

Patel's Offer of Exchanging Kashmir for Hyderabad

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In a seminar organised by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad on October 27-28, 1998, one of the Indian participants Prof. Umma Singh of Jawahar Lal University said that Gandhi, Nehru and Patel offered to exchange Hyderabad state for Kashmir but Pakistan did not accept the offer.¹ Dr. Nasim Hasan Shah, the former Chief Justice of Pakistan, who was presiding over the session challenged Prof. Singh or any one else to provide proof of such an offer. He characterised it a figment of imagination rather than part of written and sober history.

Some preliminary evidence detailed below suggests that such an offer was made at a number of times, though by Patel alone, and was ignored or rejected by Pakistani leaders.

Evidence for Patel's offer

Leaving aside the implications of such an offer for the settlement of Kashmir issue, the important question as posed by Dr. Nasim Hasan Shah is whether there is any historical evidence that such an offer was made. The question is examined here.

Patel made this offer first time in September 1947.² It was through Gen. (Retd.) Sher Ali who was visiting India at that time. Sher Ali communicated it to Jinnah. The general gave details of it in a public lecture sometimes in late 80s or early 90s.³ Later the offer surfaced in a

¹ For the proceeding of the seminar see *The News*, 1 November 1998 and *The Nation*, 11 November, 1998.

² This paper is focused entirely on determining whether Patel made such an offer without going into other related issues such as whether it was a formal offer by the Government of India or whether Patel was in a position to translate it into action had Pakistan accepted it.

³ This information was provided to this writer by Brig. (retd.) Muhammad Yusuf who attended the lecture. Yusuf recalls that Sher Ali said this in a lecture he gave in public hall outside GHQ and was attended by a number of civilians and army officers.

meeting between the governor generals of India and Pakistan, Mountbatten and Jinnah, on 1 November 1947 in Lahore. They were discussing the accession of three states – Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad. A 13-page Note of the discussion between the two governor generals, probably recorded by Lord Ismay, the only other person present in the meeting, shows that Mountbatten presented a broad formula to Jinnah which contained that ‘...the question of whether (the) a State should finally accede to one or the other of the Dominions should in all cases be decided by an impartial reference to the will of the people.’⁴ A careful reading of the note suggests that it was meant to resolve simultaneously the issue of three states, Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad through plebiscite. It comes out from the note that Jinnah also understood its meaning in the same way. The note also reveals that Mountbatten repeatedly raised the issue of accession of Hyderabad with Jinnah and wanted him not to support its independence.

Later in the dinner meeting, as described by Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan in his book, Mountbatten conveyed a message from Patel ‘...that Pakistan could take Kashmir and let go Hyderabad Deccan which had a majority Hindu population and was nowhere near Pakistan by sea or land.’⁵ In his book *From Memory* Firoz Khan Noon confirms that Jinnah had at least received such an offer and was consulting his colleague about it. Noon writes: ‘He (the Quaid) asked me one day whether he would be well advised to let the Indians have Hyderabad on condition that we have Kashmir. Patel had, I believe, made this offer to him.’⁶

The offer seems to have been repeated to Jinnah by another source. According to A.H. Suhrawardy, a former Chief Secretary of Azad Kashmir and the author of several books on Kashmir, Patel sent

⁴ The exact formula was as follows: ‘The governments of India and Pakistan agree that, where the Ruler of a State does not belong to the community to which the majority of its subjects belong, and where the State has not acceded to that Dominion whose majority community is the same as the State's, the question of whether (the) a State should finally accede to one or the other of the Dominions should in all cases be decided by an impartial reference to the will of the people’ (Record of Governor General's Interview No. 47, Note of a discussion with Mr. Jinnah, in the presence of Lord Ismay, at Government House, Lahore on November 1, 1947 from 2 O'clock to 5-30 p.m., National Documentation Centre Account No. 2804: *Mountbatten Papers*, MSS EUR F 200/195B, p.1. This writer is grateful to National Documentation Center, Islamabad for providing a photocopy of the note).

⁵ Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan, *The Nation that Lost its Soul* (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1995), p. 176.

⁶ Firoz Khan Noon, *From Memory* (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd, 1969), p. 212.

this offer to Mr. Jinnah through Gen. Auchinleck who asked Pakistani Gen. Shahid Hamid to communicate it to the Quaid, which he did.⁷

Subsequent to the meeting between the two governor generals on 1 November, 1947, Patel repeated such an offer to Liaquat Ali Khan directly. Chaudhri Muhammad Ali who accompanied Liaquat to Delhi to attend a meeting of Joint Defence Council writes that when Liaquat pointed out inconsistency of the Indian stand with regard to Junagadh and Kashmir '...Patel could not contain himself and burst out: 'Why do you compare Junagadh with Kashmir? Talk of Hyderabad and Kashmir, and we could reach an agreement.'⁸

Adding further evidence to Patel's offer Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, the then President of Azad Kashmir writes, 'Pakistan committed still another mistake in 1948 when Patel offered to Liaquat Ali, Kashmir, provided Hyderabad State was conceded to India.'⁹ Late Mir Abul Aziz, a veteran Kashmiri journalist, who heard this offer on All India Radio while sitting in Poonch House Rawalpindi¹⁰ confirmed the public nature of the offer and stated that it was made after the death of Jinnah and before the Indian attack on Hyderabad.¹¹

Above evidence from six Pakistani leaders and public servants and a well-known Kashmiri journalist leaves little doubt that Patel did make an offer first privately through various intermediaries and finally publicly.¹² Taken separately one may raise questions about some of the

⁷ Mr. Suhrawardy gave this writer the details of the story narrated to him by Gen. Shahid Hamid. See my article 'Why Pakistan Lost Kashmir?', in Dr. K. F. Yusuf (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir* (Islamabad: Pakistan Forum, 1994), p. 83.

⁸ *The Emergence of Pakistan* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, 1985), p.299.

⁹ Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, *Kashmir Saga* (Mirpur: Verinag Publisher, Second Ed., 1990), p. 205.

¹⁰ His letter appeared in the letter to the editor section of *The News*, in the month of November 1998. This writer could not get the exact date.

¹¹ See his two articles 'Why We Lost Kashmir?', *The Muslim*, 8 May 1986 and 'Why We failed to Get Kashmir in 1947-48?', *The Frontier Post*, 21 December 1990. Aziz is a well known Kashmiri journalist currently Editor of the weekly, *Times of Kashmir*, and *Insaf*. He has written extensively on Kashmir issue.

¹² Shaukat Hyat Khan and Firoz Khan were Muslim Leaguers who participated in the struggle for Pakistan. Chaudhri Muhammad Ali was then Secretary General later became Prime Minister of Pakistan. Gen. Sher Ali and Gen. Shahid Hamid belonged to Pakistan Army.

evidences.¹³ However, put together the mutually supporting statements from at least six independent Pakistanis with no political interest in making false statements, it becomes credible.

Reactions of Pakistani leaders to the offer

Why Pakistani leaders ignored or rejected the offer? According to Sher Ali, Mr. Jinnah said, 'I heard you.' Direct reactions of Jinnah to Mountbatten's proposal are not found in any of his own public statements or speeches except those in the above cited Note of Lord Ismay. Apparently the Government of Pakistan did not prepare minutes of the meetings between the two governor generals.¹⁴ According to Ismay's note, Jinnah said: 'It was redundant and undesirable to have a plebiscite when it was quite clear that States should go according to their majority population; and if we would give him the accession of Kashmir he would offer to urge the accession of Junagadh direct to India.' He also pointed out that Mountbatten's formula should not be applied to Hyderabad, as the Nizam did not want to join either of the dominion.

Noon whom Jinnah consulted on this offer first gave his own views that Pakistan should not accept such an offer because Kashmir would in any case come to Pakistan being a predominantly Muslim country and Hyderabad could remain an independent country.¹⁵ Then he cites Jinnah's reason for the rejection of the offer. 'Mr. Jinnah remarked that it would be amoral on our part to barter away the freedom of the people of Hyderabad without their knowledge or consent.'¹⁶ On Patel's offer through Auchinleck, Jinnah is reported to have said that Congress

¹³ Some weakness of evidence may be mentioned. Shuakat Hyat started writing his book in 1961 completing it in 1993. It is not clear if he was recalling events from memory or from his notes because his description of persons attending the dinner he refers may not be completely accurate. For instance he does not mention if Jinnah was present at the dinner but states that Liaquat was which may not be correct, as he was sick on that day. Noon's quoting of Jinnah that '... it would be amoral on our part to barter away the freedom of the people of Hyderabad without their knowledge or consent' (*op. cit.*, p.212) may or may not be accurate.

¹⁴ This writer checked national archives, talked to Prof.. Zawwar Zaidi, Director Quaid-i-Azam Papers' project and late Prof. Nazir Ahmad, Adviser to the National Documentation Center, Islamabad who confirmed that the minutes of the meeting between the two governor generals are not available from any source.

¹⁵ Feroz Khan Noon, *op.cit.*, p.212.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

leadership was so untrustworthy that he would not even accept a written offer from it. Jinnah had died by the time Patel made the last offer.

Muhammad Ali did not report Liaquat's reaction to the offer Patel made in Delhi. Shaukat Hyat after recommending to Liaquat that Patel's offer made through Mountbatten be accepted as Pakistan could not take Kashmir through military means, balance of force being against it, gives Liaquat's reactions: 'Nawabzada turned round to me and said, Sirdar Sahib, have I gone mad to give Hyderabad State which is much larger than the Punjab for the sake of the rocks of Kashmir?'¹⁷ Sardar Ibrahim states the following reactions of Liaquat to Patel's last offer. 'Liaquat Ali Khan told the author that Ghulam Mohammad, the Finance Minister, was opposed to the proposition and could I go and convince him of this. Consequently a meeting was arranged with Mr. Ghulam Mohammad. In this meeting, the author tried his best to convince Mr. Ghulam Mohammad, but he refused to budge an inch.'¹⁸ Ibrahim further adds that Ghulam Mohammad told him that 'Hyderabad is already ours because of the Nizam, and Kashmir we will get by plebiscite.'¹⁹

Patel's compulsions for making the offers

What were Patel's compulsions for making such an offer repeatedly against the known views of Prime Minister Nehru to incorporate Kashmir in India? Muhammad Ali's explanation is that Patel was 'a greater realist than Nehru' and believed that 'India's effort to retain Muslim majority areas against the will of the people was a source not of strength but of weakness to India. He felt that if India and Pakistan agreed to let Kashmir go to Pakistan and Hyderabad to India, the problems of Kashmir and of Hyderabad could be solved peacefully and to the mutual advantage of India and Pakistan.'²⁰

Very likely Patel made the private offers for reasons given by Mohammad Ali. However, for making the last and public offer he probably had additional compulsions. After sending army into Kashmir and 'taking police' action in Junagadh, India had damaged its

¹⁷ Shaukat Hyat Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁸ Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 206. The reason Ghulam Mohammad did not agree with the proposal is given by Sardar Ibrahim. 'This author came to know, later on, that one Sidney Cotton, a pilot was bringing in an airplane carrying gold bricks from Hyderabad to Karachi. Mr. Ghulam Mohammad had a share in this. *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Mian Abul Aziz. *op.cit.*

²⁰ Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *op.cit.*, pp. 299-300.

international image of being a non-violent and peaceful state. Taking the Kashmir issue to UN also had not produced for India the expected explicit branding of Pakistan as aggressor in Kashmir. The drive of the Indian forces in Kashmir to capture it against the resistance of Pakistan and Kashmiris at the time when Patel was planning to move into Hyderabad also was not succeeding. In these circumstances Patel's offer was an act of a pragmatic politician in the interest of his country to exchange Kashmir for Hyderabad. The barter would have spared India another blow to its already damaged international image if India could negotiate a deal with Pakistan rather than take over Hyderabad by force.