

KASHMIR RHETORIC AND REALITY

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KASHMIR - RHETORIC AND REALITY

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KASHMIR -- RHETORIC AND REALITY

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN KASHMIR ?

Today Kashmir is a war-torn state. It is a war being waged by Kashmiri people under the leadership of various militant organisations like the JKLF, for an independent nation. However, prime minister V.P.Singh declared that his government would never allow Kashmir to secede nor would it spare those fanning the struggle. In accordance to the declaration, Indian government deployed huge military and paramilitary troops who are wreaking havoc in Kashmir. Beginning with the appointment of Jagmohan as the governor in January this year, not a single day passed in Kashmir valley without gunfire at some place or the other. After hundreds of killings and thousands of arrests, Kashmir today presents the look of a country devastated by enemy occupation.

In India, except for a handful of revolutionary groups and some intellectuals who espouse the right to self-determination, everybody seems to be opposing the Kashmir movement. This is mainly due to the vicious propaganda being carried out by the Indian ruling classes. Even the leftist parties, who once extended their unequivocal support to all the nationality struggles including that of Kashmir, have changed the tune now and are condoning the government line in a shameless manner.

All those who are supporting the Kashmiri movement or just opposing the military atrocities are being branded as anti-national while those supporting the brutal repression are being hailed as great patriots. In fact, the ruling classes created a situation where to be considered patriotic or not one has to be judged by his supporting or opposing a nationality struggle, especially of the Kashmiris. Even an internationally respected human rights organisation like Amnesty International was banned entry into Kashmir and Punjab just because it attempted to bring out the truth in an objective manner.

Moreover, the government is desperately trying to prevent any kind of national and international support going to the people of Kashmir. By claiming Kashmir to be an internal matter of India in which no external force, not even United Nations, could interfere, Indian government has effectively cordoned off the state. On the other hand, a draconian press censorship was imposed so that no impartial news could get out and India could continue with its propaganda unchallenged the burden of which is that only a few groups of terrorists, not masses, are creating disturbances with the military and financial support of Pakistan. Highlighting only the killings and kidnappings of a few officials, the government is trying to pull a mask over the mass upsurge of Kashmiri people so that their legitimate aspirations could not be appreciated by the common masses in India. Then religious bigots like RSS, BJP and Shiv Sena are striving hard to mobilise the majority Hindus against Kashmir by painting the

movement as an attack of Muslim fanatics on the Hindus. The print and other media also is trying to depict the movement as destabilising.

But in reality, Kashmiris are able to view Kashmir only as a colony of India. Even judging by the sporadically truthful accounts leaking out to the press, it is clear that those fighting against the central government are not a handful of Pakistan agents as being projected by the ruling classes and their propaganda is merely an attempt to isolate and finish off the movement in Kashmir. **PEOPLE ARE STEADFAST IN THEIR STRUGGLE**

On July 31, 1989, martyr memorial day was observed all over Kashmir valley in remembrance of the independence struggle launched under the leadership of Sheik Abdulla on the same day in 1931. Millions of people congregated at mosques and other places to pray for those who laid down their lives for the cause of independence. Since then, people have been participating in great multitudes in several programmes undertaken by the militants. Life came to a standstill in Jammu and Kashmir on October 27 when a protest day was observed following a call given by JKLF and People's League against the accession of Kashmir to India. August 15 was treated as a black day and no Indian flag fluttered in Kashmir but only black flags and anti-Indian demonstrations. The boycott call of parliament elections was an unqualified success. While political parties won the election on a negative vote in the rest of the country, Kashmir did not cast any votes at all. Even the official claim was 3 per cent polling.

Meanwhile the repression being carried out became greatly intensified with the advent of Jagmohan who soon became a man everybody loved to hate. The paramilitary forces he brought along with him plunged the valley in a pool of blood. But people did not stop protesting even amidst repression. In a curfew-defying procession taken out in Srinagar against illegal searching, attacks and abductions of youth, nearly 20000 people participated. The procession was fired upon at Basantbaug resulting in killing of 200 unarmed people including women and children. The very next day, another 100 were killed in firing on another protest march of 30000 people in Maisuma. Nearly half a million people marched to the United Nations office in Srinagar on March 1. It was a peaceful demonstration demanding independence. But it was surrounded by CRPF who mercilessly shot dead hundreds of people.

Thus, people are participating in great numbers in the struggle for independence and repulsing the Indian forces with slogans like "Indian dogs - go back !" These are irrefutable evidence of the lack of confidence Kashmiris have in the Indian government. However, by focussing their propaganda only on the attacks on government officials and military personnel and ignoring the mass movement, a deliberate attempt is being made to describe the struggling people as terrorists and anti-national elements so that they could get no solidarity from the people and intellectuals of the region. This approach, of course is not

specific to Kashmir alone but is adopted towards all the militant struggles going on in Punjab, Bihar, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. Afraid that their atrocities would be exposed, government has banned anti-establishment newspapers in the valley. The news blockade is not allowing even the bourgeois press into Kashmir. Such quarantine notwithstanding, news is still spilling out laying bare the truth about the Kashmiri struggle.

No struggle can erupt without reason. The ruling class propaganda that people are provoked into agitations by mere exhortations of a few terrorists stems from their bourgeois philosophical concept that "individual heroes create history - not people". But history teaches us that heroes emerge only out of mass movements and masses struggle only when are forced by the conditions. However, our rulers are urging us to ignore this historical truth once more in the case of Kashmir. Therefore, it is necessary to review the conditions that led to the heroic struggle being waged by the Kashmiri nationality.

HISTORY OF KASHMIR IS THE HISTORY OF INDIAN TREACHERY

British imperialists placed the Hindu Dogras as rulers of Kashmir after they defeated the sikhs in 1846. Since then, Dogras ruled the predominantly Muslim-populated Kashmir with an iron hand. Severely pauperised under their despotic rule, masses held protest rallies in 1931 demanding political reforms. The people's movement which started as a peaceful one gradually expanded and transformed into a huge agitation with militant programmes. Pushed to a corner, the king set up a commission to look into the grievances of people and recommend measures for their redressal. Out of the tumult formed the Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference from which a secular section split in 1939 to form the National Conference under Sheik Abdulla. The 1944 conference of NC prepared and submitted a detailed memorandum to the king which is in essence its agenda for social, political, economic and cultural reconstruction of Kashmir. This memorandum became known as "Naya Kashmir" document. "Naya Kashmir" declared, "the problem of Kashmir was surrounded by the wider concentric circles of the problems of India and the problems of the world as a whole.....when political and economic system are in the melting pot and ideas of a New World Order are being debated, it (NC) too must formulate more concretely its own conception of the New Kashmir it strives to build." This highly democratic and egalitarian plan assured equality of rights to citizens irrespective of their 'religion, race, nationality of birth' in all spheres and envisaged a society in which "equal opportunities are provided for every member for self-expression and self-fulfillment and the adequate minimum of a civilised standard of life is assured to each member, so as to make the achievement of this equal opportunity a reality".

Armed with such an agenda, NC launched in 1945 an anti-government struggle which soon snowballed into 'quit Kashmir' movement which demanded that the autocratic Dogra House should unconditionally surrender sovereignty to the people. The

installation of Ramachandra Kak as prime minister of Kashmir signalled a reign of terror against the masses. Arrests, tortures and killings reached a crescendo and hundreds of people were mown down in the shooting on a procession held against the arrest of Abdulla and other NC leaders on 20 May 1946. In spite of Raja Hari Singh's efforts to suppress the struggle, people fought resolutely in order to eradicate the monarchy and establish a people's government. Thus, while in all other princely kingdoms in India only political reforms were demanded, in Kashmir under the leadership of NC and in Hyderabad Nizam under the Communist Party masses opposed the very system of monarchy. After Abdulla was arrested, the administration of Kashmir was totally taken over by the army.

Amidst all this, Britain announced that it would grant independence to India. At that time, except for North Western and Eastern regions (now Pakistan and Bangladesh) where Muslim League held sway, the Congress party representing the Hindu comprador bourgeois class was influential in all other parts of the country where Hindus were in majority. However, the independence struggle had always been a victim of the Divide-and-Rule policy of the British. Moreover, the comprador class which led the struggle never wished to force an unconditional surrender of the British and establish a truly independent India. They only aimed at gaining the power before anybody else so that they could monopolise the exploitation. Also in the international situation prevailing at that time when bourgeois classes in several countries colluded with their imperialist masters, India bourgeoisie also compromised with British against the growing working class in the country. So neither the Hindu compradors in Congress nor Muslim compradors in Muslim League were in a position to wage an uncompromising struggle against the British. However, the majority Hindu compradors already spread their business and influence to most of the places in the country and fearing that they would not be able to compete with Hindus, the Muslim comprador class under Muslim League started bargaining for a separate nation to Muslims. By its Lahore conference of 1940 itself, it prepared ground for avoiding competition with Hindus in exploiting the country by opting for dividing the country on communal lines. But reluctant to lose even a small part of the country (market), Congress tried to prevent partition by waxing over noble sentiments like national integrity and communal harmony. But Muslim League did not trust these arguments of Hindus who already controlled most of the country. In fact, this mistrust had gone to such an extent that Muslim League did not support even the genuine anti-British programmes of Congress. British rulers exploited this situation and sown discord between Hindus and Muslims. Thus, conditions were created in which the country had to be divided to serve the respective interests of the imperialists and Hindu and Muslim comprador classes. Even the Rajagopalachary Plan was conceived under such conditions only. This Plan recommended that predominantly Muslim areas be identified and plebiscite conducted to decide which areas should go to the proposed Pakistan.

