

JAMMU, THE PAWN ON THE KASHMIR CHESSBOARD

The new domicile rules have further weakened its political, social and economic aspirations

Ten months after the dilution of Articles 370 and 35A, new laws have been laid down and administrative structures are beginning to take shape. After months of a lull in the Jammu region, tempers remain subdued. The silence is borne not out of reconciliation, indifference or optimism, but fear of reprisal, post August 5, 2019, as well as Jammu's inherent dilemmas.

Subsumed aspirations :

Injected with highly potent doses of ultra-nationalism and integrationist politics, Jammu has lived for years under the illusion that the burden of protecting nationalism and national security rests on its shoulders. In the last seven decades, it has willingly trampled on its own aspirations to perpetuate an agenda of nationalism. This has been at the risk of transgressing into divisive politics which began metamorphosing into a thoughtless counter-narrative of Kashmir, further bolstered by the rise of the Hindu right wing in India. Caught between Hindu nationalistic winds blowing from the south and Kashmir domination plus conflict, Jammu's political, social and economic aspirations were already buried long ago. Instead of drawing on its unique strength of pluralism and diversity, Jammu's political discourse has oscillated between nationalism, polarisation and a sense of discrimination at the hands of Kashmiris. The muted reaction to the political, geographical and economic changes last year largely stems from these dilemmas that are deeply embedded, apart from a sense of fear and, more recently, due to restrictions amid the COVID-19 lockdown.

In the last few months, Jammuites have felt let down. The market economy has witnessed disruption on account of two factors — political and economic uncertainty due to the August 5, 2019 move and the Kashmir lockdown which froze Jammu's trade and economy. The partial Internet ban has also caused further heartburn, with people left wondering why they are being punished in spite of being nationalists and despite Jammu having no recent history of violence or any law and order problem.

After the gazette notification of March 30, 2020, which lays down the rules for domicile status, under the amended Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act, along with repeal or amendment of about 100 J&K State laws, the rules of engagement have become clearer, beginning a process of introspection in Jammu.

Sense of loss :

For those inspired by Hindu nationalism, the sense of triumph at having finally "shown Kashmiris their place" is overwhelming. Jammuites also hope for a better share of the spoils when the gerrymandering of boundaries begins as part of the delimitation process. But largely, this does not induce any optimism of political empowerment and a sense of parity with, if not domination over, Kashmir. Instead, there is a huge sense of loss and an equally overwhelming sense of being let down by an ideological party they had vested trust in and by a powerful Prime Minister they so ardently admired as part of the nationalisation project.

Much of Jammu may not share Kashmir's anxieties of a demographic change. However, Jammu's youth are worried that they may lose their jobs and educational seats to the new 'domiciles'. With the Agrarian Reforms Act abolished — it defined land ownership and fixed the ceiling area at 121/2 standard acres — the doors have been opened for all Indian citizens triggering worries of the entry of real estate sharks and investments by companies with deep pockets, thereby upsetting the existing economy of Jammu and damaging the ecology. While business investments from outside could boost employment, the existing units operating on a temporary lease basis do not instil confidence as they have offered limited jobs for locals, most often on contractual basis.

The exact number of people who are likely to benefit from the new domicile law in terms of jobs is unknown. According to the domicile law, anyone who has resided in J&K for 15 years or has studied there for seven years will get the domicile right. The benefits would also be extended to children of all central government employees who have served for "a total of ten years", not necessarily a continuous period.

Jammu's anxieties are more pronounced. First, most settlers who could gain immediate benefits are based there. These include about two lakh West Pakistan refugees, over 300 families of sanitation workers, and, more importantly 29 lakh migrant workers, many living in J&K for decades. Higher wages and free school education made J&K an attractive hub for them. Jammu's geographical, cultural and religious proximity with the Indian heartland also makes it a more lucrative destination for those who would like to avail themselves of

the domicile rights or make investments. Third, the absence of a violent conflict offers a salubrious climate for settlement, unlike in the Valley. Jammu's high potential for prospective settlers engenders fears of a large-scale scavenge hunt for business opportunities, land purchase and jobs by outsiders.

Triple impact :

A hub of trade, Jammu's business has flourished in the last seven decades due to pilgrimage tourism and interdependence with the Kashmir region. While the latter will receive a major setback due to the economic slump in the Valley as well as the embitterment of Kashmir's business circles with the political positioning of Jammu's traders, investments from outside do not quite induce the confidence of employment or inclusiveness. Jammu would have looked forward to a sustainable and inclusive economic road map, but hopes have been dashed because the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in its six-year tenure has not shown any inclination towards being an economic visionary.

Another fear is of Dogra culture facing extinction. Jammu's Hindu belt, despite its brush with Hindutva politics, has been the most cosmopolitan part of J&K. Its greatest strength has been the ability to assimilate many cultures and the influx of people from other parts of the State due to economic reasons and conflict. But that appears to have reached a saturation point, and threats to the Dogra identity are not unfounded.

Politically, Jammu is unlikely to gain. If a delimitation of electoral constituencies is done on the basis of area, and not population alone, and the 25 Assembly segments reserved for Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK), laying vacant since the 1950s, are filled up with PAK refugees as is being speculated, Jammu's fattened share at the expense of the Kashmir Valley is a possibility. That may enhance the likelihood of J&K getting its first Hindu Chief Minister. The BJP's integration project may spring an unpleasant surprise for the people of Jammu if the likely choice for the post turns out to be an outsider. At best, more constituencies and a Hindu Chief Minister could make it a symbolic victory for Jammu.

Jammu has long suffered in terms of a political vacuum, which has also deepened the sense of discrimination. Its political significance in national politics has been only to serve as a prop in the hands of New Delhi to counter the Kashmir narrative or to strengthen integrationist politics. Now, with the administrative project of integration achieved and Kashmir's politics stepping down into virtual servitude, Jammu's political worth has further diminished. The only thing that can reverse this is if Jammu is able to reimagine itself and assert itself politically. That is wishful thinking not only in view of its political limpness in the past but also because Jammu's socioeconomic landscape would have undergone a sea change, irreparably so, by the time a constructive political consciousness begins to awaken.

On the whole, Jammu has not only been left empty-handed but it also feels let down and robbed. That feeling has just begun to sink in.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- ❖ **pawn** (noun) – the weakest; puppet.
- ❖ **domicile** (noun) – a person's permanent residence. In law, domicile is the status of being a lawful permanent resident in a particular jurisdiction.
- ❖ **aspiration** (noun) – desire, hope, wish, ambition, goal.
- ❖ **dilution** (noun) – reduction in value/power/force of something.
- ❖ **lay down** (phrasal verb) – formulate, stipulate, set down.
- ❖ **take shape** (phrase) – become clear/definite, become tangible, fall into place.
- ❖ **lull** (noun) – pause, interval, break.
- ❖ **temper** (noun) – (angry) temperament, disposition, state of mind.
- ❖ **subdue** (verb) – restrain, control, contain, mute.
- ❖ **borne out** past participle of **bear out** (phrasal verb) – support, endorse, vindicate, justify.
- ❖ **reconciliation** (noun) – restoration of harmony, resolution, compromise.
- ❖ **reprisal** (noun) – retaliation, counterattack; revenge/retribution.
- ❖ **inherent** (adjective) – implicit, intrinsic, deep-rooted, indelible.
- ❖ **dilemma** (noun) – quandary, predicament, difficulty.
- ❖ **subsumed** (adjective) – included, encompassed, embraced, incorporated.
- ❖ **inject** (verb) – introduce, infuse, instil.
- ❖ **potent** (adjective) – strong, powerful, mighty, dominant.
- ❖ **integrationist** (adjective) – relating to an idea which urges two or more groups to come together.
- ❖ **nationalism** (noun) – it refers to a system (with narrow set of ideas) created by a group of people who believe their nation is superior to all others. It is also a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance-called as chauvinism (excessive nationalism).
- ❖ **freeze** (verb) – stop, halt, cease, terminate.

