

BUNKER POLITICS

Handwara in north Kashmir looks to have calmed down for the moment but during the unrest of one week it was once again the army which has become the casualty and for so-called civil society and champions of human rights it could be a personal victory. Army has removed its bunkers from the town to assuage local sentiments and how a 'rape hoax' triggered unrest shattering the almost six months' peace in Kashmir Valley is evident of the fact despite the incident had nothing to do with army still it was made an alibi to defame the force. This is also an indicator that summer is going to be hot for the incumbent government. Shifting of bunkers could be a big relief for the separatist agenda floaters. Had the town be a peaceful there would have been never bunkers in large number and big in sizes especially multi story one. This could be one of the reasons the town saw frequent protests targeting security forces. The pace at which the demolition took place shows how meticulously the whole issue was used to rake up emotions. Caution is needed that Handwara should not become a case study for removal of other security bunkers especially from some of the hot spots. There is no doubt that elements are awaiting to vitiate the atmosphere by posting false information on social media. Security forces, seen as New Delhi's extended arms of rule, are always on the target of such forces. The old and narrow localities have advantage for militants and these bunkers helped in manning security of the area. Recently Union Home Ministry has sounded caution over a spurt in infiltration across the LoC and has called effective vigil in border areas by security forces. The unrest has claimed three lives two on the spot falling victims of the firing and another few kilometers away from the site. Unrest was triggered to carry out a planned campaign against armed forces who have been their protectors at the time of external aggression and militants' onslaught.

DROUGHT FEAR

Staggering ten states covering 33 crore people are facing threat of drought with worst affected being the Marathwada region of Maharashtra which became after the spate of farmers suicide because of their inability to bear crop losses and a financial quandary made acute by water scarcity and an agrarian crisis. The drought conditions have forced Maharashtra government to go for some emergency measures like running water trains while a public outcry over water use led to IPL matches being shifted out on court orders. Politics has heated too over incidents such as use of water to settle dust at a helipad prepared for a VIP inspection in Karnataka. The gravity of the situation is much worse than what one can imagine. The Marathwada dams are left with just three per cent of water reserve and levels at 91 reservoirs are declining in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Though, it is normal for water bodies to deplete sharply in the pre-monsoon period, but any delay in the arrival of monsoon would further worsen the situation. The availability of water in these reservoirs will also give clue to the status of Rabi crop later this year. Already the effect of drought has started impacting prices of pulses which are rising in the market. Government is mulling to resort to import of the commodities to check the rising prices and to build up buffer stocks. The Union Consumer Affairs Ministry has asked the state governments to project their demands for pulses so that timely release from the buffer stocks can be ensured. Already country had faced two consecutive droughts which had affected domestic production adversely but government is trying to keep the price line under control. A good monsoon would decide the food grain buffer, vegetable prices, fruit production, food prices and farm GDP making it the life line of Indian economy and agriculture.

OFF 'D' CUFF

'They need neither air nor light'

They live several kilometers under the surface of the earth, need no light or oxygen and can only be seen in a microscope. By sequencing genomes of a newly discovered group of microbes, the Hadesarchaea, an international team of researchers have found out how these microorganisms make a living in the deep subsurface biosphere of our planet. Microorganisms that live below the surface of the earth remain one of the last great areas of exploration. Organisms that live there have not been grown in the laboratory and, therefore, their lifestyles are unknown. An international team led by microbiologists Brett Baker, assistant professor at the University of Texas and Thijs Ettema, senior lecturer at Uppsala University, along with scientists from UNC Chapel Hill and the University of Bremen, have discovered how microorganisms, first discovered in a South African gold mine at a depth of two miles, are able to make a living in the absence of oxygen and light. The study is published in Nature Microbiology. Baker and Ettema found these microbes in vastly different aquatic and terrestrial environments; the deep mud of a temperate estuary in North Carolina and underneath hot springs at Yellowstone National Park. "This new class of microbes are specialised for survival beneath the

