

The Facade of Democracy

As we are fast approaching the 72nd day of Transfer of Power (August 15) the hollowness of the supposedly largest democracy continues to get exposed before the people.

The democratic and civil rights are being violated at all levels by security and police forces with impunity. Dozens of encounter and custodial deaths are taking place. Yet, the directives from the Supreme Court go unattended and National Human Rights Commission condones itself by announcing monetary compensation to the victims. Private armed gangs are killing law abiding and innocent citizens which are being abetted by the Hindu communal forces wielding the state power. Anyone trying to promote secularism, freedom to practice one's own religion and freedom of speech is being branded as anti-national. Dissenters are being denied to organize peaceful rallies against forceful acquisition of land, displacement and submergence of villages. 'Paid news' and 'fake news' are being paraded as the authoritative facts. Journalists have no freedom than presenting what the big bourgeois bosses want. And when scribes belonging to small press are exposing the facts, they are being eliminated physically.

While the mandarins in the seat of power at New Delhi are getting more intolerant with every passing day trampling the voices of dissent, they are, including the PM, engaged in the exercises to please the US imperialism. In her recent visit to India, Nikki Haley, the US representative at UN and a person of Indian origin, publicly asked the Indian government to downgrade its relations with neighbor country Iran and stop buying oil from it. And Modi government is ready to buckle under pressure as its predecessor UPA has done in the case of Iran gas pipe line to the detriment of country's interests.

The Indian Parliament, which used to function more in disruption by its members than discharging its duties, not surprisingly sat for a marathon 14 hour session to discuss no confidence motion against the BJP government. The result was as predicted, defeat of the motion. Yet one more aspect of the Indian democracy, the so-called federal nature of it, has come to the focus. Many Members of Parliament from various states cutting across the party lines have accused the Centre that it has been perpetuating injustice to their state – denying financial allocations due to them, taking away many of their powers etc. But no one was bold enough to demand a review of the Centre- state relations.

Though the ruling class parties praise the unity and diversity as the sacred feature of Indian polity and culture and talk endlessly of the federal nature of the Indian Constitution, in practice, it largely remains as an unitary state. With every passing year more and more powers of the state are being taken away to rest them with the Centre. Whichever ruling party and coalition is at the helm of the affairs, it encroaches upon the powers of the states. The latest example is the Goods and Services Tax, which has effectively taken away the tax collecting capability of the states and forced them to look to the Centre for the devolvement of the income through tax collections and virtually made them dependent on the Centre.

When the Centre-state relations became a serious political discourse during 1980s, the Central government appointed the Sarkaria Commission. Its recommendations, though of limited nature and purpose, have been shelved once for all. The much tomtomed 'cooperative federalism' peddled by Narendra Modi turn out to be unilateral attack on the states. That the states continue to remain as glorified municipalities is a fact of life.

The Programme of the CPI (ML) categorically stated that the federal system claimed to be the essence of the Indian constitution is a myth and India is "prison house for the various nationalities" that are striving to develop.

Another much praised aspect of the Indian democracy, the elections, has also come under attack from the ruling classes. The BJP for a long time is the advocate of presidential form of governance. Recently it coined the slogan: "One Nation-One Election". Holding elections as and when needed by the procedure stipulated in the Constitution and being followed all these years as 'constitutional perversity'. The Law commission is hearing the opinions from the political parties. The Niti Ayog floated an outrageous proposal to make 'the President head of executive'. If the dissolution of Lok Sabha cannot be avoided, then the provision could be made for the President to carry out the administration of the country, on the advice of Council of Ministers to be appointed by him till the next House is constituted. If this is accepted in principle, the state would come under governor's rule. And it spells doom to even the semblance of democracy.

As usual, this month the rulers would perform the ritual of Independence and project themselves as the custodians of national interests. But the plunder, oppression and suffering our people had experienced in the last seven decades make them realise that they have a lifelong struggle to wage to win a really independent, democratic and prosperous India. They are definitely on this path.
