

MEMORY, FREEDOM AND POWER

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Abstract

In this age of retreating democracy, diminishing freedom, proliferating populism and rising absolutism, power is increasingly asserting itself as the monster god. Perhaps it was always so: dehumanizing, enslaving, intimidating and non-sharing. However, with the increasing awareness of the important role that freedom, justice, and humanism can play in transforming human societies, concerned scholars and policymakers are deeply involved in exploring ways and means to diminish the brutality of power and enhance the dignity and quality of life of the individuals, communities and nations. In this connection, discussions and debates have been taking place all over the world to strategize a new and dignified future for the entire humankind. Clearly such a future cannot arrive if the tendency of power to convert human societies into constituencies of fear and servitude is not challenged and confronted. Nevertheless, it is not easy for the powerless to speak to power. History tells us that the powerless were often empowered through the launch of nonviolent movements for peace, freedom and change. In this context, the empowering and emboldening role of memory is usually ignored or slighted. This paper attempts to examine the concept of memory in the changing times and highlights the role of memory in the struggle against the tyranny of power. It suggests that a study of the role of memory in empowering and emboldening the movements for freedom and human dignity is all the more relevant today in the context of Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) because it is being rapidly converted into vast prison houses and torture camps.

Keywords: Memory, Freedom, Power, Liberation Struggle, Karbala, New History, Past, Present, Future.

Introduction

Memory and destiny go together. The more resilient, defiant and empowered memory is, the more assured the future is. This is what history tells us and what the story tellers tell us. Though time changes, location changes, perpetrator of

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violence changes, language, caste, creed, color or race of the victim changes, story remains the same. Again and again, the storyteller tells the same story with new details: when Power strikes and strikes savagely, it hopes to be able to stifle human aspiration for dignity, right and freedom. It feels confident that it can impose an ugly future, a future of total servitude, on the unwilling, and bury alive the hopes for freedom and change for all times to come. Power is emboldened when a hustling and bustling human society, the targeted society, is reduced into a cemetery, where fear runs amok like wild fire and silence roars. Power then feels sadistically contented that the going is good, not realizing that at that very moment memory might be opening the floodgates by telling the stories of past heroic deeds against tyranny, illuminating the images of the possible, encouraging the scared lambs at the slaughter houses to rush toward freedom, and eventually transforming them into a mighty force to confront the tyrant. In due course, and in so many ways, the powerlessness of power gets exposed, and fall of the powerful becomes inevitable. At that point of time, the arrival of a new future, a new time is celebrated in the Kingdom of Memory. From then on, the arriving new future and the arriving new time get prepared to become part of new memory and new history.

Being increasingly aware of the inspiring and empowering role that memory can play in the movement for freedom and change, power tries to banish dangerous memories, bury them forever, resurrect the memories of fear and servitude and invent new memories in order to hold the fort. However, power doesn't always succeed. By and large, its record to liquidate liberation struggles by terrorizing freedom seeking masses and imprisoning memory is rather poor. Nevertheless, and as Milan Kundera suggests, power continues to play the power game in order to consolidate its position.

Milan Kundera

Milan Kundera, born in 1929, is a Czech-born French novelist, short story writer, playwright, essayist and poet. His outstanding literary works often combining 'erotic comedy with political criticism and philosophical speculation' have been internationally acclaimed. In 1979, when he was living in France in exile, he was stripped of his Czech citizenship. He became a naturalized French citizen in 1981. A number of his works which he had authored and published abroad remained banned in his home country till 1989. These include his novels entitled *The Farewell Party*, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, and *The Unbearable*

Lightness of Being.¹ At one place, he famously observes in his novel 'The Book of Laughter and Forgetting'.²

"The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster..... The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting".

Kundera's statement carries a historical truth and a profound message. It is, indeed, time-tested and can be applied to numerous challenging situations faced by the peoples of different cultures, regions and religions in the past. A deeper study of the history of indigenous peoples, also known as aboriginal peoples or native peoples, and that of the history of oppressed and suppressed peoples during the long, dark and ugly periods of European colonialism in several Asian, African and Latin American societies may indicate as to how the cultures, languages, histories and memories of millions of peoples were distorted by the occupation forces. Likewise, a study of millions of people who languished and perished under the ruthless communist regimes and the history of the peoples of many post-colonial third world countries may indicate as to how brutally these peoples were overpowered and incapacitated by the absolutist regimes. In addition, Kundera's statement can also be applied to several tragic human situations of our own times. Among these, one of the most tragic is clearly the fast deteriorating human situation in the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir region. Kashmir is now completely under the clutches of Hinduism and locked. How can it achieve freedom from the brute occupation forces? Can there be any role of memory in its liberation struggle?

