

## Commentary:

# **Kashmir - Fulfil the Aspirations of People**

The PDP - BJP Govt. fell like a pack of cards with the withdrawal of BJP from the coalition. Governor's rule has come into vogue as no other party or combination of parties has come to the fore to form a govt.

There is nothing surprising or sudden in the collapse of regime in Kashmir. In 2015 elections, the PDP and BJP were two opposing poles. They fought bitterly to defeat each other. The PDP claimed to champion the aspirations of Kashmir people and oppose the Hindu communal and divisive politics of BJP. But the seats it won in the elections were inadequate to form a govt. So it went all out to strike a deal with its proclaimed foe BJP. The PDP leadership sought to attribute 'sane' intentions to justify its opportunistic alliance with BJP. It said, the alliance with BJP was the best option in the given situation to serve the Kashmir people. But the Kashmir people saw in it only a betrayal for the sake of power.

The formation of coalition govt and formulation of a common agenda were uphill tasks. The death of PDP's leader Mufti Mohammed Sayeed had enhanced the strains in the relations between the PDP and BJP. Ms Mehbooba Mufti had to spend many sleepless nights and engage herself in tiresome and humiliating exercises of bargain with the BJP leadership before assuming the Chief Ministership and cooking up a common agenda for the govt. The question before the PDP leadership at the time was how to retain the facade of PDP's continued commitment to the interests of Kashmir people. The question before the BJP leadership was how to grab key positions in the govt; how to keep the coalition partner PDP under check and how to use the power to consolidate and extend its support base in Kashmir. Having a BJP led govt. at the Centre provided an added advantage for the BJP in Jammu and Kashmir.

### WHY THE BREAK - ?

Announcing BJP's decision to sever ties with the PDP, Ram Madhav, BJP's General Secretary had this to say on June 19, 2018: He said: " It has become untenable for the BJP to continue in alliance in Jammu and Kashmir." ".....dominant partner in the alliance ( the PDP ) was not able to handle the situation in the state. Obstacles were also placed in the way of development projects in Jammu and Ladakh."

After tendering her resignation, Mehbooba Mufti said: "Masculine policy will not work or be successful in Jammu and Kashmir. We cannot treat the state as an enemy territory." The PDP's leader Mohammed Khurshid Alam said, the reasons that the BJP gave for pulling out "are worth to hail" and the "party feels proud of such reasons." "The reasons are demands made by Mehbooba Mufti for talks with Pakistan and separatists, withdrawal of the cases against the stone throwers, implementation of the ceasefire on ground and measures to be taken for successful dialogue and reconciliation."

These statements and counter statements reveal some facts, conceal some facts and seek to blame each other for the present crisis.

In the three and half years' rule of PDP – BJP combine, the Kashmir people had experienced worst repression. The central armed forces, protected by special Laws like AFSPA, had gone all out in their attacks against the people. Both in the course of so called anti-terrorist operations as well as dealing with the protest movements, they used the guns and pellet guns freely against the people. Hundreds and thousands of protesting people coming into the streets whenever and where ever a boy was sought to be arrested or gunned down by the armed police; taking part in funeral rallies of persons who lost lives in police firings and to demand legal action against those who committed the crime against people has become a common feature in Kashmir. The people who joined the massive protest movement of 2016 waged pitched battles with the central forces who used pellet guns extensively against the protesting people. Gunning down of young militant leader Burhan Wani roused more anger and defiance among the youth than striking fear in their hearts.

The abduction, rape and murder of a girl of 8 years in Kathua of Jammu in Jan'2018 came as part of a conspiracy of BJP and Hindutva forces to communally divide the people and terrorise a section of people into leaving Jammu. The involvement of Hindutva forces in the crime and the open and shameless support extended by BJP Ministers to the culprits had widely exposed the BJP. This heinous crime has brought the people and democratic forces into protest actions not only in Kashmir but also in various parts of India and the world.

### **Both on Leaky and Sinking Boat**

The PDP leadership remained a mute spectator to all these crimes against the people or engaged in some eye washing measures like ordering enquires, filing the FIRs and the release of some prisoners. Mehbooba Mufti also proposed cease fire during Ramzan, the dialogue with the stake holders and also with Pakistan to find a solution to the Kashmir problem. But it never ventured to go into the heart of the problem and never tried to spell out its view based on the aspirations and rights of Kashmir people.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir are well aware of BJP's policy of negating the aspirations and rights of people. The people know that BJP openly stood by the suppressive policy of the Indian govt. and sought to combine this policy with the politics of communal division.

Here is what a senior BJP leader of Kashmir has said about the state of BJP and PDP at the time of break up: "The situation in the state has become such that both our core constituencies have alienated from us. There was no way the alliance would hold till 2019. We were facing huge back lash from Jammu and Ladakh, the areas that voted for us, and the valley was hitting out against the PDP. We have an idea that the PDP would pull out of the govt. by Sept – October, well before the February announcement of General Elections. By pulling out first, we can still hope to retrieve ground."

True, both were in a leaky and sinking boat and BJP has shown the smartness of jumping out of the boat first. But both refuse to see the real causes placed them in such a state at the time of break.

#### **What Next ?**

The PDP may try to retrieve its support base by presenting itself as a 'martyr' which lost the power because it stood by the Kashmir people and for the resolution of Kashmir problem. But it cannot work. The PDP leadership cannot convincingly explain its opportunistic alliance with the BJP. The people will not believe it because it cannot adopt a policy in line with the genuine aspirations and rights of Kashmir people.

BJP's future course in Kashmir is clearly spelt out in the following words of BJP's leader Ram Madhav. He said:

" We have put in place a four-pronged approach. One is utter toughness on terrorists. Secondly, go after the overground operatives of terrorists via the legal course; thirdly, to engage with different sections of the society, fourthly, to focus on development." This approach will continue under Governor's rule also."

He even said: " When you (we) are pulling out of the government, it does not mean we are leaving the state. The Centre will administer the state. So it's the Governor as the representative of the President of India who will govern the state."

This is a method of running the govt. by back door without being in power in the state. By breaking the govt. the BJP has freed itself from the responsibilities. It is free to pursue the policy of ruthless suppression against the people in Kashmir under the cover of fighting terrorism. This policy will only aggravate the crisis and widen the gulf further between the Kashmir people and the Indian rulers. The Indian rulers and the BJP leaders may rest assured that their policy will only prove to be a monumental blunder and will boomerang.

The parties in the opposition in Kashmir can help the Kashmir people little if they show interest and enthusiasm in reaping the electoral gains from the present political crisis. The people of Kashmir, who are in a great difficulty and threatened by the intensifying onslaught, expect a clear policy and definite action on the part of political forces which can help the Kashmir people to withstand the onslaught and seek to find a just and lasting solution to their problem. The political and democratic forces in Kashmir as well as India must realise that a just and lasting solution to Kashmir problem can be found only by ensuring the necessary democratic and peaceful conditions for the Kashmir people to express their views and aspiration and decide their future.

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