

Calling Pakistan's Bluff

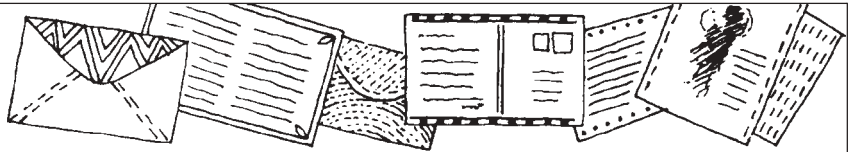
I read with great interest your well argued article on "Calling Pakistan's Bluff on Plebiscite in Kashmir" in Issue 131 of MANUSHI.

It may be pertinent to recall in this context a resolution of the J&K People's Convention, convened by Sheikh Abdullah in 1968, which was not only the most formidable secessionist challenge ever in Kashmir but also the most representative gathering. Sheikh Abdullah himself was the unchallenged leader of Kashmir but the convention also included every possible dissident organisation like Jamaat-e-Islami, Maulvi Farooq's Awami Action Committee and GM Karra's pro-Pak party.

The Convention unanimously resolved that the future of the State should be decided keeping in view the interest of its three regions. It further adopted an outline of an internal constitution which envisaged regional autonomy and devolution of power to district, block and panchayat level. The Convention was of the view that any decision about the future of the State must ensure implementation of such a Constitution.

No other group or front of groups could ever claim even a fraction of the popular support that the Sheikh alone or the Plebiscite Front and Convention enjoyed. This may answer some of the objections you raised about the democratic nature of a plebiscite. However one difference is that the convention had laid emphasis on regional and sub-regional identities while you talk of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

Again, a point of fact. You have mentioned the percentage of non-Kashmiri Muslims and non-Muslim



Responses to MANUSHI

Kashmiris at 35 percent of the population of the state. According to the census of 1981 (the religious and language wise figures of 2001 are not yet available and there was no census in 1991) the population of Kashmir valley was 52 percent of the population of J&K. Out of it 10 percent of the people do not speak Kashmiri and 5 percent are non-Muslims. Though the Kashmiri speaking Muslims of the valley are, in many respects, the most important single community in the State, they are in a minority. In fact J&K is a classical land of minorities where every ethnic community is a minority.

Balraj Puri, Jammu.

Good News is also News

I advise MANUSHI not to fall for what the general media goes for. Please also write about the positive happenings which I'm sure would be numerous in a country with the population size of India. You could highlight accounts, stories and reports on the good things that individuals are championing. However few these actions may be, highlighting them could benefit your readers. Not all of us have the imagination, courage or circumstances to do great deeds against corruption or injustice on a national scale. But giving voice to a lay person's story on how they made a difference to

their family, their *mohalla*, their school, will give readers hope and direction, and not merely despair. Perhaps you could consider inviting your readers to contribute such accounts.

Manik Datar, Canberra, Australia.

We have always welcomed accounts and profiles of those who have made a positive contribution and made a small or big difference in their own environment and even published several such accounts. We are only too aware that excessive focus on negative things is likely to add to demoralisation and cynicism. We will do our best to ensure a fair balance between critiquing what is wrong and efforts that have produced positive results. **Editor**

Poser for Liberals

After reading the articles "No Political Burqas for Us" and "The Politics of Communal Polarisation" (No. 129), I'd like to congratulate you for your forthrightness, self-confidence and concern for voicing what is right.

D. L. Sheth's analytical article provided useful insights into why Gujarat has been reduced to the state it is in today. At the end of the article, he has a poser for the liberals of the nation. We look forward to Sheth's wisdom for further guidance on finding a solution to the poser.

Abhinava Shukla, Ahmedabad. □