But Muslim League opposed the plebiscite idea in the talks held between Jinnah and Gandhi in September 1944 in the presence of Mountbatten. Instead, it argued that states with majority Muslim population should join Pakistan. Finally, British India was carved up into two with West Punjab and East Bengal forming into Pakistan. However,, there were 563 princely kingdoms in India which were not under British rule and as such their issue remind ambiguous ; Kashmir was one such large princely kingdom. And Kashmiri race has since been fighting unrested for its independence.

Today, our rulers are claiming that India has sovereign rights over Kashmir under the purview of Indian Constitution since Kashmir joined India on its own accord at the time of the partition. No bourgeois or revisionist party is opposing this argument. At the time of partition, the British declared that the Mountbatten Award did not apply to princely kingdoms and the kings would have to decide about their future themselves after Britain bows out of India. Though this move sounded very democratic, it was clearly designed to keep the discord between India and Pakistan alive so that they would fight each other for these kingdoms. This was proved by the subsequent wars.

But Congress, which till then confined itself to British India, interfered in the princely kingdoms also after the British left. Excepting for large crowns like Kashmir, Nizam and Junagarh, all others were merged into Indian Union using a carrot-and-stick policy. But situation was peculiar in Kashmir and Nizam. Both were large in geographical spread. A Muslim king was ruling the Hindu-dominated Nizam while a Hindu king was ruling the Muslim-dominated Kashmir. However, Nizam was annexed through military action in 1948 after the Nizam government was already quite weakened by the anti-feudal revolt in Telangana under the leadership of the Communist Party. The accession was made easier when the Communist Party also bowed before the Nehru government. Thus the right to self-determination which was created the British to serve their selfish ends, was trampled down by the Indian government right in the bud.

In Kashmir also, Raja Hari Singh, who kept the state under military rule after the arrest of NC leaders, was not prepared to merge with Pakistan or India but preferred to remain independent. But Pakistan tried to force the issue by closing the traditional trade routes of Kashmir passing through it (India had no direct trade link with Kashmir), knowing that India could not compensate immediately for the sudden economic boycott of Kashmir. Shortly thereafter, in late October 1947, Pakistan troops led bellicose tribesmen from the Northern areas of Hazara and Peshawar to invade the valley with the object of scattering the civil and military forces of Hari Singh. The Maharaja looked to India for help which was granted with alacrity on condition of Kashmir's accession to India. The Maharaja complied and on 27th October Kashmir became a legal part of India and Indian troops were flown into Kashmir to suppress the tribesmen. Once having reached there on the pretext, Indian army occupied Kashmir.

The Muslim majority in Kashmir had been brought into India by the decision of a Hindu ruler with the NC leaders still in Jail. The Indian government gave official sanction to its private doubts about the procedures followed in obtaining the accession, and in accordance with the precedent established in Junagarh (in which a plebiscite was held) and the preference expressed by Congress leaders for Kashmir self-determination, offered to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir as was first suggested by Mountbatten. Nehru immediately accepted the idea and permitted Mountbatten to add the proviso that "as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and its soil cleared of the invaders, the question of the state's accession should be settled by a reference to the people". Later Nehru explained that this offer was a "pledge to the people of Kashmir; if you like, to the people of the world....". With the accession to India, pending a plebiscite, Sheik Abdulla was appointed Prime Minister of Kashmir.

With an Indo-Pak war brewing, on December 20th the Indian cabinet decided to take its case to the Security Council and on January 1, 1948 India's request was formally submitted, the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) finally began its sessions in June in Geneva. When it reached the subcontinent in July the Pakistani foreign minister informed it that two months earlier, his government had sent regular troops into the state to face the increasing Indian military commitment. The UNCIP's resolution of August 14th drew attention to the "material change in the situation caused by the presence of Pakistani forces", and specified terms for a cease-fire, troop withdrawal and an administration during the plebiscite. On December 11th, 1948, UNCIP made further plebiscite proposals which reflected its decidedly favourable regard for India's position. The proposals were accepted by both the sides, as a basis for cease-fire, effected from January 1, 1949. But no agreement could be reached on the conditions in which to hold the plebiscite. Pakistan and UN felt it should be held under UN auspices while India felt it should be under the government of India.

The comprador governments of Pakistan and India in no way respected the national sentiments of Kashmiris; their only interest was on how to conquer them. In this, India won the battle for control, because of its superior military power over Pakistan. Also, US imperialism had a keen interest in Kashmir as it was strategically located from which the then socialist USSR and China could be spied upon, and sought to play off Pakistan against India in order to secure a hold in the area. The secret location of SNAP generation in the Himalayas (with knowledge of top Indian officials) is an indication of US imperialist interest in this sensitive region.

Meanwhile in 1950, Abdulla decided to convene a Kashmiri Constituent Assembly. Despite protest from Pakistan, reinforced by a Security Council resolution on March 30, 1951, the assembly was formed after a general election through universal secret

ballot. A new constitution was drafted reaffirming Kashmir's accession to India and its autonomy in areas other than foreign affairs, defense and communications. The next year, Nehru and Abdulla signed an agreement in Delhi which confirmed Kashmir's unique status and stipulated in article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

By 1953, however, postponing assembly's ratification of agreement with India, Abdulla put forth the idea of an independent Kashmir and was arrested for it on August 9, 1953. following a series of unpublished manouvres the Deputy Prime Minister Bakshi Ghulam Ahmed took power. In February 1954, Kashmir's constituent assembly, with several of its members under detention, unanimously ratified the accession to India. In the following year Kashmir's autonomy was gradually eroded as various articles of Indian Constitution previously inapplicable in Kashmir became operative in the state. Thus, Sheik and his National Conference fell victim to constitutionalism. As a bourgeois democrat, he was unable to fight the comprador bourgeois government of India in a consistent way and undertook only the parliamentary path of struggle. Though his "Naya Kashmir" reflected the aspirations of bourgeois democracy he was unable to mobilise the entire people of Kashmir and so failed to win over the Hindu population in spite of its secular approach. Unlike the national movements of Nagaland and Mizoram which went underground and launched an armed struggle against the centre in order to fulfill their national aspirations, Abdulla and his NC succumbed totally to the attacks of the ruling classes.

On March 29, 1956, in a speech made in Lok Sabha, and, later at a press conference held at Delhi on April 2, Nehru made public for the first time his opposition to plebiscite. In November, 1956 the constitution of Kashmir was finally adopted. Article III stated that the "State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India". Thus, Kashmiris were defeated in a bloodless conspiracy in which Kashmiris were acceded to India. From then India completely dropped the idea of plebiscite. In 1957, this issue was taken up in a big way at the UN. Nehru himself presented a confusing picture on Kashmir by announcing and permitted others to proclaim that Kashmir was an integral part of India and would remain so, but then entering into negotiations over Kashmir (in 1963) "without preconditions".

So the comprador bourgeois government, true to its class character trampled over the national aspirations of the Kashmiri people. After first agreeing to the holding of plebiscite, which, in effect, accepted the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people (including the right to secede) now completely retracted from its earlier position and occupied Kashmir through force. The so-called 'socialist' Nehru could not even tolerate a constitutional bourgeois democrat like Abdulla who was put under house arrest for 22 years. It shows the total comprador/feudal character of the Indian ruling classes for all their democratic rhetoric.

Nehru unexpectedly decided to release Abdulla in April 1964, after his almost continuous detention since 1953. Abdulla immediately plunged into active negotiations on the future of the state with Nehru and Ayub Khan. But he was soon back in prison after his anti-Indian statements in a meeting with Chou En Lai in Algeria. He was released after a full ten years and handed over the reigns of power based on an agreement reached with Indira Gandhi which was known as Kashmir Accord. After 1977, when he became the chief minister, Abdulla announced that all the central laws applied to the state would be reviewed and those found "irrelevant" would be withdrawn from the J&K constitution to restore the autonomous character of the state. In the 1977 election manifesto of the NC, Abdulla stressed on economic issues and envisaged a task of 22-point economic programme for the party to fulfill the dream of "Naya Kashmir". Congress realised that only NC wielded clout in Kashmir, so their entire aim was to tame the NC leaders, strike a bargain with them and reinstate them in power. So, by 1975, and only after making sure that Abdulla had finally given up the idea of plebiscite for an independent Kashmir, Congress installed the NC back into power. On the other hand, Abdulla leaving the entire initiative to Congress, quietly accepted their gift of power.

AGONY OF KASHMIR

Thus, Sheik Abdulla proved incapable of leading the struggle forward to realise the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiri people. True to his vacillating bourgeois democratic character, he struck greater and greater compromises vis-a-vis the Indian comprador leadership. Even Farooq Abdulla, Sheik's son who assumed power after his father died in 1982, proved no exception from this character. Taking advantage of their weaknesses, Congress made a puppet out of the NC which played to its tune. When Farooq got the Kashmir Rehabilitation Bill passed in the assembly on the strength of Article 370 after he won the election in 1983, Indian government did not like this and after pressurising in various ways to no avail, it finally dismissed the Farooq Abdulla government and appointed Jagmohan as governor and the Congress agent, G.M.Shah as the chief minister infuriating the Kashmiri people. But Shah was also soon dismissed after the Indian-engineered communal riots in Anantnag in 1986 and the state was put under the President's rule. Thus, Congress never allowed an elected government function properly; the moment a government talked anything about the autonomy, it was ruthlessly brought down. Farooq who hobnobbed with the opposition parties plotting against Congress for a brief period after his dismissal but soon joined hands with the same party which brought him down and a Congress-NC alliance fought the election in 1987. Through this spineless act, became a much-hated man in Kashmir but still managed to win the election after massive rigging and abduction of opposition candidates. From then onwards, Farooq Abdulla proved second to none in denouncing the Kashmiri liberation movement and helping suppress it. In a way he completed the process of degeneration that set in NC since the surrender of his father to the Indian ruling classes. National

Conference lost its relevance in contemporary Kashmir.

Apart from the state repression, the majority Muslims in Kashmir experienced a sharp slide in the standard of life during the misrule of the hotch-potch governments inflicted on them. An unscrupulous administrative set up took advantage of the successive inept governments in fleecing the people through corruption of gigantic proportions. Severe power shortages, unemployment and sky-reaching prices the life miserable for common people in Kashmir. Kashmir has continued to remain one of the most industrially backward states in the country. Even in the government establishments, Muslims were totally discriminated against in employment, especially in the gazetted ranks. For instance, just 7 per cent of gazetted officers in 13 per cent of non-gazetted officers in the central government offices and 40 per cent gazetted officers in state government offices were Muslims who constituted 65 per cent of the total population. Comparing this with 84 per cent gazetted and 79 per cent non-gazetted officers from Hindus who comprised only 32 per cent of the population, one can easily imagine the educated Muslim youth getting disenchanted with India. And add to this, hundreds of killings and thousands of arrests of youth in the name of being Pak agents. It is not surprising that the alienation of Kashmiri Muslims is total and irrevocable.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT IS AGGRESSIVE

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution today exists only on paper. Fundamentalists like BJP and RSS are demanding that even the fossil be removed. But irrespective of Article 370, Indian government never implemented any of the promises made prior to 1947 to Kashmir. However, Kashmir is not alone in this betrayal as the same treatment was meted out to all other states as well. For instance, though Congress promised to divide the states on the basis of language, it refused to do it after coming into power and several agitations and sacrifices were needed to achieve that demand. Similarly, though India was deemed to be a federal republic in the Constitution, Congress in the centre through all the federal principles to wind and in course of time usurped all the privileges of the states through various amendments to the Constitution. In the last two decades there was not a single state which did not criticise the centre for its big autocratic attitude. Even the Congress-ruled states resented this claiming states have been reduced to the status of municipalities. Everything requires the permission of the centre which appropriates a major portion of the revenue earned by the states.

The Article 370, which proffered special privileges to Kashmir, was created not with any special consideration but only with the aim of retaining with India. Later, all the provisions of the Article were steamrolled and Kashmiris were cheated more than anybody else. Kashmir became a hinterland which supplied revenue to India just as India was once a hinterland for the British. Therefore, the annexation of Kashmir cannot be termed as

anything but occupation. This is quite consistent with the big brotherly attitude of India which forcibly merged Sikkim into it and interfered in the internal affairs of all the neighbouring countries. In fact, the expansionist nature of India is best reflected in the Third Point in Article One of the Constitution which says that Indian territory will include a) territories of all states, b) territories under Union rule shown in the I Schedule, and c) Other territories to be occupied. This shows in no uncertain terms the designs of the Indian ruling classes.

INDIAN ATROCITIES IN KASHMIR

Kashmiri people are reeling under the brutal repression of the Indian forces. The Indian government which never misses an opportunity to extoll its tradition of non-violence, is massacring the Kashmiris by thousands. The frenzied Indian troops are firing upon peaceful processions without any provocation. Even the funeral procession of Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq was not spared. Long curfews and news black-outs are being used as effective tools to hide the truth from the rest of the world. Ironically, government issues huge advertisements explaining how a one-day bandh would result in loss of hundreds of crores of rupees. Can it explain how the life is supposed to go on if curfew is imposed continuously for weeks on ?

