



On August 5, 2019, exactly a year ago, Government of India effectively abrogated Article 370, in the name of expediting development and ending militancy. Kashmir was subjected to a lockdown which included blockage of communications. One felt concerned, and definitely angry at the fact that the Indian State had stomped all over Kashmir, worsening an already bad situation, and without giving the people of Kashmir a voice in the determination of their future. One may say that these two, Goa and Kashmir, cannot be compared. True, they can't be compared, in that, in the one, it was a forced and heavily militarised lockdown meant to gag, but introduced in the name of checking terrorism, and in the other, the police-enforced lockdown was said to be meant as a safety measure to prevent spread of COVID 19.

While recognizing that the specific situation in Kashmir is dramatically different from that in Goa, there are certain basic human rights principles that have been getting a beating, whether in Kashmir, Goa, or other parts of India, albeit manifested in different ways. A year later, after having witnessed an abrupt lockdown ourselves without warnings, one gets at least just a little feel of what the Kashmiri people must have endured, that too, with the Indian army marching on their streets. We in Goa had a taste of the CISF, misrepresented as the CRPF by the Chief Minister, for just a day or two. But that was enough for us to understand how the weakest sections in society, in our case — the migrants and the poor who were desperately foraging for food during the lockdown — became the victims of such moves, that are imposed by an undemocratic authoritarian state in the garb of protection.

Further, there is little doubt that India's annexation move, or the manner of this annexation, will not be the solution to the Kashmir problem. The people should have been enabled to exercise their view through a plebiscite. This is nothing but a muscular way, both literally and figuratively. It is an extension of a macho way to deal with the problem — pull up your sleeves and brace for a fight. What a tragedy that at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, governance does not find peaceful and dialogical ways of redressal of grievances!

Some measures taken in Kashmir in the last one year seem progressive, but the intentions are devious, and that makes all the difference; because the devious intention will be the spirit in which the law will be enforced. Take the new domicile law as an example. The BJP is tom-tomming the same as ensuring that Valmikis (who are mostly cleaners by occupation) and Gorkhas (mostly security persons), who are not of Kashmiri origin, but who have been residing for long periods of time in Kashmir, have been issued domicile certificates. Well, certainly, these persons deserved to get a domicile, if they have worked there for many years. But the hidden agenda of the BJP of bringing demographic changes in the state, through this move, will ensure that the real interests of the Valmikis and the Gorkhas in

getting good jobs, and just and decent work conditions, will not be met, and these

communities will only be weaponised for the larger agenda.

Thinking Goa, Thinking Kashmir



There is an issue of fundamental process here that we are witnessing in many a move by the ruling party. The ruling party, for instance, has criminalized triple talaq. Women's rights activists know how many women have practically suffered because of an arbitrary talaq pronounced be it once, twice or thrice, that too, in Goa, the land of the so-called Uniform Civil Code. But how does criminalization of triple talaq resolve this issue at a time when women from communities that have been minoritised feel compelled to identify with their community because, at the end of the day, without a robust welfare state system in place, the natal community is their only source of protection? So, in this process, isn't governance pushing the youth to the brink of further militancy rather than bringing them out of it? America also waged what was called a just war on Afghanistan, in the name of women's rights. Did that resolve any issue? Radha Kumar of the Forum for Human Rights remarks that figures for militancy have come down a bit, but might go up again. In fact Nandita Haksar in the introduction to the revised and updated version of her book *The Many Faces of Kashmiri Nationalism* quotes the warning former Director General of Police in Jammu and Kashmir, Ashok Bhan: The abrogation of the special status awarded to J & K and re-organization of the state will add to alienation, mistrust and the questioning of the Government's democratic credentials in the Valley.

Similarly, the forces of nationalism and globalization are in a strange way taking away the possible controls from the local people. For the first time ever, non-local companies have bagged a majority of contracts for the extraction of minerals from the water bodies of Kashmir. Like Goa, it is not as if the situation may have been at its best before, with big local companies involved in bagging the leases or contracts for the extraction of minerals, but the point is that the online bidding takes it to another scale where responding to their violations of the laws would be that much more difficult for local communities. Local stakeholder peoples' initiatives to mine responsibly would simply stand no chance.

When international solidarity with Kashmiris flowed, and the people from different parts of the world said and are still saying, 'Stand with Kashmir', the Government is responding saying it is an internal conflict. For those who work on women's rights, this is such a familiar statement made if one questions domestic violence. It is a private matter, they say. And therein lies the rub. Because there is domestic violence, you support the survivors of domestic violence, and stop the domestic violence. You don't extend the wrongful confinement from the woman in the home to all in the home, where the domestic violence continues. But the wrongful confinement is now extended to the males as well, all in the name of equality!

Land resources being plundered, or being made vulnerable to being plundered, issues of rights to resources, demographic changes... do they ring a bell for us Goans or not?
Thinking Goa, Thinking Kashmir



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