

## Yasin Malik: Insensitive India-Today's Youth Icon

Written by Lalit Koul

Wednesday, 26 March 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Saturday, 11 September 2010 03:44

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*A reaction to India Today Conclave 2008's decision to invite former terrorist and self-confessed killer of Kashmiri Pandits Yasin Malik to its meeting.*

"What India needs is political vision and a leadership that has nothing at stake except India." These are the words of Mr. Aroon Purie, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, India Today Group.

What is the significance of these words, you might ask.

These words are significant because Aroon Purie is a respected journalist whose words influence the powers that be and that he used these words to promote recently held India Today Conclave 2008 - that was billed as a conclave that "addresses the subject of Leadership For The 21st Century and hopes its efforts at bringing the best minds together to discuss, debate and offer solutions to issues that plague the world will make a difference."

Still, why I am talking about it, you might ask.

The reason I am talking about is the gross insensitivity shown by India-Today and Mr. Aroon Purie towards thousands of Kashmiri Hindus who were ethnically cleansed from their homeland Kashmir and are living like refugees in their own country.

How he was being insensitive, you might ask.

Well, few days back, India-Today and Mr. Aroon Purie had invited Yasin Malik to be a speaker for one of the panel discussions in India-Today Conclave. The theme of the panel discussion was: "Youth Forum - If I Could Change The World". Anyone who knows Yasin Malik, would know that he is a terrorist from Kashmir. He has himself admitted that he was the pioneer of terrorism in the valley. He was the mastermind of ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindus in the valley. Kashmiri Hindus were not the only victims of his communal killings but he was also involved in the killings of 4 Indian Air Force officers in the valley. He was also involved in the kidnapping of Rubiya Sayeed, the daughter of then Union Home-Minister Mufti Mohd. Sayeed. It was this kidnapping and the resultant release of hardcore terrorists like Hamid Mir, Javed Nalka etc. that emboldened the terrorists operating in the valley. And in spite of all these facts, India-Today introduced Yasin Malik as:

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"Yasin Malik is chairman of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). His faction is a secular separatist movement which advocates a united Kashmir independent from both India and Pakistan. Malik came into prominence as a militant in JKLF and underwent training in Pakistan-based camps. He later turned to a peaceful mode of protest. The JKLF was originally a militant organisation, but since 1995 it has renounced all violence and called for strictly peaceful methods to achieve its aims. Yasin Malik is also a strong advocate for the right of return of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits who have been forced to leave the state."

Yasin Malik is also a strong advocate for the right of return of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits? Since when? What is India-Today drinking? There is nothing farther from truth than this lie perpetrated by India-Today. Aroon Purie knows better. A journalist with his experience and knowledge knows better what Yasin Malik stands for. On one hand, Aroon Purie says, "What India needs is political vision and a leadership that has nothing at stake except India" and then on other hand he provides a platform to a terrorist who has no love for my country India and is actually working against Indian interests. What am I missing here? By providing a platform to a terrorist like Yasin Malik, India-Today and Aroon Purie not only offended Kashmiri Hindus but also the brave soldiers of India who are battling terrorists like Yasin Malik day in and day out in the valley. It was an insult to the memories of those Indian Air Force soldiers who gave up their lives serving the nation of India. It was an insult to all other panelists (Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, Sachin Pilot, Preity Zinta, and Vikram Akula) who are respected law-abiding leaders in their own fields, to put them on the same platform as Yasin Malik, the murderer and terrorist. I wish all other panelists had the gumption to refuse the invitation and decline to sit on the same platform with Yasin Malik.

By providing Yasin Malik an opportunity to spew his messages of secessionism and hatred, India-Today is in a way helping his so-called cause. The concept of "Freedom of Expression" cannot be used to allow hardcore criminals to propagate their secessionist and militant ideology. Mr. Aroon Purie might argue that Yasin Malik has given up violence but let us not forget that Yasin Malik has not done his time. There are many charges still pending against him and he cannot be and should not be given any platforms until and unless he is brought to justice and until and unless he pays for his crimes. Just renouncing violence does not cut it. He has to pay for his criminal deeds. People like him need to be put away and kept away from the citizenry of India.

The story does not end here. Not only did India-Today offend Kashmiri Hindus and Indian Jawans, it also humiliated Kashmiri Hindus who attended the Conclave. When a Kashmiri Hindu attendee protested the presence of Yasin Malik at such a forum, this Kashmiri Hindu was thrown out of the conclave. Not only have we been thrown out of our homes, we are now also

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being thrown out of platforms where we should raise our voices against our perpetrators. Instead of providing the victims a platform, India-Today provides the platform to perpetrators and throws the victims out. What a platform for freedom of expression!!

India-Today has no right to offend Kashmiri Hindus by honoring a criminal who is responsible for our ethnic cleansing. Inviting Yasin Malik as a guest speaker and at the same time disallowing Kashmiri Hindus to raise their voice is like inviting a Nazi to spew anti-Semitic messages and disallowing Jews to speak against that Nazi. Would Mr. Aroon Purie dare to provide a platform to a Nazi? Would he? He would not and rightfully so. But he would go ahead and honor and honor Yasin Malik. Why? Only he can answer that.

While India-Today was honoring a terrorist, Delhi Police was not going to take a back seat. They too swung into action and made sure that Kashmiri Hindus, who are the only ones fighting for India's pride in the valley of Kashmir, are humiliated and subjected to harassment. While Yasin Malik was delving on his secessionist theories inside the Taj Palace hotel, hundreds of Kashmiri Hindus were peacefully protesting outside. These Kashmiri Hindus whose brothers, sisters, fathers have been the victims of Yasin Malik's brutal ethnic cleansing tactics, were exercising their fundamental right to protest against India-Today for providing space to their killers. But that did not go well with Delhi police. Instead of protecting the fundamental rights of Kashmiri Hindus, Delhi police arrived in full force and lathi-charged peaceful protestors. Not only were they lathi-charged, but dozen of them were actually arrested and locked up at Chanakypuri Police station for many hours. This is the price Kashmiri Hindus have to pay for hoisting Indian Tricolor in Kashmir and continuing to believe in Indian nation and constitution.

I wonder what UPA government's response would have been if these very Kashmiri Hindus would have raised Pro-Pakistan and Aazaadi slogans.

Would that have made them sit up and take notice? I wonder.

Burning question:

Manik Rao Gavit, Minister of State for Home in Indian Union cabinet said that in 1947, as many as 5,674 families comprising 47,215 people migrated from West Pakistan and settled in Jammu, Kathua and Rajouri districts. This number has since risen to 24,200 families with 1.5 lakh

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people.

Do you know that adults among these 1.5 lakh people can vote in Indian parliamentary elections but cannot vote in local Jammu & Kashmir assembly polls?

That brings us to the burning question:

When will the Indian Union Government have the political will to abolish the temporary act of Article 370?