The genocide going on in Kashmir will make any civilised country hang its head in shame. People are being subjected to most horrendous ordeal. Many of the horrific experiences were described by the victims to the members of the Committee for Initiative on Kashmir (CIK) who visited the state to study the situation (see 'India's Kashmir War', Economic and Political Weekly, 31 March 1990). Entering every house forcibly in the name of searching, destroying everything in the houses, molesting women, etc., have become daily occurrences. Even engineers, doctors and government employees are constantly harassed on the suspicion of harbouring terrorists. People are picked up arbitrarily and tortured for being Pak agents and terrorists. Just Indians were insulted by the British in India, Kashmiris are being insulted by India in Kashmir. The Indian government which condemned the apartheid in South Africa are practicing their own brand of apartheid in Kashmir.

PRESENT REALITY

The Indian government is arguing that Shimla Accord be the basis for solving the Kashmir tangle while Pakistan is hell-bent on plebiscite idea. Implementing either of it will be tantamount to an agreement between two slave traders. But Kashmir since the beginning of '30s has been fighting, first against Hari Singh and then against India, for freedom and not for plebiscite or to join with Pakistan or India. Kashmiris want to decide their own future.

But neither Pakistan nor India are considering the public opinion in Kashmir. For Pakistan the choice is only either India

or Pakistan to be decided in a plebiscite; India does not even admit this choice. But both are in firm agreement that Kashmir cannot be given the right to self-determination. Because of this attitude only Sheikh Abdulla never put too much emphasis on plebiscite and wanted to fight for a sovereign Kashmir. At the time of partition, even the international opinion was not much in favour of plebiscite. Only the imperialist powers like US and Britain supported the plebiscite idea. The then socialist countries of China and Russia opined that a third choice of independence, if Kashmiris wanted it, should be allowed in the plebiscite which was the only way to conduct it in an objective manner (they changed their stance following the takeover of power by capitalist roaders). But this suggestion was heeded by neither country.

By now it is a wellknown fact that Kashmir was annexed by India through devious means. Situation would have been no different had Kashmir joined Pakistan instead. So plebiscite in the form wanted by Pakistan would be no solution to the problem. It would like masters exchanging their slaves.

Similarly, the Indian argument that Shimla Accord be made the basis is also meaningless. This accord was made when Pakistan was in a battered condition after being vanquished in the 1971 war; the victorious India mobilised huge troops on the border and entered into an 'agreement' with Pakistan between 26th June and 2nd July, 1972. The Indian proposal in the accord was that if Pakistan would not approach international organisations like UN, India would be prepared to solve the controversial Kashmir issue through bilateral talks. Pakistan gave in to this condition not only because of its defeat, but also due to its appeals to UN for 25 years which proved futile in the face of arrogance shown by India in disregarding all UN resolutions favoring Pakistan. This is again another trait of India, the biggest and strongest in the region, which always bullied its neighbours and tried impose unilateral decisions on them. True to form, it did not stick to Shimla Accord also. The same India which termed Kashmir as 'controversial' in the agreement and turned back and started claiming Kashmir to be an integral part of India in which no outside intervention would be tolerated.

But can even the Shimla Accord provide the basis for solving the Kashmir problem? No! Because both India and Pakistan want to decide the fate of Kashmir without any role for Kashmiris in the decision. This is in no way different from the plebiscite agreement of 1947. Kashmir would not be benefited from such a framework; only India and Pakistan can bargain for their gains and losses.

Be that as it may, having usurped Kashmir with deceit, India is now desperately trying to hold on to it. Appointment of Jagmohan for a second time after he became notorious the first time, was indicative of the desperation. Except for BJP, the party Jagmohan openly identifies himself with, everybody else condemned the move and even Farooq Abdulla resigned in a huff. As

feared by everybody, Jagmohan turned Kashmir valley into a battleground. Moreover, he painted the movement as an anti-Hindu struggle aimed at Kashmiri Pandits. He made open pronouncements that it was not possible to save Hindus from Muslim fanatics thus giving a cue to the fundamentalist groups in the country. In a Kashmiri Pandits meeting on March 15, it was declared that "65,000 Hindus migrated from the valley and 32 Hindus were killed by militants in the last seven months." Jagmohan himself initiated and actively encouraged the migration by giving monthly allowances and other facilities to migrants. Through him, the Indian ruling classes have tried to mask the real nature of the movement in Kashmir branding it communal. This policy was adopted by Indira Gandhi against Punjab and is being continued in Kashmir by the National Front government.