Answer to this question calls for the appreciation of the fact that a liberation struggle cannot be studied in isolation. All such struggles are interrelated. They derive inspiration and strength from each other, and their blossoming into a powerful energy capable of causing upheavals and producing whole sale changes takes time, sometimes decades, sometimes centuries. A number of freedom struggles including those in Palestine, Kurdistan, Catalonia, and several others in contemporary Asia, Africa, and Americas suggest that the journey to freedom is not only uncertain, dangerous and deadly, but also not bound by any deadline. However, the time that passes records the unfolding events and stores it in the memory houses. Eventually, such memory houses transform into power houses and cause the downfall of the most powerful.

Furthermore, a study on the role of memory in the liberation struggle of the territories and peoples desiring a total disconnect from the occupation model imposed by the outsiders, non-natives, and from a governance model based on authoritarianism and absolutism and imposed by the native power gods on their captive native populations, calls for an understanding of the concept and power of memory. In addition, it also asks for a brief historical account of memory's role as an energetic liberating force in situations of servitude. The present study takes note of the above, and moves on accordingly.

Memory and New History

By any count or criterion, memory is power, but a different kind of power. Power, in the traditional sense and as understood in the corridors of power even now, flows from the barrel of the gun. It thrives, proliferates and expands by converting the living human societies into cemeteries, where silence prevails and fear of the unknown abounds. At its best, it may be likened to an all-powerful tribal lord of a tribe or an all-powerful father in a patriarchal society, a roaring lion in the house; and at its worst, a godfather with all the power over the life and death of the humans. In contrast, memory is the mother power, a healing, transforming, life-and-hope breathing, and confidence-building energetic force.

In this age of retreating democracy, diminishing freedom, proliferating populism and rising absolutism, power is increasingly asserting itself as the monster god. Perhaps it was always so: dehumanizing, enslaving, intimidating and non-sharing. Memory, on the other hand, is the fosterer, nurturer, inspirer. It is humanizing, liberating, and sharing. In short, power and memory are quite different from one another as their functions are different. While the major concern of power is to defend the status quo at all cost and by all means, and destroy the dreams and movements aspiring for freedom and change, memory illumines the images of freedom and empowers the movements for justice, change and freedom.

In the given context, the point can be further elaborated by referring to two terms: nest and net. Though there is a difference of only one letter- S- in the two terms, there is a world of difference between the two. Nest is a cradle, a heaven, a kingdom of security, where especially the mother bird takes care of the little ones, feeds them, sings the songs of love and joy into their ears, tells the stories about life and about the ancestors, cautions regarding the lurking dangers, and prepares them to fly confidently into the free and all-embracing blue sky. One

day, the little ones fly away, enjoy their freedom and enjoy the ecstasy and torment of the unknown. In due course, these little ones prepare nests for their little ones, nourish and nurture them, pass on their memories to the next generation, and prepare their little ones to fly one day into the vastness of the free blue sky and experience the joy and pain of the unknown. Nest, the mother nest, is also the memory nest where future grows. Net, on the other hand, is the trap laid by power. It is the schemer, targeter, chaser, hunter, cager and destroyer of ideas and dreams for freedom and change. It is the dungeon where dangerous memories are intended to be kept for ever to prevent the hosting and hoisting of liberating ideas and movements, and preempt the arrival of the new time and new history.

However, new ideas and dangerous memories cannot be wished away forever. A time comes when the carefully built dams are busted, when new perspectives on the past and its ties with the present and future begin twinkling and glittering like the restless neon signs or like the moving, shining stars running across the free blue sky like happy, innocent children. Then the old, forgotten, persecuted and buried memories come to life once again and push the events toward a showdown between the forces of status-quo and the forces of freedom and change. For decades, centuries, and perhaps millennia, the contest between these two forces have been going on. However, such contests were kept dumped into the mass graves of history and into the domains of the unknown for a long time. A very lively, inspiring part of history was, to a large extent, was reduced to lost history'.³ But by making waves and making its presence felt, this 'un-history, often bounces back into history. Then a 'new history' is written, which generously provides space to the struggles for freedom and highlights the important role that memory plays in such struggles.

Indeed, the new history was prevented from arriving for centuries, nay millennium. It was only in the early twentieth century when American historian James Harvey Robinson (1863-1936) vehemently criticized the way traditional history was written, studied and taught, and called for fresher, people-centred perspectives. His works include *The New History*, *The Mind in the Making*, *The Humanizing of Knowledge*, *The Ordeal of Civilization* and *The Human Comedy as Devised and Directed by Mankind Itself*. Through his works, he pinpointed the lopsidedness in traditional history, a history which always zoomed in on political and military personalities and events, largely ignored the anthropological, sociological, psychological, and other aspects, and created and dragged a void in historical research. He was one of the pioneers of the historiography movement, which believed in history as an instrument in helping solve contemporary

problems, concentrated upon the life of the common man, and cooperated with other social sciences'.⁴ He was a passionate teacher and writer. In his lectures and studies, he focused on the missing historical links, helped broaden the scope of historical scholarship in relation to social sciences, and strongly advocated the study of the past not only for the sake of collecting information about the past but to study the past events to understand the contemporary issues and challenges and solve them.

