

# Condemn and Oppose the Onslaught on Kashmir People

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It is already 40 days since Kashmir people were totally cut off from the rest of India and inside Kashmir. The Indian Govt. took every care to conceal the real situation and the consequences of its actions for the Kashmir people. Yet, a few facts, somehow, are trickling out of Kashmir throw light on how the oppressive conditions created by the Indian Govt. have throttled the life in Kashmir.

All means and forms of communication are cut off. Normal life and activity of Kashmir people are banished. More than 10 lakh military and para-military forces occupy every inch of Kashmir with loaded guns ready to act against the people. The jails are filled with the leaders and activists of political parties and people. The leaders of political parties, MPs of the opposition, media are not allowed to visit Kashmir and interact with people. The Kashmir people who happen to live in India are not allowed even to interact with their families and friends in Kashmir. Kashmir is now reduced into a vast prison and a virtual war zone. Here, the unarmed and innocent people are faced with a fully armed state. The people know too little why they are targeted and where an end to it is.

It was a conspiratorial and arbitrary assault. On Aug 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah proposed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, 2019 and two Resolutions in both Houses of Parliament which, in effect, proposed the abolition of special status to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and 35-A of the Indian Constitution. He used the same Article 370 to abrogate it and to divide and down grade a State into two Union Territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Laddakh. The opposition had nothing to do and, in fact, was not allowed to do except raising some noise. The Govt. simply walked away with the adoption of its proposals on the strength its brute majority in parliament.

The Union Home Minister and other defenders of Govt. proposals advanced their own arguments in justification of their actions. They contended that according a special status to Jammu and Kashmir was itself wrong on the part of Jawaharlal Nehru and his Govt. More so, its continuation for so long a period was doubly wrong. They argued that Article 370 and Article 35-A stood as serious roadblocks in the way of total integration of Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian Union and for the development of Kashmir. They complained that liberal and vacillating policy of Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible for the temporary loss of a part of Kashmir to Pakistan and the failure of Indian Govt. to a straight away and unconditionally integrate Kashmir into the Indian Union. All troubles that the Indian Govt. had to encounter in the subsequent period were only a consequence of this blunder which the present Govt. is correcting. They assured that the present move is in the best interests of Kashmir people.

## **National chauvinist Frenzy**

The BJP leadership has kicked up a lot of national chauvinist frenzy to silence the dissenting and opposing voices. Many have succumbed to this. The BJP and its leadership sought to project itself as a political leadership

which can act decisively and courageously when it comes to protecting the national interests. It brushed aside all the talk about the violation of democratic norms and parliamentary procedures by the Govt. in the context of propo-sing the Bill and resolutions in parliament and its failure to take Kashmir people and other parties into confidence as a matter of no importance. It sought to even call critical voices as anti-national, pro-Pakistani and a dangerous attempt to weaken the national unity and national leadership much to the delight of enemies and adversaries. Here is a vulgarized concept of nationalism peddled by the exploiting ruling classes and their regimes in the world. The BJP regime is using it aggressively against its political adversaries and people.

## **Throwing All Commitments to Winds**

In the view of present Indian Govt. and BJP leaders, the promises made by the Indian Govt. to the people of Kashmir; its responsibility to honor its own commitment to Kashmir to finally decide their political future in accordance with their national aspirations and wishes are worthless. They

can be set aside and ignored since the interests of Indian ruling classes are of paramount importance. This kind of political position, logic and assertion on the part of a responsible Govt. only stem on the basis of muscle power and lack of rationality. They seriously erode the trustworthiness of a Country's rulers, further deepen their alienation from Kashmir people and evade the resolution of problem.

### **Lame Defense of Congress**

Most of the parties in parliament were critical of the way the BJP Govt. brought the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill and Resolutions on Kashmir and the way it sought to manufacture their adoption by brute majority in parliament. They were critical of division of Jammu and Kashmir and its degradation into Union Territories. The Congress leadership is one among these critiques.

At the same time, the political position; defense of Congress role in Kashmir are particularly noteworthy.