Since Jagmohan assumed charge, only the government reports were being released as news. However, independent reports compiled by organisations like CIK and PUCL clearly establish that no antagonism exists between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. They also reveal that the actual figure of migration is only around 17,000 and not 65,000 as claimed. Hindus who met these groups emphasised that they faced no threat from Muslims. Even some those who migrated handed over keys to Muslim neighbours for safeguarding their homes. Many Hindus sheltered Muslims at the time of military crackdowns. Hindus themselves said that those killed by militants were mostly police informers who caused deaths of Muslim leaders. They also pointed out that some Muslims were also killed by the militants and stressed that the hatred of Muslims was main against the central government, military and the CRPF.

Even though government is harping on the communal motif leading to the loss of innocent Hindu lives, it is evident that most of the killed were Muslims and that too in firing by government troops. Even some Hindus and others were killed by the troops. For instance, on 25th January, army shot dead one Roop Singh while offering prayers in a Gurudwara. On 27th February, a Kashmiri Pandit, Pyarelal Fotedar was shot dead while working in his field. "Kashmir Times" reported that immediately after the incident a procession was held by people shouting slogans against the army and emphasising the amity between Hindus and Muslims.

It is clear that government is deliberately attempting to break the Hindu-Muslim bonds in order to discredit the movement as communal. Jagmohan gave one month salary in advance to those Hindu employees who migrated but sacked 60 Muslims because they could not attend the office due to indefinite curfew. In Partap park area of Srinagar, government trucks were sent for Hindus to move out though there was no clashes of any kind. On the other hand, in an interview given to India Today, Amanullah Khan said, "Kashmiri Pandits are our brothers".

As a matter of fact, Kashmir never had much of communal tension except for the state-provoked riots of Anantnag in 1986. But in India, communal riots have been taking place quite

regularly. In fact, they have become an annual ritual in northern India where the Hindu fundamentalists are fanning communal trouble to serve their selfish interests. Advani and Bajpai asserted several times in public speeches that India is a Hindu nation in which other religions could survive only if they accept the domination of Hinduism. On the Rama Janambhumi issue, riots were engineered many a time in which Muslims were killed in large numbers. Even the military and police deployed to maintain law and order in these sensitive areas killed only the Muslims; molested their women; and, damaged their properties. In October 1989, there were massive riots in Bihar and in Bhagalpur district alone 926 people died out of which 876 were Muslims. Thus the Ram Janambhumi controversy is playing havoc with the communal situation but the government has done nothing so far to solve it. Since the administrative machinery is predominantly Hindu, it is fully cooperating with the Hindu fundamentalists.

This situation is bound to have an impact on Kashmir and it is but natural that some Muslim leaders there consider the Hindu chauvinism as threat to Muslims. Right from the beginning, the National Conference had always strived for communal harmony and now JKLF is also following this policy. But it is true that there are some groups who are religious and mosques have become centres of militant activity. But even these groups are not propagating anti-Hindu feelings.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE ?

Bourgeois parties are arguing that if Kashmir secedes, India will be weakened and also Kashmir which is very small will be vulnerable to invasion from other countries, especially Pakistan.

However, one should not forget that Kashmir is already under occupation of the Indian rulers. So no nationality fighting for its liberation will be deceived by such arguments. There are several countries in the world smaller than Kashmir. Similarly there is no sense in saying India becomes weaker if Kashmir goes away. Only comprador bourgeoisie are being benefited by Kashmir's accession to India and they are the ones who will stand to loose. The common people of India have no stakes in it.

Then there are communists who put forward the logic that "how can we justify secession of a nationality while claiming to work for the unity of all workers of the world ?". But for what end should communists seek the unity of all nationalities ? To eradicate all the exploiters in the world and establish a classless society unto live with mutual cooperation with prosperity -- not to impose our authority and exploit others. Since the present Indian society is exploitative and the predatory comprador class is ruling it, it is the responsibility of the communist to support all the national liberation struggles being waged against this ruling class. In this country, any person who wishes to remove the semi-feudal, semi-colonial society must uphold the right to self-determination including

right to secession. At the same time they should also strive to develop the perspective among the people of all nationalities that they should fight against feudalism and imperialism in order to build a new society.

There is no contradiction between all nationalities living together in a federation after liberation and recognising the right to secessions for all nationalities while fighting against despotic rule of exploitative classes.

So far several rounds of bilateral talks have been gone through to solve the Kashmir tangle without any positive result. Only, Kashmir became two parts each of which was illegally occupied by India and Pakistan respectively. But this was not an acceptable solution to either of them so they continue to fight over it. Pakistan have been insisting that Kashmir should go to it because Muslims are in majority there. It is hoping that the anti-Indian feelings of Kashmir help its cause. So it is aiding, both financially and militarily, the liberation struggle in Kashmir. Though Pakistan has been denying such role for long, it is quite an open secret. But because of this assistance Indian propaganda machine has been going overboard in depicting the movement as Pak-inspired and militants as Pakistan agents who should be truthlessly crushed. Even a section of the Indian bourgeois press joined this malicious act.

