

## Is Peace Just a Word Now?



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Once upon a time, peace meant something real. It meant borders that stayed quiet, children who didn't flinch at the sound of planes, and religions that were not split by politics. But today, peace is simply a word- a word that has no meaning. It is now just an imagination of how the world would be, only if it were pleasant. We repeat the word to comfort ourselves, to make us feel like everything is fine, even when the world around us has started to break.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2025, in the quiet and pleasant town of Pahalgam, a terrorist attack killed twelve innocent pilgrims who were on a spiritual journey. The only "crime" they committed was believing they were in a safe land that they trusted. The news didn't just shock a country, it tore open a wound, with deep layers into it- decades of pain, betrayal, terror, and mistrust between India and Pakistan.

For many, this was not just an attack; it was a symbol of something more profound. A symbol of terror, and even the most sacred places, could not be safe for the citizens anymore. The holy mountains of Pahalgam, a site of god, now a graveyard that carries the echoes of those final screams while shots were fired at the people, echoes that have not yet faded, and may never fade.

In the days that followed, there were incredible airstrikes launched from India, desperate to protect its citizens from the pain and terror that the Pakistani's have caused. But now, something deeper broke. On 1<sup>st</sup> May, India withdrew from the Shimla agreement and the Indus Water Treaty. These were agreements that held back decades of conflicts between the two countries. Pakistan called it "an act of war". In the next few days, missiles were launched, bombs blasted, troops moved in silence, and the twelve lives were bid farewell- some of fathers, some of newlyweds, and some of happy parents. Dreams were shattered, there was scarring, scarring that would never go away, not even when the body is turned into ashes. These scars will always remain.

No one talks about the families in Pulwama, Baramulla, or Uri, who now sleep in shifts, terrified of the next sound. No one talks about the teenage girl who lost her entire family in the Pahalgam attack on April 22, where 12 unarmed pilgrims were killed in cold blood. According to reports, the terrorists stopped their convoy at Baisaran meadows. They asked the religion of the person before opening fire. This was a message of hate. What did the Hindus do to the Pakistani's that they hate so much? What have the twelve pilgrims done to Pakistan for their lives to be taken?

Nothing. It was just hatred towards India and its religion.

They weren't soldiers, they were normal civilians. Family members were taken away from them. One victim, Shubham Dwivedi, had just gotten married and was on a pilgrimage with his wife.

She survived. In her interviews, she couldn't stop crying — her grief said more than any government ever could. They pleaded, "Take us away too, why only them?" The terrorists asked the civilians to complain to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about what they had witnessed. This was nerve. This was to show what they wanted. They wanted war.

Pahalgam, once known for its peace and beautiful peaks, is now known for the bloodshed. It didn't deserve to be turned into a place of horror and terror. In July, India launched Operation Mahadev to hunt down those who were responsible for the loss of the innocent lives of the civilians and the citizens who tried to help them. There was hope and unity amongst the people being attacked, as well as the ones attacking, but not with the Hindu civilians they decided to attack. The mission brought justice, but not peace. The fear still lingers in the eyes of locals. Fields feel unsafe, homes feel temporary. When India withdrew from long-standing treaties, it was clear: talks had failed. But maybe — just maybe—peace doesn't have to be over. Not yet.

## References

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