**Dark Shades of Societal Reactions**

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Traditionally, the sensation attached with India – Pakistan cricket match has always brought fans to the edge of their seats and public reaction to the defeat or victory of respective teams never went beyond the usual methods before the recent T-20 contest. Though Indian defeat in the T-20 match was just a usual sports event dark shades of societal reactions have exposed multiple hateful tendencies eating up rapidly the so-called Indian secular democratic values.

One aspect is more than obvious now that losing a match is no big deal but losing a match to Pakistan will be dealt like an unpardonable crime in Modi’s India. This is no exaggeration! Let’s compare the societal response to two T-20 defeats of the Indian team. Routine criticism surfaced on defeat against New Zealand but the reaction on defeat against Pakistan was unprecedentedly hateful and Islamophobiac. Surprisingly, the defeat of the whole team was attributed to the only Muslim player Muhammad Shami.

Few loose deliveries bowled by poor Shami during the match are enough for BJP hatemongers to prove him such a traitor who willfully supported the opponent Pak team. Narrative spread by BJP hawks on social media against Shami was woven with threads of religiosity-based prejudice. As per extremists, Shami being a Muslim willfully bowled loose deliveries to support the Muslim brothers. These baseless hollow allegations on Shami are the most concrete proof of deep-rooted Islamophobia spreading in Indian society. Let’s analyze that why the Indian reaction to a simple sports defeat is so intense, hateful, and overwhelming? Multiple factors multiplied the pain and agony of Indian defeat. Public celebrations in IIOJK on Pak T-20 victory against India were hard to digest for BJP hawks.

This single development nullified the hollow claims of normalcy in IIOJK. With these celebrations, Kashmiris have rejected India as an occupational oppressor state and clearly shown their soft corner for Pakistan. The world has come to know once again that Kashmiris are not satisfied with the unilateral abrogation of statehood and the Modi regime’s claims of prosperity in J&K are blatant lies. Post-T-20 defeat societal reactions proved much more than a simple sports event for New Delhi on account of political narratives, religious extremism, and Hindutva cum Islamophobiac tendencies.

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Anti- Muslim wave spread like a jungle fire among extremist circles who tortured Kashmiri students in colleges and universities for celebrating the performance of their favorite team or players. