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THE KASHMIR CONTENTION

GHULAM MOHAMED

THE old man lay brooding in the bed in a kind friend's house to which he had come from hospital after a rather serious illness, and his thoughts turned to the past, to the time immediately following the end of the fighting in Kashmir when the matter had been referred to the United Nations. He remembered talking then to the profound economist and political scientist, Prof. D. R. Gadgil about the matter.

"What", he asked, "would be the best solution for a durable peace now between India and Pakistan?" Said Prof. Gadgil, "Well, if both parties don't want to fight again nothing could be better than making the line of actual control at present the territorial boundary between the two countries. India I think does not want to fight. Otherwise why go to the United Nations, why not have cleared up the matter by force of arms now? Pakistan too does not want to fight, it would seem. It has had its nose sufficiently tapped and has probably come to the conclusion that it can gain nothing more by continuing fighting. So the time is propitious if both parties have the sense to see that this is the only real solution. I am afraid though they will not have the sense and the matter will go on for years on end causing further wars perhaps, which too will lead only to stalemate". Returning from a conference in Europe which he had attended as a private individual, the old man next remembered how he had stopped for a few days with a very good friend of his from his time in Delhi, Ghulam Ahmed, who had been Additional Director of the Intelligence Bureau in Delhi and was now Home Secretary in Pakistan. The President of Pakistan at the time was Ghulam Mohamed, another old friend from Delhi and Ghulam Ahmed mentioned that on his telling Ghulam Mohamed that the old man was to be his guest the President had suggested that he bring him over for a private lunch the next day. The old man then told Ghulam Ahmed what had been in Prof. Gadgil's mind about the Indo-Pak situation and Ghulam Ahmed after reflecting for a few moments said he agreed it might be the real answer, but the old man had better talk to the President. Next day they both drove to the Presidential residence, the old man being greeted with cordiality by the President.

At this time Ghulam Mohamed's speech had become somewhat slurred but with attention what he said could still be clearly understood.

After the first course Ghulam Mohamed had said, "Well now, didn't what I told you on the last day we met in Delhi come true? You are out of Government, aren't you? I know how it happened but I knew it would happen on some ground or another. Remember what I said? I'll tell you.

"A *Saf-Go Saf-Kun* like you could have no place with these people whom I knew very well. My actual words were with them '*Aap ki dal nahin galegi*'. Within nine months you will either resign or be dismissed." The old man had replied, "Yes, Sir, what you said came true. But now I want to talk to you about a very serious matter affecting both our countries, that is the old India. I am still, I am afraid, an old Indian and the welfare of both countries is near to my heart. I see it being irretrievably damaged by constant or occasional war over Kashmir and I suggest you and we put an end to the matter as quickly as possible. You keep the part you have occupied and we keep the rest, making the actual line of control the international boundary between the two countries and putting an end to the matter." Ghulam Mohamed looked at me keenly and said, "Have you any authority for making this suggestion?" I said, "No, I have none, I am afraid I am as usual meddling."

"Well", said he, "this time you have meddled to some effect. If such a suggestion is acceptable to Nehru I shall go along with it. Bring me his 'Yes' or let his official representative make some movement in this direction and you will not find me lacking in response. You know me well enough. To know that when I tell you I will do a thing I'll do it. Our relations have been long enough, pleasant enough and cordial enough to assure you of that." The old man said, "I have no close relationship with Mr. Nehru, Sir, but I shall endeavour through someone who has to have the matter put to him. Thank you very much for being so forthcoming and understanding".

"Well", he said, "I see you still remain the well-wisher of both our countries and there are few such these days. Now, turn your attention to this *gajar ka halwa* and cream to which I remember you were always so partial in the good old Delhi days". So we lunched well and after a time Ghulam Ahmed and I withdrew with many expressions of cordiality, the President saying, "*Umr daraz ho, khuda hafiz*." That was the last the old man saw of Ghulam Mohamed.

On return to India he had sought out one whom he knew to be a special confidant of Pandit Nehru and had related the whole incident to him. He, who also occupied a seat in the Cabinet, had promised to put the matter fully and accurately before the Prime Minister. Calling on him again after three days he was told the Prime Minister was not interested and had refused to apply his mind to it.

The old man returned sadly to Bombay. But even today he could not see any real final solution except the one suggested.

The old man's thoughts turned to Ghulam Mohamed. There could

be no doubt he had been one of the most impressive personalities he had met during his Delhi days. He had also become a close friend and the old man had found him sincere, genuine and truly civilised. A lover of the arts and literature in several languages, a most engaging conversationalist and a most *sans pareil*.

His wit was remarkable and the humour of any situation struck him quickly and was appropriately characterised. To spend an hour or two in his company with friends was an experience always to be welcomed. Cordial relations had developed between them when a month or so after the old man had become Deputy Secretary in the Communications Ministry, Ghulam Mohamed, the Finance Officer for the Ministry of Communications had dropped in one afternoon after lunch into the old man's office and said, "I hope I'm not disturbing you but I seek the solution of a mystery. On the cases that come to me from you for financial sanction I find I can do nothing but sign in approval. You have already done all the Finance Ministry could do. So I am puzzled. You are the departmental secretary but you take into account the financial point of view as well. Do you want to put us out of business or is there some deep secret behind it all?" He said this with a smile and a glint of mischief in his eyes. The old man remembered he had replied, "You know I am just a clod-hopping Collector. I know nothing of the nuances of Secretariat behaviour so if I have erred you must forgive me. You see I am accustomed to regard all Government as one. The principal point to me is whose money is being spent. Obviously the public's, well then, it must be spent in the public interest. Not more not less than what is really necessary. So the key to my decision is my understanding of the public interest alone in each case".

"Wah!" he exclaimed. "A miracle, a miracle. In future, I shall pass orders that your cases need not be examined at all in my office and be put up to me straightaway for approval. And if you are not doing anything tomorrow night come to dinner at 7.30. I have a special sweet pea hedge which is the pride of my garden and it is still discernable at that time."

Next evening the old man had gone and had found a most agreeable company gathered together there, men and women who talked of ideas and matters beyond their official function. They could have been anything and not just bureaucrats.

From then on he discovered in Ghulam Mohamed a great knowledge of a great many subjects from gardening and Urdu poetry to Persian philosophy and French art. He never paraded his knowledge and accomplishments or tried to impress but that he had a solid background regarding anything he said there was no room for doubt. The old man also found him a most capable administrator, honest, compassionate, responsive to real need, interested in the public good. A thoroughly civilised human being, one who shared the belief that while religious

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dogma has often to be respected, good men of all faiths have the same religion.

On the day on which he had told the old man about his likely future under the new Indian regime he had also said, "Come away with us to Pakistan. I am likely to be offered the Finance Ministership in the new Government and we will make you Finance Secretary. There you can go on in your usual style saying what you think right and doing what you think right. And consider the challenge, the building-up of a new state from scratch. Are you ever likely to get such an opportunity again?"

The old man had replied, "Thank you very much. I appreciate your kindness but I am a Hindustani and you have not even left a shadow of Hindustan or India in the name of your new state. How then can I serve it? I wish you and it much progress, stability, peace and prosperity but for me who was brought up with the ideal of a free India always before my eyes to think of anything else is quite impossible." And so he went his way.

Great man he was undoubtedly, an admirable character and a most engaging personality. God rest his soul in peace. And may the blessing of His grace enfold him in perpetuity!

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