The senior Congress leader from Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad has explained with all emotion, anger and outburst the position and role of Congress leadership in the decades' long years of rule. His explanations boils down to this: In the given most complicated historical conditions then prevailed in Kashmir, wise, practical and able handling of Kashmir question by Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress led by him alone had resulted in the signing of Instrument of Accession by the Indian Govt. and Kashmir Maharaja Hari Singh. The said Agreement integrated Jammu and Kashmir in India confining Indian Govt's powers to defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications. In the given historical conditions, it alone was possible and can be said as a great achievement for India. The inclusion of Article 370 and 35-A in the Indian Constitution and other promises made by the Indian Govt. in the subsequent period were in line with the Agreement. However, the Congress regimes in the subsequent period initiated several moves towards greater integration of Kashmir into India. Credit for all this goes to Congress, Sheikh Abdulla and Kashmir people as they extended their support and concurrence to these moves.

### **Untold Story**

Here the Congress leader states only some facts of history conveniently forgetting or concealing many crucial facts that expose how the Congress regimes in the Centre acted against the letter and spirit of Instrument of Accession; their own commitments and promises to Kashmir people; how they resorted to many foul methods to water down Kashmir's special status and how they combined the methods of manipulation, pressure and suppression to compel the Kashmir people to come to terms with the Indian ruling classes to the best of their satisfaction.

The facts concerning this period include: The historical conditions at the time of signing the Instrument of Accession (Oct 26, 1947) were peculiar in the sense, to start with, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir was not for integrating Kashmir in either India or Pakistan. But then he was in the thick of intensifying crisis. On one side, he was encircled by a powerful and ever growing anti-feudal peasant movement led by Sheikh Abdulla for radical land reforms and democratic changes. Had it developed further at the time, Jammu and Kashmir had every possibility to free itself from the yoke of feudal rule and emerge into an independent and democratic Kashmir. On the other side, the Pakistan rulers were for integrating Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan. Resultantly, Pakistan had sent its armed bands into Kashmir and went on occupying some parts of it. There emerged a situation where Maharaja was not in a position to withstand and needed help. The Indian Government had fully utilized this situation to bring around the Maharaja Hari Singh to sign an Instrument of Accession with India. India's armed action against Pakistan intruders had begun on October 27, 1947, in the areas of Jammu and Kashmir then under the attack and occupation of Pakistan. The armed conflict had developed into a mini-war between India and Pakistan and ended with a cease-fire agreement in Jan, 1948. It is curious to note that it was British Chiefs of the Army who were commanding the armed forces when the armed conflict had begun between India and Pakistan. This will give a glimpse of imperialist policy and role in the origin and continuation of disputes between the erstwhile colonies. Thus the first division of Jammu and Kashmir had taken place with no consent of its people and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Kashmir conditionally integrated in India had emerged.

## **The Special status for Kashmir and Promises**

The Indian Govt. as well as Jawaharlal Nehru had assured in the UNO and publicly in India that the Instrument of Accession will be honored in letter and spirit and the political future of Jammu and Kashmir will be finally decided through a democratically held plebiscite in accordance with Kashmir. The Article 370 was included in the Indian Constitution (draft) on Oct 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949 according a special status for Kashmir as promised by the Indian Govt. Jammu and Kashmir came to have a Constituent Assembly, Constitution, Flag of its own, etc and Sheikh Abdulla as its Prime Minister. This is one part of earlier history of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Acting against the Letter and Spirit of Agreement**

But, another part of history had begun right in 1953. The Indian Govt. had arbitrarily removed Sheikh Abdulla as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in August 1953 as it found him as an obstacle in the way of its proposed moves of further integration of Kashmir. Bakshi Ghulam – a deserter of National Conference and a loyalist of Indian ruling classes was installed in his place. Then, series of moves like doing away with the separate Constituent Assembly, Constitution and Prime Minister followed. The Plebiscite Front was banned in Kashmir. Sheikh Abdulla was arrested and foisted with a conspiracy case. Though the case was withdrawn after 6 years, he was kept under detention till 1964. Again, he was kept under house arrest in 1965 till 1974. The Indian Govt. used this period to push through the changes it intended to bring in Kashmir and pressurize Sheikh Abdulla in the name of engaging him in dialogue to bring him to terms with the Indian Govt. Sheikh Abdulla's release was possible only because of his compromise with the Indian Govt. on some points that weakened the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The process of dilution of Article 370 continued even after Sheikh Abdulla's return to power in 1975. Ghulam Nabi Azad was deliberately concealing this part of sad and tragic history when he presented the role of Congress in Kashmir in bright colors.

