

Rajiv Vora's Jammu Visit 5 - 7 June 2014: Some New Developments.



Jammu SP Youth Group

Introduction: There is a natural development of our intervention in tune with the commonly felt and expressed need and demand. Out of this commonly felt and expressed sentiments and demand Swaraj Peeth decided to identify twenty youth peace-keeper & peace-builder initially for training as Gandhi Shanti Sainik from communally sensitive parts of the Chenab Valley of Jammu division, namely Kishtwar, Doda, Bhadarwah, and Ramban. People have been venting their grave concern at the

communalization and polarization during the recent time, something not known in J&K. in spite of mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in 1990. Politics having no answer to it a Gandhian interface needs to be created as a matter of urgency. The SP plan (Kishtwar Report, Sept 2013) is highly appreciated. Something like this has never been attempted and the situation demands it urgently. A respected public figure and Retd. Army General, who, at one stage was dismissive of peace and nonviolence talks, said "Please, speed up your work, it is urgently needed."

Brief UP-Date: *In the course of our continuing engagement in J&K following Hind Swaraj Centenary Conf. Nov 2009, it was 12th visit by Rajiv Vora, 5th to 13th June, over past three and a half years to J&K – eight times Srinagar and the Valley; six time Jammu, in some of which Dr Niru Vora and Sehtu Das, and initially Prof Pirzada Amin have been part of the SPT team; have conducted more than twenty one and two-day dialogues / intervention in communal conflict and won their trust in a raging environment of mistrust and suspicion. Swaraj peeth is perhaps the only organization to have by now a stable group of bright activist, scholar, writer, journalists man and women in Srinagar and in Jammu, who identify as Swaraj peeth J&K Chapters. Srinagar group has under taken to involve more youth in dialogue on peace and nonviolence and taking up social issues; and, monitor media which often presents wrongful facts and biased interpretation of events and therefore there is strong feeling about misrepresentation of J&K in the national media. The Jammu group is readying for a concrete plan of identifying, recruiting, training and deploying Gandhi Shanti Sainiks, Nonviolent Peace-keepers and Peace-builders in areas of communal sensitivity and divide.*

Within the given environment of sever trust deficit and alienation they consider such a development no mean an achievement for any one from outside of J&K. In Jammu too we have a youth group and a group of leading Pandits, most of them displaced from Kashmir. The Srinagar group is in communication with the Jammu friends who together had worked on a Common Statement of Shared Concerns; and, leading Pandit families had hosted a group of senior youths from Srinagar. After the visit by six of Jammu youth group to communal riot-hit Kishtwar, Doda, Bhadarwah in September 2013 followed by their report to senior citizens of

Jammu and to the press, there has been a demand for setting up an organized civil society peace and nonviolence mechanism that would monitor communal situation, mobilize forces of harmony and intervene through Gandhian nonviolent means and methods in the time of disturbance and violence. Shri Ved Bahsin, who was close to J P Narayan and one of the few senior most public figures, doyen of journalism and public life in J&K also shared his deep concern with Rajiv Vora about communal polarization as the most worrisome issue; some people need to work on building up broken relationships, monitor and intervene in conflict situation. Nothing but Gandhian approach is urgently required and that is only what will work because of the mistrust of the rest he said – echoing commonly running sentiment among the people of J&K. Shri H S Siddiqi, Additional Advocate General, Shri Shibani Koul, a leading Pandit activist and intellectual, members of SP group, Prof Ellora Puri, Editor/ Publisher of J&K Human Right Watch, expressed keenness about creating a band of trained nonviolent peace keepers. Similar views were expressed by Rtd. Gen Dhar, who chaired the Kishtwar report meeting on 11 Sept 2013 in Jammu Press Club and earlier dialogues with Jammu Pandits , besides Sh. B.L.Saraf, Rtd. Session Judge and a Columnist, Sh Kuldeep Pandita, Chairman of Thinkers Forum to mention a few.

Rajiv had meeting in Jammu with some senior Pandit community leaders on the subject of follow up of a proposal by a group of senior Muslim intellectual and academicians of Anantnag (see Anantnag dialogue Report Nov 2013) besides with members of the youth team on selection and training of prospective nonviolent peace-makers, peace-keepers and peace builders.