But if Kashmir stops taking aid from Pakistan, will India agree to give freedom to Kashmir? The answer will be a resounding 'no'. The people who have been fighting since 1931 have resorted to armed struggle only because the Indian machine guns are strafing them. In such a situation it is only the Kashmiris who have to decide whether or not to take aid from Pakistan or any other quarter. Nobody else has any right to dictate terms to them.

India is being highly hypocritical in condemning Pakistani hand since it is glossing over its own murky role in the affairs of neighbouring countries. When it trained and armed the Tamils fighting in Sri Lanka; when it helped divide Pakistan using its army in 1971; and, when Indian leaders went and made provocative speeches in Nepal recently, nobody seemed to have taken exception to them. Therefore, India cannot be holier-than-thou over the matter of Pakistan's role. When Kashmiris are fighting against India, they have a right to accept or reject assistance from any source. So all the democratic forces in the country should reject the talk of foreign hand which obscures the main issue of the Kashmiri independence.

By raising a bogey of war with Pakistan, Indian ruling classes are attempting to side track Kashmiri movement as well as other people's movements in the country. They are claiming that Pakistan is piling up huge stocks of arms and is making atom bombs. They are also saying that Pakistan deployed all its forces on Indian border and making active war preparations. Explaining why Pakistan wants the war, I.K.Gujral said, "since

the Benazir government is unstable and fanning agitations and internal dissention from Punjab and Sind provinces, it wants to rally all the forces behind it by mobilising them against India". Now that Benazir has fallen, we should await new wisdom from our intellectual foreign minister.

But the truth is, India is facing much more severe crisis internally than Pakistan. Punjabi, Kashmiri, Assamese and Naga nationalities are fighting for liberation; revolutionary movement is surging ahead in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Dandakaranya; Jharkhand is fighting for a separate state. National Front government has failed on all fronts and it desperately needs to divert the attention of masses from the crisis it has thrown the country into. So it is exploiting the Pakistan hand for this purpose. Setting aside the question of its war preparation, one should ask, can Pakistan start and win a war against India? Going by the past reverses and the present Indian military might which is much more superior than Pakistan, it will be clear that Pakistan is in no position to begin a war, let alone win it.

But even if there is war, there is no need to support either government as they will wage war only to divert the people from their respective internal crises. Irrespective of which country wins the war and occupies the other, it will not benefit the people at large because the gains will be appropriated by the comprador class and its allies. Therefore, it is imperative that people of both the countries should vociferously oppose war preparations. It is possible to stop war only by intensifying liberation struggles and the revolutionary movement. All of us should resist the government efforts to sustain national 'unity and integrity' at gunpoint.

Today parliamentary parties of all hues are conspiring to exterminate the entire Kashmiri race in order to crush their love of freedom. Ranging from right BJP to left CPI and CPM including Congress and National Front are spreading poison about the Kashmir struggle and supporting the brutal acts of military and paramilitary forces. In this set up, one can attribute the stand of other parties to the classes they represent, but what about 'reds'? After betraying the revolution long time back, they have been faithfully serving the ruling classes for 40 years and in the process degenerated to a stage where they could lick the feet of anybody who could help them get a few parliament seats. As a proof of their compliance, they praised IPKF which was no more than a mercenary army in Sri Lanka; competing with each other in helping nab the terrorists to receive p'atitudes from a police demon like Rebeiro; they have been egging on various state governments to take sterner steps in dealing with the revolutionary movement. So it is but natural that they should condemn the genuine nationality struggle of Kashmir.

In the course of Kashmir struggle, kidnapping and killing of government agents have developed as new forms of struggle. Some revolutionaries who support Kashmiri cause are seeing this as individual terrorism on the part of the activists. But one has to

realise that only conditions would determine how a particular struggle should proceed and what forms it should take. So it will be unfair to put sanctions on these matters. Revolutionaries would do well to realise such criticism would help only the enemy.

Thus, at a time when all the ruling classes united to plunge Kashmir in a bloodbath, all progressive and democratic forces should come together to save Kashmiris and their liberation struggle. Defeat of Kashmir means defeat of people of all nationalities. Just as Kashmiris are fighting for freedom, other nationalities in India also want freedom to mould their lives themselves. So all of them have a common enemy in the exploitative classes at the centre. It is the historical task of all the people to revolt against the common enemy.