The story did not end here. The period between 1953 and 2014 was bloody for Kashmir people. The entire Kashmir valley was turned into a vast dumping ground for military and para-military forces protected by (AFSPA) special powers. Imposition of Sec 144, curfews, prohibitions, blockades and imprisonments, for days together whenever there is a protest; declaring vast areas as disturbed areas and prolonging them for an unlimited time; the innocent youth being branded as terrorists or suspected terrorists, disappearances, encounters of people; the people coming into streets in protests against police atrocities, injustices and even to get the dead bodies of their near and dear who had died in police firings and protests assuming massive and prolonged nature; the people taking part in these protests with courage and defiance had become a normal feature of life in Kashmir.

The Indian Govt. had enacted the drama of democratic elections to show that Kashmir people are ruled by a democratically elected Govt. and there exist normal, democratic and peaceful conditions of life in Kashmir. It used the riggings, toppling, president's rule and coalition to maintain a façade of democratic rule.

On one side, the congress rule went on diluting the Article 370 with an aim of reducing it into an empty shell. On the other side, it tried to keep the Kashmir people under the illusion that the congress Govt. continues to be committed to retain the Article 370 and Article 35-A in the Indian constitution. It also tried to put up a show of a dialogue with the people. However, this so called dialogue and other maneuvers were only meant to convey the message to the Kashmir people that they are left with no alternative to integrate themselves in India unconditionally and forget about their national aspirations and rights once forever.

The Pakistan rulers, on their part, had been doing everything to project the Kashmir issue as a dispute between Pakistan and India. Certain political forces in Kashmir who claim to represent the cause of Kashmir people too share this view. The acts of Pakistan rulers like showing sympathy to Kashmir people, propping up some militant elements and their attempts to occasionally bring the Kashmir question on the agenda are only aimed at reminding the Indian rulers that the question of Kashmir concerns Pakistan too and it cannot be solved without their involvement and concurrence. Thus, the ghost of Pakistan had become a convenient tool even for the Indian ruling classes as it

helps them to project the Kashmir problem as a creation of Pakistan and paint a tar and negate the genuine national and democratic aspirations of Kashmir people.

The imperialists never respected the genuine aspirations and rights of Kashmir people. Yet, they shed tears for the Kashmir people. They too project the Kashmir issue as a problem between India and Pakistan. They seek to fish in the troubled waters. Their attempt, as US President Donald Trump has recently done, to place themselves in the role of mediators and judges in the Kashmir problem is only a part of it.

The kind of political defense of its own policy and role in Kashmir the Congress leaders had put up in the face of BJP's criticism has weaknesses of basic nature. Their criticism of BJP govt's abrogation of Article 370 and 35A holds little water without explaining where they stand in relation to the main content of special status to Kashmir, the promises and commitment and how they propose to do justice to Kashmir people. The repeated assurances of Congress leaders that they are one with the BJP govt. in upholding national interests and in opposing Pakistan's interference in Kashmir issue can only be a walk into the propaganda trap laid by the BJP. The general mass of people and democratic forces see it as nothing but an attempt to express the solidarity and unity among the Indian ruling classes against the Kashmir people.

BJP's move is conspiratorial and sinister. It is stab in the back of people. It carries with it far reaching consequences for Kashmir people. They have had a bloody experience in the last seven decades. Yet, a remote hope or illusion was lurking in their minds that one day some wisdom may dawn on the Indian rulers and things may take a better turn. But the present move of BJP govt. had inflicted a devastating blow. Their struggle has entered a most difficult phase.