More than hundred years ago, on 22 April 1911, Robinson had read a paper entitled 'The New History' and observed that the older historical writing was 'narrative in character' and its 'chief aim was to tell a tale or story by setting forth a succession of events and introducing the prominent actors who participated in it'. Pointing out that the older traditional type of historical writing was 'a branch of polite literature, competing with the drama and fiction', differing often with the limitation placed on their fancy by the writers themselves, Robinson said:⁵

The things that would interest them in history would be, not the great masses of toiling men, not the silent revolutions by which nations pass from barbarism to civilization from ignorance to knowledge, from poverty to wealth, from feebleness to power, but the striking figures of history, kings and queens, the leaders of armies, men renowned for statecraft, and the dramatic incidents in the life of nations. Each must have his hero and villain, his plots, conspiracies and bloody wars. Just as Froude had his Henry VIII; just as Macaulay had his William III; Carlyle his Robespierre and Cromwell and Thiers his Napoleon, so Motley had his William of Orange and Philip of Spain; Prescott his Cortez, Pizarro, Ferdinand and Isabella; and Parkman his Pontiac, Frontenac and La Salle.

Robinson, who was prominent in the founding of the New School for Social Research in New York in 1919, was also one of the founders of 'new history'. Derived from *Nouvelle Histoire*, the term new history is also referred to as total history, as history of the rulers and the ruled, and as history of the political struggle of the powerless. This new history hosted and highlighted the memories of all sections of the people and their struggles and dreams. The inclusion of the memories of common people and the political and social events related to them helped the new history emerge as a powerhouse, an embodiment of what was later described as soft Power.

True enough that fierce criticisms were also levelled against this new concept as it advocated the teaching of history not merely as factual knowledge, but also as a subject encouraging debate, promoting critical thinking and igniting imagination in the class rooms and outside. During the interwar period (1919-1939),

when ruthless absolutist and militarist regimes reigned supreme in much of Europe and in the Far East, when European colonial powers were brutally ruling over their colonies in Asia and Africa, and when revolutionary ideas of socialism and communism were exercising a mesmerizing influence on the youth of Europe and elsewhere, the idea of new history was viewed with skepticism in the corridors of power. It was even feared as dangerous history.

However, the march of new history couldn't be halted during the interwar period, nor its spread could be contained after the Second World War. The world changed profoundly after 1945. So did history. The failure to prevent the outbreak of another world war, a much more destructive war, within the life span of one single generation, suffering of pains and sorrows caused by the war to millions of men, women and children, growing realization of the need to avoid such wars in the future, and the memories of the dead and the wailings of the survivors led to the de-glorification of war itself and brought into sharp focus its ugly sides. In addition, a series of serious initiatives were taken by the academia, research institutes, and civil society organizations in different western countries, in particular, to study the causes and consequences of the 1939-45 war, and channelize the widespread anti-war sentiments into an organized, well-coordinated international movement against the institution of war itself. True enough that the unleashing of the cold war within two years after 1945 couldn't be prevented; the movement against war, violence and unfreedom grew in strength. Meanwhile, almost entire Latin American region rose in revolt against structural violence and international exploitative and unjust regimes. New actors joined the world community after the rapid decolonization of Africa and Asia and a number of brilliant scholars ignited human imagination, produced new ideas in different fields, and acknowledged the dignity and power of memory.

Memory-Building and Memory-Empowering

There is a long list of writers, poets, novelists, playwrights, historians, artists and political activists, who have condemned in their works, the slavery of all kinds, persecution of the humans on any ground, human killing through wars and violence, and imposition of absolutist rule in any human society. These are the people who dignified new ideas and brought suppressed, lost and forgotten memories into life and at the centre of debate and discourse on the powerlessness of power and on the power of the powerless. They wrote fiction and non-fiction on freedom, composed poems and songs, painted lively and immortal paintings, staged plays, waged nonviolent struggles and condemned servitude of all shapes and colours, and immortalized the memories of struggles against slavery,

colonialism, and tyranny. Such a list of the thinkers and doers who carried assaults on power and its violent structures and tools including invented memories, and tried to free the unfree memories may include Edward Said. He was a Palestinian American, Professor of Literature at Columbia University, a public intellectual, founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies and author of several important works including *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Rajni Palme Dutt, a leading journalist and theoretician in the Communist Party of Great Britain, is another important author who transformed Indian memory into a powerful tool against the British colonial power. In his book *India Today*, he wrote about the lost wealth and grandeur of India, provided details of the loot and plunder of India by the Colonialists, and in so many ways, contributed to the freedom struggle of India.

