

‘Endless Kashmir War’

Curfew is an evil and there is no necessity to live permanently under curfew—‘civil’ curfew or ‘official’ curfew. But Kashmiris have no option but to learn how to make life easier under curfew. The two-month old mass agitation in the Kashmir valley by unarmed ordinary citizens speaks volumes about the ground reality but the policy makers in New Delhi refuse to read the writing on the wall. Terrorism can no longer be limited to just Pakistan-financed jihadi groups. All rulers fear mass opposition. The coalition government of National Conference and Congress in Srinagar too fears mass agitation. Through ‘civil’ curfew Kashmiris seem to have devised their own way of continuing non-cooperation movement—non-cooperation with the Omar Abdullah government because the present imbroglio is in the main a “war of Abdullah’s choosing”. “There is no government worth the name in the state”. So said the other day Mehbooba Mufti, president of Kashmiri Opposition Party—People’s Democratic Party, that lost the last election. Then it is the pet allegation by opposition everywhere. New Delhi’s policy of leaving in charge one coalition worse than the other has so far failed to produce desired results in Kashmir.

The on-going unrest in Kashmir seems endless. Despite its humanitarian cover the Indian army is being seen by most Kashmiris as an occupation force. That National Conference is no answer to pro-Pakistani Huriyat Conference is now amply demonstrated by the death-defying mood of the Kashmiri people. Meting out VIP treatment to some top Huriyat leaders is unlikely to change the equation in favour of New Delhi. In the wake of massive mass anger the so-called mainstream parties are increasingly becoming irrelevant paving the way for the ‘fundamentalists’ and ‘terrorists’ to fill up the vacuum. For the Abdullaha addressing public means addressing a “captive” audience in well guarded public halls.

There is no denying the fact that religious leaders have enormous sway on the Kashmiri people. Despite active involvement of mosques in the current phase of anti-government agitation Amarnath Pilgrims faced no hurdle to complete their journey and reach the cave shrine, much to the dismay of the saffron establishment as they failed to portray the Kashmiri movement as communal directed against the hindus. True, there are communal elements in the movement but separatists showed political maturity by not attacking hindu devotees and making their annual ritual difficult.

Political parties, mainstream or otherwise, have virtually no specific agenda on Kashmir other than endorsing union government policy. The future of Kashmiri youth is at stake. And New Delhi’s periodic announcement of some packages, particularly after every bout of mass upsurge, is too cosmetic to heal the wounds. For the first time agitationists burnt down government offices and police stations with the clear message that the situation could turn more violent any moment now. Luckily for the people of Kashmir they have not yet discovered the all-pervasive maoist link with the present civil disobedience movement.

Surprisingly, maoists too, not to speak of official communists, have no clear-cut policy on Kashmir. At no juncture of history communists in India were at ease with nationality

problem as they failed to support any genuine demand of self-determination to the point of cessation. Even in the seventies the naxalites were vague about the nationality question. And today what is said about right to self-determination including Kashmiri self-determination and autonomy issue, in most maoist literatures can at best be described as ritualistic discourse, having no potential to develop a solidarity movement, even on human rights abuses, across the country. Today the valley of Kashmir—or the valley of death—looks like a big prison house, rather an open air prison campus, encircled by security forces.

While the British prime minister Cameron in his recent diplomatic and business mission to India was a bit magnanimous somewhat deviating from the traditional western stance in helping New Delhi on its position on Kashmir by accusing Islamabad of 'exporting terror', UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made things embarrassing for the Manmohan Singhs by issuing a caustic comment on the security situation in Kashmir. Then these days nobody bothers about UN unless Uncle Sam moves in.

Moscow failed to crush the spirit of East Europeans by sending troops and tanks. The unarmed civilians revolted against the Soviet might. And unarmed citizens, particularly youth, of Kashmir, are responding in ever increasing numbers to the call of anti-establishment agitation. The real problem for New Delhi is that the junta of Islamabad is in no mood to share the Kashmir real estate, they want full control. And in cross-fire the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, the only real solution to the vexed question of more autonomy and self-determination, have been silenced too long. □

8-8-2010