The people (undivided) Kashmir has their own distinct economy, culture, language and life style. They represent fine qualities of a budding nation, It will be a great injustice and insult for the Kashmir people from the divisive lenses of Hindu or Muslims. The national aspirations and democratic features of people here had blossomed in the course of their prolonged struggle against feudal kingdom, for radical land reforms and a democratic system, Here people of different faiths like Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Sufis had set a best example of co-existence, harmony, mutual respect and brotherhood. The Kashmir people proudly call the common, secular and unifying culture which they have developed by a common effort as "Kashmiriat". They suffered worst attacks and massacres under the Dogra king Hari Singh. They withstood the pressures and provocations from Pakistan and rabid communal forces, and the disastrous consequences of two major wars between India and Pakistan. BJP, its earlier incarnations and Sangh Parivar forces had done a lot to communalise and communally divide them. The present move of the BJP Govt. to cut Jammu and Kashmir with a big axe physically into two pieces is a monumental crime or blatant regressive move to nullify whatever the progress the Kashmir people had achieved by shedding their sweat and blood in developing the healthy features of their nationality.

The BJP and its sangh parivar had done much earlier to divide the Kashmir people. In the last six years, it has shed much blood of Kashmir people (2016) to suppress their just struggle. However, they miserably failed in breaking the will and unity of Kashmir people. Now, by their act of physically cutting Jammu and Kashmir into two pieces and down grading into entities (UTs) worse than a state, the BJP seems to hope to freely play its dirty politics of communal division and break the back bone of Kashmir peoples' struggle for better political future.

The onslaught of BJP Govt. on Kashmir people has sent dangerous signals even for other people in India. The people in the North East region of India, with their historical backgrounds of evolution and development, are still in the process of gaining confidence in their integration in India. Some of the political groups here are in different stages of dialogue and struggle with the Indian Govt. The Kashmir development came as a big shock for them. The states which are assured of special statuses fear where and how the axe of Indian Govt. is going to hit them. The states, which are already, pushed into a status of municipalities virtually under the increasing concentration of powers in the centre fear what is in store for them. Especially, in the conditions of frenzied drive on the part of BJP to dismantle opposition, impose its own rule everywhere by hook or crook and to reduce even the notion of federal structure into a mockery, the states are worried of possible

repercussions of developments in Kashmir. The thirst of Hindutva, the talk of one nation, one culture, one religion and one language indulged in by the BJP go against the concept of diversity and the nature of India as a flower house of various nationalities that can unite and prosper only on the basis of equality, fraternity, secularism and common urge and effort. So, the attack on Kashmir people is an attack on the entire exploited and oppressed masses of Indian people.

All the claims of BJP Govt. that its more is, no doubt, a bitter pill, but will open the doors wide for employment, investment and all-round development of Kashmir are totally misleading. Through their policies of loot and subservience to imperialism the Indian rulers had already driven the country into irredeemable economic crisis. They had taken the unemployment to unprecedented heights. They are engaged in mortgaging and selling off natural resources, public sector industries, services and human resources to foreign and Indian corporate looters; they are imposing back breading economic burdens on the people. Placed themselves in this state, it a big fraud on the Kashmir people to promise them a better future. Nothing had prevented the Indian rulers in the last seven decades to address the problems of Kashmir people. It is really astonishing for the BJP first to plunge the Kashmir people in utter darkness and tie their hands and feet with heavy chains and then promise them an illusory feast. This is nothing but playing with the lives and feelings of Kashmir people. What one can expect from them is to open the flood gates of Kashmir for foreign and corporate loot, push through their agenda of communal division.

The Indian rulers may silence the Kashmir people for a while with a heavy hand. But they cannot win the people either by force or manipulation. The Kashmir people had seen the worst conditions. They can be expected to overcome the present difficult situation and learn to stand on their feet and find a way to continue the struggle.

It is most urgent and essential to demand:

1. The restoration of all freedoms and rights to the people of Kashmir;
2. Restore all forms of communication among the people inside Kashmir and with the outside world.
3. Allow the leaders, workers of parties and peoples organizations and media to function with no restrictions whatsoever.
4. Kashmir people must be allowed to ventilate their views and grievances fully and freely so that a dependable and lasting solution to the Kashmir problem can be found.

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