Likewise, memory has played a powerful role in the movement against the slavery of the blacks in the United States and elsewhere, in the restoration of the dignity of the blacks all over the world in the modern times, and in the movements in the post-colonial societies against their exploitation and pillage by the international political, economic and security system. Frantz Fanon, a French West Indian psychiatrist, political philosopher and writer wrote influential works on postcolonial studies, critical theory and Marxism. These include *Black Skin, White Masks*, *A Dying Colonialism*, *Alienation and Freedom* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Almost all his works are journeys to the future through the past and through the beautiful and ugly memories of the past. Walter Rodney is another powerful writer who brings into life the memories of the sufferings of Africa under European colonialism. He is a university teacher and an activist belonging to what is known today as Guyana and author of an important study on the impact of colonialism on Africa entitled *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Aime Cesaire, an influential Francophone Caribbean writer, is one of the founding fathers of Negritude, the black consciousness movement dedicated to assert African cultural values through the rediscovery of its proud heritage and memories. He is a prominent politician and an eminent poet, whose books of poetry include *Lost Body* and *Return to my Native Land*. *Discourse on Colonialism* is his most celebrated non-fiction work. Another writer, Albert Memmi, a French-language Tunisian novelist and essayist and author of numerous sociological studies focusing on human oppression has aroused the memories of the colonial past in his fiction and non-fiction works. His best known autobiographical novels entitled '*Pillar of Salt*' and '*The Colonizer and the Colonized*' earned acclaim in the literary and political circles. Such works and hundreds of other important studies on colonialism not only brought into focus the memories of atrocities committed by the colonizing European states in the colonized world, but also indicated as to how important is freedom for the humans.

Memory has also been used very powerfully in the non-fiction works of Amartya Sen, an economist and philosopher and a Nobel Laureate known all over the world for his contribution to welfare economics, social choice theory, economic and social justice and economic theories of famine. He is the author of numerous important studies including *Development as Freedom*, *The Idea of Justice*, *Identity and Violence*, *Poverty and Inequality*, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. He is not only a theorist of economics or a generator of new economic debates but also is a humanizer of economics. He elaborates very complex issues with the help of story-telling and memory- building.

The battle of power against collective, inspirational and magnetic memory is a battle for its own survival. It tries to win the battle at any cost. As such, power takes all sorts of preventive and coercive action and defends all such actions. In addition, it tries to dignify the unwanted pasts and unwanted memories and ridicules them by saying they fail to pass the rigorous tests of scientific analysis and betray the requirement of evidence-based research. Again, in order to slight the impact of new history and collective memory on the movements for change and justice, it says that the new history is fictional and since new memory is a part this history, so it is also fictional. When the past begins challenging power and when memory begins speaking to power, such pasts and such memories are declared to be subversive, toxic, and deadly.

Past is Never Dead

In general, the past and especially the undesirable, unacceptable, and subversive past, a past feared most in the corridors of power is wished to be treated as non-existent and often rendered non-existent. However, no past is non-existent forever, and some pasts, especially suppressed pasts, have a tendency to return. It may return after a day, a month, a year, a decade, a century or a millennium. No past can be prevented from returning for ever. In fact, the past has often returned in the past. Again, when power fails to prevent the arrival of the unwished and unwelcomed past, it tries to degrade it by saying that the past is dead time, spent time, and it is not wise to carry the dead load of the past into the journey through the present and into the future, which, after all, is a continuation of the present. In order to ensure the continuity of un-change, the court of power always perceives the new memory, and unwanted arriving past as something evil.

Small wonder, therefore, that the past has often been treated as irrelevant. In addition, it has been ridiculed and belittled. In this context, often those wise

sayings or quotes are projected which emphasize the importance of the present and the future and slight the past. Often such sayings, available in abundance online, are quoted out of context. The sayings may include the one by Maxim Gorky, a prominent Soviet story writer, novelist and political activist, who once said that 'Remembrance of the past kills all present energy and deadens all hopes for the future'.⁶ Likewise, the Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun and missionary who devoted her entire life serving the destitute and poor around the world and who was a doer, had once observed that 'Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin' Lauren Oliver, American author and novelist, whose works have been translated into more than thirty languages, builds up a far more stronger case against the past.⁷ She says:⁸

I'll tell you another secret, this one for your own good. You may think the past has something to tell you. You may think that you should listen, should strain to make out its whispers, should bend over backward, stoop down low to hear its voice breathed up from the ground, from the dead places. You may think there's something in it for you, something to understand or make sense of. But I know the truth: I know from the nights of Coldness. I know the past will drag you backward and down, have you snatching at whispers of wind and the gibberish of trees rubbing together, trying to decipher some code, trying to piece together what was broken. It's hopeless. The past is nothing but a weight. It will build inside of you like a stone. Take it from me: If you hear the past speaking to you, feel it tugging at your back and running its fingers up your spine, the best thing to do—the only thing—is run.

