

Politics of Sloganeering, Good Governance and Services Delivery in Jammu and Kashmir since 2014-2020

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Abstract

According to the current Government, after seventy years of rule, there was a lack of good governance, infrastructure, job opportunities and quality of services in Jammu and Kashmir. The successive governments on both levels were failed to build the J&K economically, politically and administratively. And to develop the region in its true sense, various promises and slogans were put forward since 2014 to 20. The special status was considered a blockade to good governance and effective delivery of services and peace in the region. Thus, the current piece of research was an attempt to highlight the relevance and significance of foresaid rationale and sloganeering to address the issue of good governance and effective delivery of services in Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Sloganeering, good governance, service delivery and J&K

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Introduction

During the era of nation state, it is very normal to hear about India as a Nation and its interest repeatedly in political speeches. Furthermore, the powerful nations have been the major players on the world politics to assert their interests. The fulfillment of national interests largely relies on the power of a nation state as how it influences the other states through its internal and external strength of delivering the services to the citizens. And the strength is affected by various factors viz. constitutionalism, social security, and administrative efficiency, transparency and accountability. Thus, the question of nation state or its building must revolve around all these issues rather mere sloganeering. The materialization of governance and effective public services delivery system based on infrastructural development, socio-economic and political liberty, equality and justice play a significant role in shaping the image of a nation state internally as well as externally.

But using merely slogans to maintain the power status quo can be drastically threat to a national interest. The current study primarily explores the various slogans that were made to attract the public attention for reorganizing the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two separate union territories for good governance and good services.

Interpretation of J&K's Special Status and its Abrogation

The current government at national level has put forward a large rationale behind abrogating the Article 370 and 35 A to start the development move in the region. But, does that rationale really justify its claim or give central

government an exclusive right to redefine the existing relationship between the both. Considering Articles 370 and 35A a blockade to develop the Jammu and Kashmir hardly seems true when we saw the J&K a more progressive state in many ways. The state under its special status had taken various initiatives for welfare of its people. The New Kashmir Manifesto 1944, under the Sheikh Abdullah Government was one of the best detailed documents on the state policy to avail the various rights and services to its people. The state provided special rights for people living across the borders, in hilly and backward areas, women in professional and educational institutions. Most importantly, this was the unique identity of the state that was known for its successful land reforms. It was state's constitution that provided for "right to property" as fundamental right. It also materialized the slogan i.e. "land to the Tiller" in both spirit as well as in matter. Making J&K as corruption free unit by abrogating the 370 was not also convincing as it does not provide any clause for this practice. Corruption in J&K was not a special case, hardly need abrogation of its special status; it can be seen everywhere at different levels in the country and unrelated to existence of 35A and 370. Specifically, the political lineage and administrative corruption were not caused by the inventions of J&K's special status but political and administrative ill will.

The current government gave slogan of "Zero Tolerance against Militancy" and mentioned about its mission to crush it completely from Jammu and Kashmir. But according to the ground figures, there was a drastic increase in its recruitment from the Valley and especially recruitment of educated youth, showed a new trend in the episode of militancy. Despite killing the militants in large numbers, there was hardly any stoppage in the process of their recruitment. The militancy had acquired a mass support in the region as lakhs of people provided tribute to the killed militants on their last rites. On the other hand, there was a reemergence of militancy in various sub regions i.e. Kishtwar, Doda etc also. The slogan of availing the service of peace really could not prove real on ground and needs revisiting of current policy towards the issue. As per the reports mentioned in the print media, there were 328 infiltration attempts by Pakistan-based terrorist groups into Jammu and Kashmir from across the border in 2018, of which 143 were successful. In 2017, there were 419 cross-border infiltration attempts, of which 136 were successful. In 2016, there were 371 cross border infiltration attempts, of which 119 were successful. A total of 121 infiltration attempts were in 2015, of which 33 were successful. In 2014, there were 222 infiltration attempts, of which 65 were successful. The ongoing military in Jammu and Kashmir is intrinsically linked with infiltration from across the border i.e. the International Border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, a total of 257 terrorists, 91 security personnel and 39 civilians were killed in 614 terror incidents in the state in 2018. The casualties included both security personnel and the terrorists. And 2018 also could provide the highest number of terror incidents. All this data had falsified the relation between abolition of special status and end of militancy or terrorism in the region to establish the peace and good governance. The Pulwama Attack on security forces in Kashmir further highlighted the intensity of the militancy in the region a curtailment to good governance and effective services. The Kashmir militancy might be known to every country men but not the cause of its origin. India as the largest democratic state needs not to curtail the basic liberties of its own people to maintain the law and order or serve national interest. The application of enemy approach or treating Kashmiris as enemies was the big historical blunder adopted to restore the good governance in the region. It always gave space to external players to serve their vested interests. On the other hand lack of good governance and transparency were majorly responsible for the origin of the militancy.

