right from the day they were signed, for want of such an enforcing agency. As India was not strong enough to force Pakistan to implement its part of the agreements, the alternative, though second best, would have been to have the agreements sanctified by the United Nations. India is, apparently, aware of this flaw in the various agreements that it has reached with Pakistan over the years. As a matter of fact India seems to have tried to have the Tashkent Declaration registered with the UN but Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, sensing the danger, "saw to it that Pakistan would not associate itself with India in getting the Tashkent Declaration registered in the UN", (Kuldip Nayar in *Distant Neighbours*)

As regards the out come of the summit-to-be, Kuldip Nayar is right in saying that Musharraf will have to pick up the threads from the Lahore Declaration for proceeding further. But what threads does he pick up. The political compulsions in both countries, and the time wrap of over half a century, prevents any solution of the Kashmir issue other than the *status quo*, without, of course, either side admitting this to be so for fear of losing face. Call it by whatever name the new agreement can only be old wine in new bottles – each side sticking to its known stand on Kashmir but agreeing to abjure the use of force for settling the issue. Hopefully the "Agra Declaration" will, this time, be registered in the UN, even if under pressure of the United States, to prevent either side from wriggling out of it.

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