However, past never leaves nor deserts. Nor is it possible to escape from it. What is possible is to avoid the past follies and tragedies by remembering the follies and tragedies and not repeating. For instance, since the US atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945 respectively, no nuclear bomb has been used in any other war. It is not because the romance with the bomb has diminished. Neither because its military value as the ultimate weapon in case of war has diminished, nor the weapon has been rendered dysfunctional through any internationally accepted legal instrument or through the destruction of all the bombs in the stockpiles of nuclear weapon states. Again, there were occasions when the powerful nuclear weapon powers like USA and former Soviet Union could have been tempted to use their nuclear weapons. After all, the Soviet humiliation in Afghanistan during the 1980s or the American disgraceful exit from Vietnam in 1975 could have been avoided, albeit for a short duration, if these two super powers had dropped nuclear bombs on these two non-nuclear developing Asian countries. But they couldn't venture thus as a strong anti-nuclear weapon movement was growing up in Japan and elsewhere through the remembrance of the tragedy of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki and through the projection of the sufferings and narratives of atomic survivors and as reflected through the highly creative works of art, literature, music, cinema and theatre. If Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not remembered or if the *Hibakusha* had not told their tragic stories and if their stories were not carried everywhere, the world could have suffered a series of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by now.

Memory therefore can play a significant role in transforming the turbulent present and in guiding it toward the rainbow world of tomorrow. Past is important and memory is important. These cannot be absented by describing them as 'absences' or 'absentees'. Indeed, the importance of the past and memory is now being increasingly acknowledged by the thinkers, fiction and non-fiction writers, artists and activists challenging the tyrannies of modern times.

For instance, Jennifer Hillier, Canadian author of psychological thrillers like *Jar of Hearts*, *Wonderland*, *The Butcher*, *Creep*, and *Freak*, and who claims that she writes about dark, twisted people who do dark, twisted things, says: "The past is always with you, whether you choose to think about it or not, whether you take responsibility for it or not. You carry the past with you because it transforms you. You can try to bury it and pretend it never happened, but that doesn't work."⁹ William Faulkner, an American novelist, short story writer, playwright and poet and a Nobel Laureate, comes out with a stunning statement about the past. In his work of fiction entitled *Requiem for a Nun*, he famously says: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."¹⁰ Likewise, Eugene O'Neill, another Nobel Laureate from US and an outstanding playwright, makes similar stunning statement when he says: "There is no present or future-only the past, happening over and over again."¹¹ He repeats the same idea in his masterpiece play *Long Day's Journey into Night* and says: "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future too."¹² Pointing out that the 'record of great deeds is a defeat of Time: for it prolongs their power through many ages after they and their authors have been swallowed by the abyss of the non-existent'¹³ and adding that 'out of the past, the voices of heroes call us', Bertrand Russell, one of the greatest philosophers and activists of the twentieth century, observes:¹⁴

The past alone is truly real: the present is but a painful, struggling birth into the immutable being of what is no longer. Only the dead exist fully. The lives of the living are fragmentary, doubtful, and subject to change; but the lives of the dead are complete, free from the sway of Time, the all but omnipotent lord of the world. Their failures and successes, their hopes and fears, their joys and pains, have become eternal - our efforts cannot now abate one jot of them. Sorrows long buried in the grave, tragedies of which

only a fading memory remains, loves immortalized by Death's hallowing touch-these have a power, a magic, an untroubled calm, to which no present can attain.

However, there are doubtless issues, very critical issues, with the past and with memory. We are now living in an era of scientific, technological and information revolution, and as the Portuguese scholar Sergio Matos says in his remarkable paper entitled 'History, Memory and Fiction: What Boundaries ?' that developments like the dawn of the 'era of computing for masses', when 'the notion of time and space have become deeply altered' and when the 'world threats-financial crisis, pollution, global warming, famines, epidemics, drug dealing-and the apocalyptic mentality associated to them-contribute decisively for the centralism of the present', the knowledge of the past remains 'indispensable to question the complexity and difficulty of understanding our time'.¹⁵

