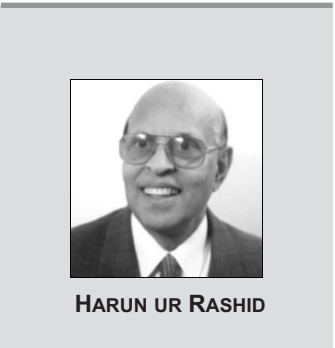


Indo-Pak talks: Do they offer any hope?

The future of values



INDIA and Pakistani Foreign Ministers met in New Delhi for two days on September 5-6 to resolve outstanding bilateral disputes including the Kashmir dispute. Both sides concluded the meeting with a positive note. India's Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said that they were confident that their continuing dialogue would produce lasting peace between them.

What they have agreed in New Delhi are small steps that may be considered as "confidence-building measures." Among them are the bus services linking the holy city of Amritsar in India with the holy place Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. Another is the commencement of technical talks on a rail link between Rajasthan (India) and Sindh (Pakistan). The first one will certainly please the Sikhs who constitute about 19 million in India (Prime Minister Manmohon Singh is a Sikh). The second one may assist in the growth of trade and cultural interactions between the two countries.

One could say that the very fact that the two Ministers sat and discussed the Kashmir issue is more or less an achievement. No one expects that the long-drawn Kashmir dispute will be resolved so soon. However, observers expected a bit of movement on this core issue because it triggered two wars between them (1947 and 1965).

Indian Foreign Ministry spokes-

man Navtej Sarna told reporters: "There is a commitment ...there is determination to take this process forward and make progress in which-ever field we can."

It seems that the diplomatic jargon could not hide the fact that no real progress had been made on the core issue of the talks relating to the Kashmir dispute. The media reported that the division between the two remained as before as to how to handle the Kashmir territorial dispute, a principal cause of fracture in

dence-building measures" with Pakistan before the Kashmir dispute is discussed. The reason they claim is that trust and confidence must be built up not only for the government but also among the people as well. Kashmir is an emotive issue for people in India and no solution can be arrived at unless people support the efforts of the government in reaching a compromise on this issue.

Pakistan, on the other hand, believes that the core Kashmir issue must be grappled first before other

Pakistan claims that it has made great efforts to stop militants coming to the Indian part of Kashmir and if some people cross over to meet their fellow Kashmiris, the government cannot fully control the porous border. However Pakistan says that India is building a fence along its border with Pakistan (the army reportedly said that 90 per cent of it has been completed) that will stop the unwanted infiltration. Pakistan also accuses India of serious violation of human rights by its troops of the Kashmiri nationals in the Indian-administered zone of Kashmir where the 15-year revolt against India has claimed about 40,000 lives.

Third, both countries perceive that control of Kashmir is a vindication of their very existence. For India, giving up Kashmir would be a serious challenge to its secular ideology, and perhaps more importantly, would send a strong message to other separatist groups in India, in particular in the seven northeastern states, bordering Bangladesh. Furthermore, India considers Kashmir a strategic barrier with China.

On the other hand, Pakistani nationalists see Pakistan incomplete without Muslim-majority Kashmir. No Pakistani government can afford to give away Kashmir as Pakistanis perceive that India has "stolen" Kashmir from them by force.

Finally, military remains a powerful institution in Pakistan and has a considerable say on how the Kashmir dispute is to be resolved. President Musharraf continues to be the Chief of the Army (it is reported that he will not relinquish the post at the end of December as earlier promised). It was the General Musharraf, India suspects, who led the Kargil war in 1999 in Kashmir. India, being a democratic country with a robust opposition parties including BJP, naturally wants to go slow on Kashmir.

Possible options on Kashmir

It is correct to assume that the Kashmir dispute cannot be resolved within days. Observers agree that confidence-building measures must take place between the two countries in order to eliminate friction and tension between them. Confidence-building measures may involve agreement in economic, cultural, and social areas. Progress on these issues is likely to contribute to a climate that could in the long run help leaders to take difficult decisions on Kashmir.

Eventually both the countries have to come to a compromise on Kashmir. Some suggest that the existing Line of Control on Kashmir, established in 1972, could be the international border with a few adjustments. The other two options, such as the self-determination by all Kashmiris or an independent Kashmir, may have to be abandoned at this point of time.

There is another daring option. Both India and Pakistan could jointly control and oversee a democratically-elected administration of the Kashmir territory. There is an instance in which two countries have joint sovereignty over a territory, such as in Andorra, a small country of about 453 square kilometers with a maximum length of 30 km and breadth of 20 km, sandwiched between Spain and France on the Eastern Pyrenees. Both France and Spain oversee the administration of Andorra, elected by its people.

Conclusion

It is good to see that both countries met at a Ministerial level in New Delhi and both sides have an upbeat assessment of the cordial meeting. Furthermore President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh are expected to meet at the UN and are likely to hold talks on the sidelines of UN General Assembly in New York later this month. The resolution of the Kashmir dispute will be slow but it does not matter, if the two countries are engaged in a constructive dialogue. As Churchill once said that "jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war."

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.



AT a time when the world seems to be undergoing an unprecedented crisis of values, it is right that an organisation such as UNESCO committed to instilling the values of peace in the minds of men and women should pose the question of the future of values.