The government's statement about people resentment that only "five percent of Kashmiris" are anti India and believes in separatism also seemed false. Because, total shutdown across the valley and many districts of Jammu region since 5th August to materialize the new changes hardly validated the argument. Moreover, the hate against every Kashmiri Muslim could be seen throughout the country. Legally speaking, the Jammu and Kashmir had been always an integral part of India since its accession to it. As per as instrument of accession, despite recognizing its certain special rights, it became an undestructive part of Indian Union and Articles 370 and 35A merely ratified the existing relationship. These twin provisions were incorporated actually to strengthen the existing relationship between the two i.e. J&K and Union of India and good governance throughout the region. But in post 2014, both the Articles 370 and 35A were considered injurious to the Nation's Health and removed

caused a lot of distortion and appropriation leading to unhealthy environment for good governance and services delivery. When the article 1 of Indian constitution treats Jammu and Kashmir a part of Indian Territory, there was hardly any scope to doubt these two provisions for alienation of people. Though, the region demanded further values to get integrated emotionally and psychologically. The special provisions were enshrined categorically to restore the peace, harmony and specifically to respect the historical and diversified identity of the place. If providing double citizenship and separate constitution was against the national interest of the country, then how the America has been surviving with its idea of complete decentralization and federalism. The USA could have hardly continued with its division or separation of power to serve its nation interest as if the separation of power was a hurdle.

Moreover, in India, if the snatching special powers were treated as only the instrument to serve the National Interest, the central government should have done same with other states having the special rights. After accepting the abolition of special rights a right decision, how the people of Jammu and Kashmir could tolerate the special status of other states especially of North Eastern States. This somewhere highlighted the old routine of centre's obsession with centralizing the power or its concentration at the centre to fulfill its own arbitrary will rather establishing governance with decentralization of power. For instance, historically, the central government had been well known for exploiting the units for their vested interests and running the state governments on its own tunes. Since beginning, the centre's interference into the local state politics or Jammu and Kashmir in many ways had been an ugly truth i.e. the rigging of elections and dismantling the local government machinery in case of interest conflict had always curtailed the march of good governance and effective services delivery.

Relevance of Good governance, No to corruption, Back to Village Programme, services at door step, and various other Slogans

The political actors on Jammu and Kashmir may start and end their speeches with 'back to village programme' and entertain the audience but could not be seen on ground. The national slogan i.e. good governance could not serve the purpose until is implemented in all the departments of the state. The slogan hardly remains national when is used for self-interest or power acquisition and its maintenance. Making merely an emotional appeal to avoid the actual responsibility of public services delivery and good governance had weakened the people support. In a multi-cultural society like India or Jammu and Kashmir, the political leadership or administrative machinery has to adopt inclusive approach to address the issues. Despite realizing the true essence of governance i.e. effective delivery of services, the existing political and administrative favorable conditions were removed. The ruling parties or their associates always gave it a religious and communal orientation, prevented the spread of true democracy in Jammu and Kashmir. The sloganeering that should become a part of implementation remained limited to official documents only i.e. Public Services Guarantee Act. And this not only affected the people's belief in government badly but isolated the region more psychologically. The people from all over the state were seen on cross roads demanding justice, governance and good services.

In second case, "No to Corruption" also remained mere a slogan could not guide the administrative machinery and represented the people's voices. The people continued with the corruption as hurdle in receiving the services timely. In post 2014, there was a censorship on media and public voices to lodge their grievances gave boost to the corrupt government machinery rather empowering a common man or woman to express their will. The main stream media also had lost its credibility and identity through adopting a biased and unscientific attitude towards public issues. The loss of being forth pillar of democracy through surpassing the media ethics, the journalists could not become the public mouth piece. Rather, they focused on the advertisement and propaganda of state. The core responsibility of administration at different levels to provide the platform for public grievance was lacking except few governor's portal. Majority of people in Jammu and Kashmir live in the rural setting and could not even connect to these portals due to unavailability of internet facility.

The campaign about cleanliness also could not cover the dirt practiced in the public offices in the state. It hardly addressed the social and mental dirt that has led to exclusion of the downtrodden sections in post 2014. The Cleanliness Abhiyan broadly should have been for the eradication of caste, communalism, feudalism, patriarchy, militancy, corruption, bad governance and defective public services delivery. The *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* could not go beyond its narrow borders of occasional cleanliness of streets and lawns. It could not work to end the various socio-economic and political anxieties within Jammu and Kashmir that a common face in public offices. No doubt, the GRAMIN has accelerated the efforts of achieving universal sanitation coverage to focus on sanitation and improving the levels of cleanliness through solid and liquid waste management activities and making the villages defecation free, clean and sanitized. But this also left many of villages uncovered in various districts. The villages without regular water supply also could not become defecation free, clean and sanitized under the initiative. The toilets were not found functioning properly due to lack of water.

Similarly, the programme 'Back to village' also could not go beyond its first phase. There was only an attempt to record the village problems rather than their resolution. Under congress and various successive governments at the centre, the amendments were made only to centralize the power. Various central laws were extended to J&K through presidential orders and all were the decisions of congress party majorly. For instance, the title of separate PM and Sadar E Riyasaat were abolished in 1965 which also falsifies the myth that central laws could not apply in Jammu and Kashmir before. No doubt, it was done according to the process and procedures established and agreed by both the governments. The uniqueness of the current move was not only to reject the approval of constituent assembly but also of state assembly or the elected government. To a political scientist or a political science student, the problem did not lie with articles 370 and 35A or any extension of central laws to the state but not utilizing the exiting provisions to address the issue of good governance and service delivery. There was only a consistent process of centralization of power to weaken the unit rather to materialize the trends of good governance.

Sloganeering and Issues of Services

The government might have a lot to say about its programmes, schemes, and claims to reconstruct the Jammu and Kashmir in post 2014. And to achieve this, various slogans and programmes like Sab Ka Sath Sab Ka Vishwas, Back to Village programmes, my town my pride were propagated and initiated respectively. But the issues of regional imbalance, employment, infrastructure, smart cities, lack of road connectivity, water supply, regular electricity etc. still existed. Erstwhile Doda comprises of Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban were still the untouched areas so far as quality health, educational and infrastructure facilities or services were concerned. Number of villages i.e. Shirote (Saroor), Kantwara, Pora and Chandalli in Kishtwar district were found without road, mobile network connectivity and basic health facility. The Chenab Valley i.e. Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban continue with highest deaths in road accidents due to poor road connectivity and poor transport management services. Like past, the post 2014 discourse also remained dominated by human rights violation due continuity of aforesaid issues. The human rights violation due to civil causes i.e. road accidents on poor road infrastructure, lack of road; health system etc remained untouched even today.

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir has been reorganized into two union territories to satisfy the Ladakh and Jammu only. There was nothing for people from sub regions particularly Kargil, Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban. All the institutions like Central University of Jammu, Cluster University, AIIMS, IIT, etc were established in the main Jammu or in its outskirts, with total neglect towards the sub-regions, prevented the areas from such services eventually. The people with their distinct culture settled in hilly and mountainous terrain, were not categorized as 'Pahadis', or regionally backward on national level. Under the new model of services, the historically marginalized sub-regions were hardly considered on priority basis, had to face 10 percent cut in their backward quota (RBA reservation) to create economically weaker section category. After facing prolonged disparities, the amendment in special status had made them more vulnerable and victim to inequality of distribution of values in an unequal developmental process.

The “Sab KA Sath Sab Ka Vikaas” could be attractive merely by the slogan but demanded proper implementation in a broader way either through restoring special status or providing similar rights to these marginalized sub regions. The special status was not flawed but its biased implementation that was to be eradicated for the welfare of every section and regions. Similarly, the rights of Women, Valmiki, Gorkhas, and West Pakistanis could be also guaranteed through bringing the bill in the state legislature within the current constitutional framework. Like extension of GST and various other laws and values could have been added to the local constitution without eroding the essence of the 370 or 35 A. The central government’s claim to ensure the women rights in Jammu and Kashmir also was a hollow slogan as it could not show any real concern for increasing the representation of women in Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. Even the reservations for women from other backward classes have not been incorporated within the bill, despite recommendations from the report examining the 1996 Women’s bill.

At the end, the announcement about creating fifty (50) new colleges and fifty (50) thousand new vacancies and also developing the industries in Jammu and Kashmir further was mere a politics of sloganeering rather providing the services to the people. There was no attempt made for creating more educational institutions, jobs, the required infrastructure, etc. for better educational services. The students in existing institutions always found their career on the stake due to poor educational services.

Back to Village Programme

Back to Village Programme’ started by the administration led by Governor Satya Pal Malik covered the role of officials under the programme to collect the first hand information about the problems and plan of resolving the same in villages of the Jammu and Kashmir. It has been an innovative idea to reach the people in villages and avail them the services at door step. The programme might compensate the issues of poor road and communication connectivity through reaching to them. But Since 2019, two phases have been completed and on the initiation of third phases, none of the problem or priority-based issues located in first phase were resolved. Only the first phase was completed successfully highlighting the feedback of people. The programme relied largely on those officials who for years had recorded official irresponsibility and unaccountability. After their prolonged nepotism and corruption in government offices, the same officials were authorized to become instruments in revolutionizing services delivery process. The transparent officials who visited the villages were very few and always misguided by the local corrupt Panchayat i.e. Sarpanch and panches who on ground were the real culprits involved in looting the public purse. Back to villages programme or strengthening the villages Panchayats might be a good idea but without checks and balance empower only few local elite and serve their interests rather strengthening the services delivery system.

Future prospects

Various objectives of Modi’s vision like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Sab Ka Sath Sab Ka Vikas, Zero tolerance to corruption, militancy, bad governance, in Jammu and Kashmir could be achieved successfully if the government actually will work for the same to establish good governance and better services. The fruits of article 370 were to extend to whole Jammu and Kashmir without eroding its essence against the will of people. Its strengthening may restore the trust of the people and the relationship of state with India. Considering governance and development of Jammu and Kashmir as Whiteman’s burden will only widened the existing mistrust and deepening the alienation in many ways. In the age of decentralization and globalization, the government needs not to go for centralizing the power through reorganizing state into two UTs rather to work more for the process of decentralization, devolution and localism. The state also needs to cooperate with other actors to materialize the concept of good governance and act as a facilitator to protect the rights and liberties of the people. The Kashmiris like any other human cannot be looked as enemies or merely a religious community in own country. There a need of clear cut pro people administrative policy on Jammu and Kashmir to resolve the Kashmir issue so that it will

not work an excuse for bad and corrupt government or governance. A multifaceted approach has to be used for issue resolution viz. economic, political and cultural. The reductionism to the level of religious fundamentalism and handling with coercion can only lead to the diversion from the realistic governance issues. Hence, there is a need to penetrate into the socio, economic, political and administrative gaps and think beyond the religious boundary and hard policy to locate the origin, causes and development of Jammu and Kashmir and its services related problem. Both governance and effective delivery of services and peace or security are to be taken complementary and supplementary to each other.

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