Equally importantly, pasts not only returns, it often becomes contemporaneous and also futuristic because of its memorialization. Referring to it, Matos observes that 'the places of memory and the rituals of memory have multiplied as never before-everything becomes patrimony, from natural places to the old dead factories, from the ruins and their illusion of eternity to the experimentalism of artistic installations, without forgetting the multiplication of museums, monuments, memories, archives-everything is commemorated'.¹⁶ 'Memory', he points out 'has become 'an object of mass consumption'.¹⁷

In his paper, Matos also refers to a paradox that is there. He says that on the one hand, there is the 'obsessive culture of memory' and, on the other, 'an accelerated culture of forgetfulness-the accelerated amnesia'. He further says that there is the tendency of 'immediate forgetting of what happens in the present' and adds: 'Perhaps never as today the dead are forgotten and death is withdrawn from the frenzy of life. But the past always erupts in the present'. He concludes by quoting August Comte, who had said that 'the dead govern the living'.¹⁸ To what extent do the dead govern the living and to what extent can the memory of the liberation struggles of the past benefit the liberation struggles of our times, including the Azaadi movement in Kashmir?

Tragedy and Memory of Karbala

Memory and freedom movement reinforce each other. If a road map for freedom movement doesn't provide a respectable space to the desired or required memory, the preferred future may lose its direction. Likewise, if forgetfulness

dominates over memory or if invented memory holds sway, then also the preferred future may get lost. Furthermore, memory doesn't mean the remembrance of a certain event taking place at certain point of time at a certain place, which can be remembered or forgotten or exiled when wished. No event happens in isolation and the past doesn't live in isolated, fragmented parts. The past is a continuous flow of time which always flows in conjunction with the flow of the present and future. It is like an ocean in which the events of the present and future fall like the arriving rivers and become part of the ocean. As such, the movements of the past against tyranny, injustice, indiscriminate and human indignity are linked to one another. They strengthen each other through the bond of memory. Memory is, indeed, the blood line linking all such movements from the ancient times to the present and future times. The real challenge is to rediscover such emboldening movements, memorializing them and their heroes, and be on the watch that power doesn't succeed in assassinating, distorting and belittling such memories or replacing them through poisonous and counter memories.

Here, one may refer to one of the greatest nonviolent movements of all times. It is, indeed, the greatest nonviolent movement in human history. It was led by Hazrat Hussain and joined by a handful of his followers and close family members. The event took place more than thirteen hundred years ago, but Karbala hasn't been forgotten. The memory lives on through the memorialization of the heroic deeds and sacrifice of the Imam and his near and dear ones and appreciation of the Imam's resolve to challenge the usurpation and tyranny of state power and protect the teachings, values and spirit of Islam. Every year, during Muharram, the first month of Islamic calendar, the martyrdom of the Imam and his followers and family members is commemorated everywhere in the world where the Muslims live. Special religious sessions are organized where lectures are delivered by the ulema and learned scholars on his life and martyrdom and on the teaching of Karbala. Mourning Processions are brought out, and the tragedy of Karbala is remembered with sorrow and anguish.

Karbala is a teacher for the entire humanity. Of course, Hiroshima is also a teacher for the entire world. But Hiroshima is something that has happened once only, and there is least likelihood that it would happen again. Such is the power of the memory of Hiroshima. However, the teaching of Karbala is far more profound and it is concerned with an issue tormenting the entire human society right from the time of its formation to the present times: how to liquidate the savagery of the powerful and how to humanize the human society? As such, the precious inheritance of the memories of Karbala is not the inheritance of the Shia Muslims

only, nor is it the inheritance of all the Muslims only. This inheritance belongs to the entire humanity, to the Muslims and non-Muslims, to the blacks, whites and browns, and to all the generations of more than thirteen centuries as well as the present generation and all future generations. Again, the memory of Karbala will remain relevant for all times to come as it can empower and embolden the movement for freedom anywhere and everywhere.

In fact, the memory of Karbala is the grand inheritance of the entire humankind and its empowering impact has been acknowledged by a number of non-Muslim heroes of nonviolence and change. For instance, Nelson Mandela, the legendary nonviolent leader of twentieth century and the main leader of the movement against racial discrimination and un-freedom in South Africa recalls, "I have spent more than twenty years in prison, then on one night I decided to surrender by signing all the terms and conditions of government. But suddenly I thought about Hazrat Hussain and Karbala movement and Hazrat Hussain gave me strength to stand for right of freedom and liberation and I did".¹⁹

Indeed, Karbala serves as a strong and robust root to the nonviolence tree and helps growth of numerous nonviolent movements against tyranny and unfreedom, or as a fountainhead from which the stream of nonviolence movements flows. Meanwhile, numerous movements for freedom, justice and rights have also come of age. They are now seeding, inspiring and emboldening the sprouting of new movements. One such movement is the modern American Civil Rights Movement. It was led by Martin Luther King Jr. from December 1955, when the Montgomery bus strike started, till his assassination at the younger age of 39 on 4 April 1968. According to the King's Centre, during this short period of less than thirteen years of King's leadership, 'African Americans achieved more genuine progress toward racial equality in America than the previous 350 years had produced'.²⁰

