

Exercise to Evade Main Question

Kashmir continues to be in turmoil. The Indian rulers had spent best of their energies and time in using the methods of suppression and divisive, diversionist tactics rather than initiating a single move to infuse confidence in the Kashmir people that the Indian rulers are serious about the aspirations and rights of Kashmir people and would honour the promises made by them to the people. Ever since the BJP led regime at the centre and the PDP-BJP coalition govt in Kashmir had come they are doing everything to show that they are committed to continue the same old policies. In Kashmir, while the PDP, which is totally dependent on BJP for the survival of regime, is going out of the way to please the BJP, BJP is going all out to strengthen its position by deepening the communal division and antagonism among the people.

The experience of Kashmir people in the last two decades alone is too bitter. This is what a youth in Kashmir has said to a writer: In his childhood, they (security forces) searched (their homes) for militants. As a teen ager, they saw them searching for the militant informers. As he entered adulthood, the Amarnath land agitation broke out in 2008, and the valley saw pitched stone-pelting battles. The counter insurgents got a new enemy, the stone thrower. Their sorties barged into homes, looking for "suspected" stone throwers. In 2009, Kashmir again shook with the alleged rape and murder of Neelofar Jan and Aasia Jan in Shopian district. Their bodies were found in an apple orchard. The locals had accused the CRPF encamped nearby of raping and killing them. "Since then we are concerned for our women"For a moment he appeared disturbed, his voice turned grave and said "Anything can happen here". The ordeal did not end there. A year later in 2010, another agitation hit the state. This time, it set off after the Army claimed to have killed three "Pakistani infiltrators" in North Kashmir who later turned out to be the residents of Nadihal villages. An army officer ganged up with a local informer and a counter insurgent and killed the three young men in a staged manner so that they could earn cash rewards and promotions?

This story continues even today. Vast areas in Kashmir continue as disturbed or sensitive areas. They are kept under the heel of Army armed with special and draconian powers under the AFSPA. Thousands continue to groan in jails under various criminal and cooked up charges or PSA. The people live in terror, atmosphere of insecurity and deprived of normal life. With no means of livelihood, no jobs, and no democratic rights and with growing burdens of life they find the life too miserable. The youth are suspected or hounded as militants or as their supporters. Many find the life suffocating and feeling of alienation is growing strong among them.

In this situation, the Kashmir people in general and the youth in particular are choosing different forms to ventilate their grievances, anger and protest at the state of affairs. The tendency of defiance is growing strong among the people. Various protest movements in Kashmir are erupting only in this wake. The people are not scared to tags like "Pro-Pakistani", "militant", or "separatist" being attached by the govt. Or security forces. It seems that the people, more particularly youth are increasingly considering it as a matter of honour to fight for justice and being called as anti-establishment.

An incident that occurred in Kulgam district recently is one example for this. On Oct 30, 2015, the police sought to bury Abu Qasim in Bagan village of Kulgam district in south Kashmir. According to police, he was a Pakistani militant who master-minded Udhampur attack and also killed After Dar, a well known counter-insurgent in an ambush in the forests of north Kashmir. The moment the news of Abu Qason's scheduled funeral reached tens of thousands of people has reached the spot and took out a massive funeral procession. Most of them were youth of age between 20-30 years. The youth from adjoining districts too came in cars, mini buses and motorbikes and participated in the procession. The youth attacked the police station had finally handover the body to the people under the pressure of massive protest. This incident shows the mood of people in Kashmir.

The BJP, which is in power today at the centre, has learnt nothing from the experience of its predecessors or from its own practice. It is persisting in communal division and polarisation in Kashmir in an attempt to consolidate and strengthen its support base. This is a most dangerous game with far-reaching consequences. The march taken out by the RSS on the occasion of Vijaya Dashimi in Jammu

city brandishing swords, guns and other weapons and raising of slogans like, “Agar Hindustan Mei Rehna Hai to Vande Mataram Kehna Hai” and their attack on Enginner Rasheed, on Independent MLA from north Kashmir Langate Constituency for criticising the march is only a part of this game. By such activities the Hindu Communalists are not only dividing the people in Kashmir but also sowing new problems there.

The Narendra Modi Govt is also using the slogan of development and empty and loud promises of economic aid to create illusions among the Kashmir youth about the economic upliftment and employment prospects. Narendra Modi’s much tom-tomed visit to Sri Nagar on Nov.7, 2015 and his announcement of 80,000 crore aid in a public meeting were only a part of this attempt.

But the Kashmir people have enough experience of similar announcements and their fate in the past and in the last 18 months. Despite announcement of massive aid by Modi himself to provide relief and rehabilitation to the flood affected people of Kashmir, the people are still struggling to restore their devastated life. The way Modi held his November 7th public meeting in Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium in Sri Nagar only made mockery of democracy and the popularity of Modi. The activists and the entire leadership of Hurriyat which had announced a “Million March” on the same day at a different venue were arrested in advance. The Venue of the PM was kept under tight security and the pavilion from where; Modi addressed was kept 30 metres away from the gathering. So it was a meeting of selected and screened audience.

Kashmir people are forced with innumerable problems of life. They are struggling for their resolution and even relief in every possible form. At the same time, the onslaught going on their lives and democratic rights for decades has become a matter of serious concern, and life and death struggle for them. It will be sheer illusion for the Indian rulers if they think that they can win the hearts of Kashmir people by throwing some crumbs out at them while at the same time brutally crushing their just national and democratic rights by force. So what is needed is: Abandon all divisive, diversionist and manipulative methods; ensure free, democratic and peaceful conditions and atmosphere where the people can express their views on what should be the political future of Kashmir. Left to them self, the people of Kashmir are capable and mature enough to take a correct decision - a decision in their interests.