- ❖ **ultra-nationalism** (noun) – extreme nationalism (hyper-nationalism).
- ❖ **rest on someone's shoulders** (phrase) – to become someone's responsibility.
- ❖ **trample on** (verb) – disregard, show no consideration for, treat disrespectfully, treat with contempt.
- ❖ **perpetuate** (verb) – cause to continue something indefinitely, particularly a bad situation, an attitude/idea/belief, etc; keep going, keep in existence, extend/prolong.
- ❖ **transgress** (verb) – breach, violate, disobey, contravene.
- ❖ **divisive** (adjective) – alienating, estranging, isolating; hostile, disharmonious, discordant.
- ❖ **metamorphose** (verb) – transform, change, convert/alter.
- ❖ **counter-narrative** (noun) – an alternative view to the existing/ earlier narrative (representation/ description).
- ❖ **bolster** (verb) – strengthen, support, fortify, reinforce/buttress.
- ❖ **right wing** (noun) – conservative, rightest section/portion of the political spectrum.
- ❖ **nationalistic** (adjective) – pro/supporting/ favouring one's country.
- ❖ **draw on** (phrasal verb) – make use of, exploit, use/utilize.
- ❖ **pluralism** (noun) – (of people) the practice exist in harmony irrespective of various differences.
- ❖ **oscillate** (verb) – swing, fluctuate, teeter.
- ❖ **polarisation** (noun) – separation of two contrasting groups (based on different opinions/beliefs).
- ❖ **discrimination** (noun) – prejudice, intolerance, inequity, unfairness (against an individual or group of individuals by society and its institutions (basically in the procedures, policies or objectives) as a whole.
- ❖ **at the hands of** (phrase) – (suffer, get hurt & be treated badly) as a consequence of someone's actions.
- ❖ **muted** (adjective) – subdued, toned down, restrained.
- ❖ **geographical** (adjective) – territorial; relating to a specific territory (area/region).
- ❖ **stem from** (phrasal verb) – originate from, arise/come from, emanate from.
- ❖ **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
- ❖ **embed** (verb) – fix/place, root, implant.
- ❖ **Jammuite** (noun) – a native or resident of Jammu in India.
- ❖ **let down** (phrasal verb) – abandon, desert, leave, give up, fail to support.
- ❖ **on account of** (phrase) – because of, owing to/due to, by virtue of.
- ❖ **heartburn** (noun) – discomfort, inconvenience, difficulty.
- ❖ **in spite of** (phrase) – despite, notwithstanding, regardless of.
- ❖ **decentralisation** (noun) – the process of distributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things away from a central location or authority.
- ❖ **repeal** (noun) – cancellation, reversal, abolition.
- ❖ **introspection** (noun) – self-observation, self-analysis, self-absorption.
- ❖ **overwhelming** (adjective) – massive/huge, formidable, absolute, very strong.
- ❖ **spoils** (noun) – benefits, advantages, perks.
- ❖ **gerrymandering** (noun) – the (manipulative) practice of setting the boundaries of electoral districts in a way that gives one political party an unfair advantage.
- ❖ **delimitation** (noun) – an act of fixing boundary or limits.
- ❖ **induce** (verb) – cause, produce, effect, bring about.
- ❖ **empowerment** (noun) – accreditation, authorization, validation.
- ❖ **parity** (noun) – uniformity, sameness, equality.
- ❖ **ideological** (adjective) – relating to a system of ideas.
- ❖ **(be) vested in** (verb) – confer on, grant to, give to, entrust to.
- ❖ **ardently** (adverb) – eagerly, passionately.
- ❖ **nationalisation** (noun) – nationalisation happens when the government takes ownership of private assets.
- ❖ **anxiety** (noun) – concern/stress/tension, unease, apprehension, disquiet.
- ❖ **demographic** (adjective) – relating to the statistical study/structure of populations, especially human beings.
- ❖ **agrarian** (adjective) – relating to cultivating/farming.
- ❖ **ceiling** (noun) – upper limit, maximum, highest permissible level.
- ❖ **open doors** (phrase) – create opportunities.
- ❖ **trigger** (verb) – give rise to, cause, invoke, bring about.
- ❖ **shark** (noun) – a person who is unethically exploiting others.
- ❖ **deep pockets** (plural noun) – It is generally used in reference to big companies or organizations having extensive financial wealth or resources; it also used in reference to wealthy individuals (rich/affluent people).
- ❖ **thereby** (adverb) – as a result of that.
- ❖ **ecology** (noun) – preservation, protection; the scientific study of the distributions, abundance and relations of organisms and their interactions with the environment.