surface, so we called them 'Hadesarchaea', after the ancient Greek god of the underworld", says Brett Baker, lead author of the study. As its name suggests, the Hadesarchaea belong to a relatively unknown group of microorganisms, the archaea. Like bacteria, archaea are single-celled and microscopically small, but from an evolutionary perspective, they differ more from each other than a human does from a tree. Archaea were discovered only some 40 years ago, by the acclaimed American biologist Carl Woese. To date, archaea remain poorly studied in comparison to bacteria and more complex life forms, such as animals and plants. "The discovery of the Hadesarchaea will help us increase our understanding of the biology and lifestyle of archaea that thrive in the deep biosphere," says Thijs Ettema. In order to understand these elusive organisms, Baker and Ettema sequenced the genomes of several Hadesarchaea. They were able to determine how these microbes should be classified and what physiologies they use to survive under these extreme conditions. Hadesarchaea have the ability to live in areas devoid of oxygen and the scientists suggest that they are able to survive there by using carbon monoxide to gain energy.

Dangerous to nurture poisonous dissent

JS RAJPUT

When one refers to the Constitution of India, it is impossible not to recall and salute with adulation the outstanding contributions of BR Ambedkar. His concluding speech just before the formal acceptance of the newly-prepared draft Constitution on 26th November, 1949, in itself is a historic document for its comprehension and futuristic vision. In the contemporary context, it is relevant to recall how he had expressed his apprehensions, particularly about those who would try their best to sabotage what 'We the people' were giving to ourselves on 26th January, 1950. The communists and 'those who think alike' and consistently shout hoarse as being the sole protectors of the weaker sections, never hesitate to sabotage democratic functioning and, to achieve their sinister designs, are ready to sacrifice national interests:

"The condemnation of the Constitution largely comes from two quarters, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. Why do they condemn the Constitution? Is it because it is really a bad Constitution? I venture to say 'no'. The Communist Party want a Constitution based upon the principle of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. They condemn the Constitution because it is based upon parliamentary democracy. The socialists want two things. The first thing they want is that if they come in power, the Constitution must give them the freedom to nationalise or socialise all private property without payment of compensation. The second thing that the socialists want is that the Fundamental Rights mentioned in the Constitution must be absolute and without any limitations so that if their party fails to come into power, they would have the unfettered freedom not merely to criticize, but also to overthrow the State."

While the communist parties have transitioned to innumerable factions, the socialists have not lagged behind. Together, they have just confirmed what Ambedkar had anticipated based on his in-depth understanding and vision. He knew that these two would not hesitate to come together whenever they smell a chance to damage the cause espoused in the Constitution. Who can forgive the communists for what they did in 1942, during the Chinese invasion of 1962, to recall only two of the umpteen

instances? Communists and other Leftists fully exploited the weakness of the Congress when the minority Government of Indira Gandhi had to seek their support for survival. They had their plan ready: Prepare people and towards that, bargain for control over institutions and use education to propagate their ideology. Further, various institutions were most suited strategically to sabotage the ancient culture and history of India and Indians. Jawaharlal Nehru University is one amongst many that exemplify the success of the Left strategy. With their hegemony at stake, the Leftists are restless and are targeting the young to play their game.

JNU is, without any doubt, a pampered institution in a country that still runs substantial numbers of its schools without teachers and blackboards, and with schools where drinking water and functional toilets are still a luxury. How could some young persons be allowed to stay in hostels for decades together and indulge in active party politics while other coming from far-off places are forced to rent rooms outside? This is what was responsible for the orchestrated strike at the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune. Is it not an amazing situation, if not amusing in a manner, that those who shout slogans against their own country, celebrate every year Afzal Guru as a martyr, or rejoice on the massacre of 73 CRPF jawans in Chhattisgarh, have the cheek to complain of 'growing intolerance'. They complain that the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression is being throttled!

Here is an institution staffed with persons who are distressed that India has 'illegally' kept Jammu & Kashmir under its occupation. Move outside JNU: A former judge of the Supreme Court of India speaks in a public gathering in Kolkata and finds fault with the judgement of his brother judges in the case of Afzal Guru. A former Home Affairs Minister, too, expresses grave reservations on how justice was 'not delivered' in Afzal Guru case. Which other country would permit the organisation of 'cultural evenings' that celebrate the martyrdom of attackers on its Parliament, on Mumbai, and killers of hundreds of innocent people?

Whatever excuses may be offered, mostly as afterthought, they cut no ice

with the people who had overthrown a lethargic, corrupt and thoroughly incompetent Government at the centre and installed an alternative government with full majority in May 2014. They are waiting for the new regime to deliver on the poll promises. They expect the Opposition to respect their verdict and let the incumbent Government function without being heckled at every step by frustrated out-of-power politicians, who find only a bleak future ahead of them. Those who never allowed the minorities (read Muslims) to progress for six decades and unabashedly used them as vote-banks, are now making attempts to endear themselves to the community on the plank of 'Narendra Modi's intolerance towards minorities'. Ambedkar had warned the nation on this count too:

"My mind is so full of the future of our country that I feel I ought to take this occasion to give expression to some of my reflections thereon. On January 26, 1950, India will be an independent country (cheers). What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people.

In the invasion of Sind by Mohammed-bin-Qasim, the military commanders of King Dahar accepted bribes from the agents of Mohammed-bin-Qasim and refused to fight on the side of their king. It was Jaichand who invited Mohammed Gori to invade India and fight against Prithviraj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of Hindus, the other Maratha noblemen and the Rajput Kings were fighting the battle on the side of Mughal emperors. When the British were trying to destroy the Sikh rulers, Gulab Singh, the principal commander of the Sikhs, sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom."

These words, and warnings, could serve as the beacon light for the young of India to serve their Motherland and thus express their gratitude to the great man who loved India and Indians.

PDP-BJP: Second inning

SATWANT SINGH RISSAM

The political system in J and K is believed to be among one of the fragile political systems in India. Over these past decades there came many issues which in a way governed the politics of the J and K State. The J and K state because of such issues was governed at that time by parties which were soft in their ideology to those issues which arose. In a way, the democracy in J and K has witnessed a lot. We will not be wrong if we say that political structure in J and K has gone through many changes in these last six decades. From one-party government to the coalition governments, the state of J and K has seen a lot. If we talk of coalition combinations which till today have happened in J and K, the last government formed in year 2015 between the PDP-BJP is said to be the oddest one. This coalition of PDP-BJP was defined itself by the then Chief Minister Late Mufti Mohd. Sayeed, as 'North-Pole meeting South-Pole'.

Initially, this combination of PDP-BJP was said to be for mere hunger for power. Various political analysts made predictions that such combination will have a very short life as it was formed just for political survival. But as per PDP-BJP the reason which gave birth to such coalition combination was that the different regions of the J and K have different aspirations all are needed to be addressed. Such has been this development that it is now said to be one of the biggest political developments of the J&K state. This PDP-BJP government arrangement created a lot of buzz even across borders of the state. The whole country also talked of this development with contrasting views over it. The main reason believed for this buzz was that both the parties were ideologically opposite to each other and even fought against each other's ideology throughout election campaign of 2014.

However, after announcement of the Assembly election results PDP-BJP in order to overcome barriers spent almost two months in attempts to bridge all ideological differences. Finally, to govern the state a common Minimum Programme (CMP) was drafted by forgetting the core ideology of both parties in order to address the aspirations of all regions. Both parties in a way proposed that with CMP they will fill up the regional gap of the state. But after a very short duration of formation of the alliance, the government was shattered with the sudden and untimely death of sitting Chief Minister Mufti Mohd. Sayeed. This death in a way raised eyebrows as PDP-BJP Government appeared defunct with no announcement of the new CM candidate by PDP-BJP. The resultant of it was that the State was put under Governor Rule. It was very much understood that Mehbooba Mufti will head the government soon but as some days passed reluctance was shown by the PDP leadership for immediately appointing the new Chief Minister. Subsequently a debate in the state started that PDP-BJP coalition is over and several political parties jumped into arena over this debate. Nevertheless there was no official debate between the coalition partners and both PDP-BJP in a veiled manner supported the fact about existence of the PDP-BJP tie up. Though both the PDP-BJP supporters wanted a resettlement but on a pattern which satisfied their political needs. It in a way became an issue of social prestige for both the parties in the J and K. Moreover with this delay in government formation in J and K, voices were raised in political circles of the State that Assembly should be dissolved and fresh elections be conducted. The predictions made in the beginning about short survival of this PDP-BJP government for some appeared

almost true. The end of alliance appeared near as almost three months had passed and State was still under Governor Rule. Interestingly, things didn't turn out in way it was predicted and finally on 4th April 2016 Mehbooba Mufti took oath as first woman Chief Minister of J and K. It is believed that underground efforts for rebuilding the alliance worked and it resulted in re-formation of PDP-BJP coalition government in the state.

In the year 2015 itself many things were said about PDP-BJP coalition and even after short interruption which arose out of death of Mufti Mohd. Sayeed, working of the State Government was still assumed to be a tight rope for the coalition partners. This assumption again showed some signs between this rebuild Coalition Government as soon as NIT Srinagar issue struck the Government in J and K. This issue has left the coalition government red faced as all the opposition parties in a way clubbed over this issue to send the government on back foot. The start to second innings of this coalition is not good as Jammu and Kashmir once again appeared totally divided over NIT Srinagar issue. For new Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti it will not be less than a struggle to manage this coalition which is connected with the emotions of the voters in J and K. It is not an ordinary government it is a government which has been built on a hope that all regions will witness tremendous change in terms of growth, development and prosperity. Everyone wishes that under leadership of Mehbooba Mufti there arise no more contradictions within the alliance and whole state of J and K witness positive change. But for some, it will always be a coalition which will be an example for 'politics of survival' and for others it will be 'beauty of democracy'.

Agenda of inconvenient alliance

RAMESH PANDITA

With the oath taking ceremony, the PDP-BJP has finally decided to give one more chance to their strained relationship. What remains to be seen is, how far both the alliance partners this time commit themselves to their wedlock, when the agenda of inconvenient alliance sustains, the reason leading both to their wedlock and the possible divorce. It took Mehbooba Mufti almost three months to take over the reins of the state from her late father Jb Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, the PDP patriarch, who served as the Chief Minister of the State twice. With the demise of Mufti Mohd Sayeed, the State turned headless and the State polity reached to a new low of political opportunism, whereby his own daughter, Mehbooba Mufti distanced herself from the political ideology of her late father by abstaining to tread the path, which her father had chosen for the subjects of the State. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was committed and comfortable with the Agenda of the Alliance, which he abided by till his last breath, but the same Agenda of Alliance became the reason for pushing the State into political instability and deprived the people of the State of their democratically elected government for almost three months.

From the recent political developments, any layman can make out that Mehbooba Mufti and her party colleagues, though reluctant, but were keen to form the government. To regain the patronage of their vote bank and to play the sentimental card to the public of Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti and her party colleagues chose to distance themselves from the BJP, the party which is being looked at as untouchable by the electorate of the Kashmir Valley. The ruling alliance partners during the first year of their rule saw a growing public outcry over the PDP-BJP pact, which, though should not have been the real concern for the PDP, for the fact that this public outcry was backed by the INC and the NC with their supporters to play the emotional card over of the ongoing secessionist struggle. The agenda of inconvenient alliance was pushed to further inconvenience with the dilly-daily tactics, adopted by the PDP president in the government formation. But this cannot snub the fact that the PDP president was equally busy in convincing some of her senior party colleagues, who had shown reservations when Mufti Sayeed chose to join hands with the BJP. If some public hearsay is to be believed, then some party members in the PDP were also reluctant about passing on of the party legacy to Mehbooba Mufti. To keep the aspiration of her late father and the party patriarch afloat, it took Mehbooba Mufti nearly three months to do maelstrom over different issues and to win over her own party colleagues under the garb of the agenda of inconvenient alliance.

The BJP and the PDP are to two political ideologies which stand poles apart and coming together of these two diverse ideologies to form the government was always seen as the rarest of the rare possibility by the political pundits. Thereon, the unconditional support extended to the PDP by the INC and the NC in the government formation further bleakened their prospects, as the primary aim of these parties was to keep the BJP at bay. But, the PDP patriarch, late Mufti Mohd Sayeed showed no hurry in the government formation and took his own sweet time to decide about the coalition partners. The difficulty with Mufti Mohd Sayeed was that he was to take over the reins of the State, which had an empty chest that too at the time when the State was yet to overcome the havoc played by the floods, thereon joining hands with the INC or the NC at that juncture would have served no real good purpose to the PDP in general and the people of the state in particular. Mufti like any sane person should have listened to his mind and chose to join hands with the BJP as its coalition partner and unlike his daughter kept aside the party ideology and didn't bother about the public outcry, which was bound to echo from the Kashmir valley, especially from the secessionist stronghold.

By joining hands with the BJP, the PDP patron displeased many of his senior party colleagues. Mufti knew that joining hands with the party, which is ruling at the centre, would bring some good fortune to the people of the State and would also help to regain the health of the flood devastated state, mostly by filling its empty chest. Both the BJP and the PDP pretended to work hard on the agenda of alliance to carve common minimum programme, but factually both the parties like today, even the then were actually buying time to set the mood of the electorate of state for an alliance.

(To be continued)

YOUR COLUMN

The power of choice

Dear Editor,

'The power of choice', here the word 'Power' is very significant because the choices we make, from the small ones to the most important ones, they all have a very strong and powerful impact on our lives. Sometimes we make choices sincerely, putting a lot of thinking and care in it and sometimes we do it in a jiffy or on impulse. But it is not necessary that the carefully made choices always turn out to be beneficial or the ones made without much thought give bad results. Sometimes it is just like a gamble with a lot of risk involved. But that doesn't mean we should be afraid of making choices. Whenever we make a wrong choice we learn from it and that way we gain experience. So whenever we make a choice there are mainly two possibilities, the choice we made was right or it was wrong. Sometimes there could be a third possibility to it too and that is, whatever choice we made had a negli-

ble or a minimal effect on us or anyone else involved. Both right and wrong choices have their positive as well as negative effects. Making right choices makes us more confident and help in obtaining more opportunities, but on the negative side one can become proud and arrogant, which obviously causes hindrance in one's growth and improvement. Making wrong choices, on the other hand, teaches us, makes us work more hard and builds our resilience and on the negative side it could be discouraging, demoralising and one could lose belief in self. Making right or wrong choices is directly connected to our successes or failures. If the choice is right we succeed (in most of the cases) and if we make a wrong choice we fail. So we can also say that both success and failure are crucial in shaping a person's life. If you have never known failure, you can never know success. In other words, failure makes us appreciate the success and it is failure only that makes success sweeter for us. Many remarkable people that are known to the world as great leaders, innovators, creators, they all have seen a lot of failure, which they overcame with their perseverance and dedication. It was the failure that made them more moti-

vated and hardworking to achieve their goals. Thomas Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb and when someone asked him, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" he replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps".

Now what is essential to know here is what makes a choice right or wrong? In my view, if you make a certain choice and you feel good after that then it is a right choice. On the other hand, if you feel bad after making a certain choice then it is probably a wrong choice. But both right and wrong choices or success and failure are the two sides of the same coin. That means both are indispensable for an individual's development and progress. Winston Churchill once said, "Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm". So it does not matter if you make a wrong choice or a right one, what's important is that you keep on trying, never give up on hope and never lose faith in yourself.

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