Between the widespread impression that values no longer exist and the bogeyman threat of a return to a "moral order," there is scope for an enquiry into future trends. *The Future of Values*, assembling some 50 contributions by leading writers and thinkers who participated in the *21st Century Talks* series organised by UNESCO, proposes a number of lines of approach. For values are still very much with us even if their appearance has changed. It may even be that there have never been so many values in contention in the history of humanity. One of the most striking effects of globalisation is arguably to reveal the extraordinary plurality of values and cultures. If we are today experiencing a crisis in this regard, it is not because values have disappeared, but rather because we have lost our bearings in a world marked by often contradictory values. The crisis we are experiencing is not so much a crisis of values as a crisis concerning the meaning of values and our ability to govern ourselves and give a direction to our lives.

I should like to open the discussion by posing a number of questions that seem to me essential.

Is it possible to speak of a "twilight of values?" Theories placing the emphasis on the historical and cultural relativity of values have undermined the belief in philosophical, religious and artistic absolutes to which the Enlightenment with its universalist certainties still subscribed. Yet to speak outright of the "twilight of values" would surely be to overlook the fact that in many regions of the world people continue to rely on traditional frames of reference to give meaning and order to their lives as individuals and in society. The crisis of values to this extent cannot be said to be universal. One may indeed wonder whether some countries, rather than posing questions about the "future of values," should not be asking themselves about the "future of *our* values." Yet, at a time when words and images from one part of the world circulate to television screens in all other parts of the world, and when the interdependence of countries and problems is growing apace, what region and what community can claim to remain indifferent and impassive when values are called into question, wherever this may occur? All cultures are equal in dignity. Each can be seen as embodying part of the human totality. All countries must therefore be respected, which in no way means that all actions are permissible and all crimes justified in the name of cultural diversity.

Does the fact that values today exist in close juxtaposition mean that we are heading towards a collision between a world founded on the rejection of traditional values and a world that refuses such a rejection, thereby giving rise to what might be termed the "clash of values"? Or are we rather witnessing an intermingling and hybridization of values? On this point, it may be said that every culture contains individuals and groups that distinguish between what is just and unjust and make their evaluations accordingly. All values are thus liable, in different cultural contexts, to be evaluated, devalued, and revalued. This is to say that values evolve and that they can be shaped in common and debated and negotiated between potentially very different actors. What we have here is an expression of the creative

diversity of human cultures and their shared sense of belonging to a single human community. The challenge today is to ensure that the ethical effort is largely directed towards the global community and that this new ethical orientation is based on the idea of dialogue between cultures. Such a dialogue should start from the premise that cultures must be respected but that values can be evaluated jointly. In this way, it is possible to envisage the future shape of values in terms of new syntheses, stemming from hybridization or the encounter of ancient and

neous a time when the emergence of knowledge societies, which are tending to transform the dream of lifelong education for all into a viable project, seems to herald a new mechanism for shaping long-term values, which will be created rather than reproduced and transmitted rather than received.

We may also wonder about the consequences of possible changes in religious and spiritual values and the rise of new political values. Whereas representative democracy seems in crisis in many countries, associative democracy is developing

What if the radical reform to which we aspire were to come about through knowledge and the spread of knowledge? For knowledge is essentially creation, renewal and exchange. Obviously the knowledge societies taking shape will not lack values, quite the opposite.

present-day pluralities.

But does this scenario not carry with it the risk that values may be reduced to a speculative game? It has already been observed that, in a world ruled by the law of supply and demand, our conception of moral and aesthetic values tends to approximate to the stockmarket model. The phenomenon of fashion would seem to be invading our conception of values. How can the central question of education continue to occupy its rightful place in a world governed by the ephemeral? It is a strange paradox that such value should be placed on the instantana-

rapidly. What are the values inherent in these new networks of affinity, alliance and communication? Given the decline in patriarchal structures, are we moving towards a feminization of values? Will this lead to the emergence of new values whose transmission will call for multidisciplinary education responsive to the plurality of cultures? This is what is at stake in the dialogue of civilizations and cultures, which we should encourage if we wish to avoid seeing communities turn in upon themselves, which is so often a source of misunderstanding and conflict.

We must also be careful to avoid the twin dangers of the erosion of cultural diversity and the growth of inequality. For the great asymmetry that leaves three quarters of humanity deprived of access to knowledge and subjects millions of human beings to the inequality born of extreme poverty looms menacingly over the future of values.

In an age marked by globalisation and the rise of the new technologies, the preservation of cultural diversity will be a key challenge. To illustrate the point, 6,000 languages are spoken today and this figure could be halved between now and the end of the 21st century. The same is true of the cultural and intangible heritage, which we have a duty to promote and preserve as a common good of humanity. In view of the erosion of diversity, we need to develop an ethic of responsibility so as to ensure that all cultures enjoy the conditions necessary to their sustained existence.

The loss of meaning is perhaps no more than an illusion. What we should rather be talking about are shifts in meaning and the creation of new meanings. Let us wager on the future: what if the radical reform to which we aspire were to come about through knowledge and the spread of knowledge? For knowledge is essentially creation, renewal and exchange. Obviously the knowledge societies taking shape will not lack values, quite the opposite. The problem will not be one of loss, but of choice. UNESCO's role is to stimulate and serve as a forum for debates of this kind, which seek to redefine and anticipate tomorrow's values. It is in this spirit that we have posed the question of the "future of values."

Koichiro Matsuura is Director-General of UNESCO

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