Now Martin Luther King himself, like Nelson Mandela, serves as a beacon and an inspiration to the powerless speaking to power. Likewise, most of contemporary freedom lovers are influenced by Leo Tolstoy, the celebrated Russian fiction writer, and Henry David Thoreau, the American political activist who dedicated his life to preserve his freedom as a man and an artist, refused to support war and wrote the classical essay entitled 'Civil Disobedience'.

Since the history of nonviolent movements for freedom, justice and rights is all about the memory of heroic deeds and human protests blazing through

different eras, it is important that such memories are passed on to succeeding generations. While serious studies on the techniques, strategies, successes and failures of nonviolent movements, several inspiring biographies on the nonviolent leaders and numerous works of fiction and poetry on nonviolence are being regularly published in the West²¹, the need is clearly there to tell the stories of nonviolent struggle against the tyranny and savagery of power to the youth of the developing world, including the youth of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, a vast landmass now converted into a huge prison and torture chamber.

Memory and Kashmir's Azadi Movement

Commenting on the second successive electoral victory of India's governing party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the elections held in May 2019, the international weekly *The Economist* observed that the second term had given Modi 'another chance to hasten development and turn India into a genuine global power' and urged him to show that 'he is not just good at winning elections, but at putting his victories to use'.²² In the following months, Modi made it clear that he would prove the weekly *Economist* wrong, and he would religiously follow his agenda of *Hindutva* at the cost of Indian secularism, democracy and unity.

Promising to deliver an unpolluted Hindu past and Hindu future, riding the hate wave against the Indian Muslims in particular, projecting the Muslim rulers who had ruled over India for centuries as foreigners, invaders, and destroyers of Hindu past, culture and memory, and insisting on straightaway reconnecting an exclusive Hindu past with an exclusive Hindu future, Prime Minister Modi has unleashed savage Hindu power against those opposing his *Hindutva* model of totalitarianism in the name of Hindu Indian nationalism.²³ Being aware that his grand design to ensure Indian Muslims' unfreedom and incapacitation depends on chaining, if not annihilating the undesirable, enlightened and secularist memories, and putting golden chains around the neck of the beautiful goddess of Indian future, the Hindu power in India under the populist leadership of Modi has now embarked on dismantling the memory, identity and freedom aspirations of the peoples of Jammu and Kashmir and promising a future dazzling with gold, modernization, and invented memories as a reward for total capitulation. What then is the future of freedom in this land of un-freedom?

In order to draw a larger picture of the future in Jammu and Kashmir, it is important that the recent developments in the land are put into a perspective, a

perspective being increasingly influenced by the longing of the Kashmiris for freedom and the desire of power to hold the sway at any cost. To begin with, on 5 August 2019, legal measures of far-reaching implications for Kashmir, India, Pakistan, and the South Asian and Muslim world regions in particular, were initiated through the Indian Parliament. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing Kashmir's autonomy was repealed; the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganizing Act, 2019, separating Ladakh and making it a union territory was enacted; Muslim dominated Kargil territory was integrated with Buddhist Leh; and Jammu and Kashmir were brought together to form a 'union territory' to be directly ruled from New Delhi through an 'administrator' called 'lieutenant governor'.²⁴ Commenting on the measures taken, Haseeb A. Drabu, former finance minister of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir said: '.....Mr. Modi's government took the unprecedented, unilateral decision to abolish the constitutionally guaranteed special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Its territorial integrity has been mauled by bifurcating it into two federally administered territories, its legislature has been disempowered and its people disenfranchised'²⁵ Drabu adds:²⁶

The measure has also abolished the residency rights enacted by the maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir in 1927 and incorporated in the Article 35A of the Constitution of India in 1954, which gave the people of Jammu and Kashmir exclusive rights to property within the state. Indian citizens who were not defined residents of the state could not buy land there. The erasure of the residency rights has set the ball rolling for changing the demographic character of the only Muslim majority state in India-an old desire of the Hindu nationalists, the Indian version of the Israeli policy of Settlements.