- ❖ **instil** (verb) – introduce, ingrain, inculcate.
- ❖ **pronounce** (verb) – announce, state, articulate, express.
- ❖ **hub** (noun) – centre, centre of activity, focal point.
- ❖ **proximity** (noun) – closeness, nearness, adjacency (in space/time/relationship).
- ❖ **heartland** (noun) – the most important part of a field of activity; the central part of something.
- ❖ **lucrative** (adjective) – remunerative, profitable, rewarding, fruitful/helpful.
- ❖ **avail** (verb) – use, utilize, take advantage of (an opportunity/resources).
- ❖ **salubrious** (adjective) – healthy, beneficial, wholesome.
- ❖ **settlement** (noun) – an uninhabited place where people established a community/colony.
- ❖ **potential** (noun) – possibilities, potentiality, capability.
- ❖ **prospective** (adjective) – potential, possible, aspiring.
- ❖ **engender** (verb) – cause, give rise to, bring about.
- ❖ **scavenger hunt** (noun) – a game in which the organizers prepare a list defining specific items, which the participants seek to gather or complete all items on the list, usually without purchasing them.
- ❖ **flourish** (verb) – develop, improve, progress, evolve, thrive, prosper.
- ❖ **pilgrimage** (noun) – religious journey, holy expedition/excursion.
- ❖ **interdependence** (noun) – the condition of being dependent on each other.
- ❖ **setback** (noun) – problem, difficulty, issue.
- ❖ **slump** (noun) – decline, tumble, drop, steep fall.
- ❖ **embitterment** (noun) – bitterness, anger, indignation, malice.
- ❖ **inclusiveness** (noun) – the practice of embracing many different types of people and treating them all fairly and equally.
- ❖ **look forward to** (phrasal verb) – wait for, anticipate, expect, hope for.
- ❖ **sustainable** (adjective) – reasonable, sensible, well founded (without disturbing the balance of nature and then without exhausting all of natural resources).
- ❖ **road map** (noun) – plan, strategy (to achieve a goal).
- ❖ **dash** (verb) – destroy, spoil, wreck, ruin (hopes/expectations).
- ❖ **tenure** (noun) – incumbency, term of office, period in office.
- ❖ **inclination** (noun) – preference, liking, interest, penchant.
- ❖ **visionary** (noun) – far-sighted person; a person who forecasts future developments.
- ❖ **extinction** (noun) – destruction, elimination, annihilation, eradication.
- ❖ **brush** (noun) – encounter, clash, confrontation, conflict.
- ❖ **assimilate** (verb) – incorporate, integrate, absorb.
- ❖ **influx** (noun) – the arrival of a large number of people simultaneously.
- ❖ **saturation** (modifier) – to a very full extent (of something).
- ❖ **unfounded** (adjective) – unproven, unconfirmed, unjustified.
- ❖ **speculate** (verb) – guess/think, surmise, postulate.
- ❖ **fattened** (adjective) – get heavier, get fat, fill out; widened, broadened, expanded.
- ❖ **at the expense of** (phrase) – sacrifice, cost, loss.
- ❖ **likelihood** (noun) – probability, chance, possibility.
- ❖ **spring** (verb) – announce, present, introduce, reveal (unexpectedly).
- ❖ **turn out** (phrasal verb) – transpire, emerge; happen/occur.
- ❖ **at best** (phrase) – simply, merely, only.
- ❖ **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, heighten, exacerbate, aggravate, worsen.
- ❖ **prop** (noun) – mainstay, pillar, backbone, support, cornerstone.
- ❖ **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
- ❖ **step down** (phrasal verb) – give up, stand down, bow out.
- ❖ **virtual** (adjective) – effective, practical, implied, implicit.
- ❖ **servitude** (noun) – slavery, enslavement, bondage, domination.
- ❖ **assert** (verb) – state, declare, claim, announce.
- ❖ **wishful thinking** (noun) – utopianism, idealism, daydreaming, mistaken belief, illusion, fantasy, chimera.
- ❖ **limpness** (noun) – lacking substance/firmness.
- ❖ **landscape** (noun) – the distinctive features of a field of activity.
- ❖ **sea change** (noun) – a significant change, transformation/evolution, reorganization.
- ❖ **irreparably** (adverb) – in a method that is not possible to repair.
- ❖ **constructive** (adjective) – positive, useful, helpful.
- ❖ **consciousness** (noun) – awareness, knowledge, realization, recognition.
- ❖ **awaken** (verb) – inspire, arouse, spark off, simulate.
- ❖ **empty-handed** (adjective) – with nothing, unsuccessful, having gained nothing