

## LETTER

### **Response to David's article on the use of pellet guns in Kashmir**

Published online on June 13, 2017. DOI: 10.20529/IJME.2017.060

I am distressed by the political inclination of the journal reflected in publishing the article by Siddarth David in a recent issue of *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* (1). The journal has tried to redeem its image by publishing a counterinterview by Ravindra Ghooi (2). I feel more voices need to be heard on the utter unsuitability of David's comments on the use of pellet guns by security forces in Kashmir in a medical ethics journal.

The medical professionals associated with the Forum for Medical Ethics Society were essentially sensitive to the inequalities in healthcare and hence always left of centre. Over the years, however, a more stringent left tilt has been observed and medical ethics is being replaced by a political ideology.

The ambit of medical discussion needs to be restricted to analysing the basic pathology, symptoms, treatment and ethics related to diagnostics and treatment. Stone pelting is only a symptom of deep-seated hatred of a few in the valley alone; Jammu and Ladakh, large districts of the Jammu & Kashmir State, being totally unsupportive of militancy and terrorism. Initially imported from Pakistan, militancy has now been coloured with the IS type of Islam. Arm-chair scholars lack the full knowledge of the conflict as they get false and incomplete information.

Having been born and brought up in Jammu, I could expand on the valley conundrum but the *IJME* is not the place. I just want to refer to the indigenous Kashmiri form of Sufism also known as Rishism. There have been Buddhist, Hindu as well as Muslim Rishis in Kashmir, and they played an important role in the social fabric of the state. This Sufism has been torn apart by Wahabi Islam over the years without a murmur from the academicians like the Davids, Kanhaiyas and Umar Khalids, who instead choose to castigate the security forces and the judiciary while hailing/ignoring Burhan Wani and Afzal Guru as symptoms of the disease. But this is again political and I should

not dwell on this. *Suffice it to say that if there were no individuals pelting stones on the security forces engaged in counter-terrorism operations, there would be no need for pellet guns or other severe measures to control the violent mobs armed with not only stones but also hand grenades and petrol bombs.*

I would personally be happy if *IJME* keeps itself free of all shades of political overtones, right or left.

Lal Ded, the famous Kashmiri woman mystic (1335–1400), says:

*The Creator watches your thoughts and deeds. Do not think in terms of Hindu or Muslim.*

*If you are conscious, understand your inner self.*

**Ratna Magotra** (ratnamagotra@gmail.com), Consulting cardiac surgeon and former Head, Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, KEM Hospital, Parel, Mumbai 400 012 INDIA

#### **References**

1. David S. Use of pellet guns for crowd control in Kashmir: how lethal is "non-lethal"? *Indian J Med Ethics*. 2017 Apr-Jun;2(2)NS:124–7.
2. Ghooi RB. Should a medical ethics journal discuss actions of the security forces? *Indian J Med Ethics*. 2017 Apr-Jun;2(2)NS:127–8.

#### **(Editor's reply:**

*The IJME is a platform for academically rigorous debates and research in bioethics, including medical and healthcare ethics. All material, including editorials, is published with authorship credit and does not necessarily reflect the views of the IJME editors and the publisher, the FMES. Dr. Ratna Magotra has supported and written in the IJME since its inception, and we respect her. She has not provided any evidence of the IJME's bias in providing space to various views. The conflicts, more so when they are internal to a country, have profound moral and ethical significance; and the violent means used by various parties, including the government, have significant medical and mental health consequences. Those issues are, therefore, within the legitimate domain of the bioethics journal. We would be happy to publish academically rigorous analyses by Dr Magotra and others on ethical challenges in the conflicts in Kashmir as well as elsewhere in India and in other parts of the world.)*