Both before and after the changes made in the constitutional and territorial status of Jammu & Kashmir and its virtual conversion into a vast prison, a series of measures was taken to brutally handle any possible violent reaction including militant uprising against the changes made. By any count or criterion, these measures were calculated and savage. These were often taken secretly and with the precision of a military operation. These projected the readiness to use hard power in case of non-acceptance of the steps taken for the whole-sale changes. According to Indian novelist and human rights activist Arundhati Roy, seven million Kashmiris were forced to stay at home because of curfew and barricades. They were cut off from the whole world as their telephones were dead and the internet was disconnected. Furthermore, even moderate and 'mainstream Kashmiri politicians were detained, and Jammu & Kashmir police was reportedly disarmed. In addition, about 45,000 extra troops were flown into Kashmir, already 'one of the most or perhaps the most densely militarized zone in the world'. Roy further says that more

than 'half a million soldiers have been deployed to counter what the army itself admits is just a handful of 'terrorists'. She adds that an 'estimated 70,000 people, civilians, militants and security forces have been killed in the conflict', thousands became victims of forced disappearance, and the valley of Kashmir has become a sort of 'network of small-scale Abu Ghraibs' and thousands have been subjected to torture in these torture chambers dotted all over the valley.²⁷

Since a fresh round of war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir will eventually turn into a nuclear war as both the states are nuclear weapon states, war is no more an option for these two warring countries, nor for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Times have changed. Sophisticated and deadly strategies have been developed over the years, and the world is now almost united against military solution of any territorial or political conflict. Not only India, but Kashmir and also Pakistan will also be bled by such military actions. Further, as the post-5 August 2019 international developments on Kashmir suggest, the world at large and the US, the European Union as well as most of the Muslim states and even the UN would be more contended by passing resolutions against atrocities and human rights violations being committed by the Indian police and military forces in particular. It seems to be very unlikely that an international military intervention will take place to decisively act in the interest of the Kashmiri people. Even different kinds of sanctions on India haven't been imposed so far by the UN, US or European Union or by even some Muslim countries. In the given situation, the holding of plebiscite on the future of Kashmir by both India and Pakistan seems to be very unlikely. Furthermore, with the passage of time, the Kashmiri struggle has been considerably influenced by the slogan of *Azaadi*. It is likely that the disenchantment of Kashmiri people with the UN's solution through plebiscite will grow with the passage of time and their commitment to the struggle for *Azaadi* will grow stronger especially after Prime Minister Modi's recent gamble with not only Kashmir's future but with entire India's future.

In the light of the above, it is likely that Prime Minister Modi would use brute state power to crush the Kashmir's struggle for freedom. His government would, moreover, use all the institutions of the state including the military, the police, and judiciary to terrorize the Kashmiri people, and would use media, Bollywood, educational institutions and temples to mobilize Hindu public opinion in favor of his action in Kashmir. In addition, Modi's India seems to be working on undertaking massive projects for rapid modernization and development of Jammu and Kashmir, and it aims to systematically bring about a whole sale demographic

change in the occupied region. In short, India seems to follow the Israeli model of controlling the angry and wounded masses through state power and violence.

What can be the possible and credible response of the Kashmiri people facing state power and being driven to the golden cage? Since neither Indo-Pakistan war nor armed struggle nor indigenous military adventurism within Kashmir is likely to deliver, nor the chances of peaceful resolution through the intervention of the UN or great powers is in sight, it is likely that the struggle for the Kashmiri people for identity, Azadi and a new and dignified future will be a long nonviolent struggle. However, while strategizing its future of Kashmir, concerned constituencies should keep in view that the battle will be between India's hard power and Kashmir's soft power. As a powerful tool of soft power, memory can play a much more powerful role in this struggle for freedom than is generally appreciated in the societies where weapon is the power god. There is the need to rediscover the culture of peace and nonviolence in Kashmir through fictional and non-fictional writings, and introduce the Kashmiri people to world literature on nonviolent action and nonviolent leadership in different eras of human struggle. While history and geography seem to be getting ready to take revenge in Kashmir, it is important that the recent upheaval caused by Modi be tackled by a new leadership capable of writing new history for their beloved land and people. After the 5th August 2019 action of India, this beautiful landmass with its beautiful people cannot afford to wait, like Cinderella, for the arrival of the prince. Cinderella will now have to rise up and struggle for freedom and rights. In this struggle, memory is destined to play a vital role.

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- ³ Writing about 'unhistory', distinguished American scholar and activist Noam Chomsky says: 'George Orwell coined the useful term 'unperson' for creatures denied personhood because they don't abide by state doctrine. We may add the term 'unhistory' to refer to the fate of unpersons, expunged from history on similar grounds'. Explaining the point, he says that while so many events are regularly celebrated and highlighted, so many events have been pushed out of history and collective memory, and says: 'Right now we are failing to commemorate an even of great human significance: the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's decision to launch the direct invasion of South Vietnam, soon to become the most extreme crime of aggression since World War II'. Noam Chomsky, 'Anniversaries from 'unhistory', Because We Say So, UK; Penguin Random House, 2016, PP.29.
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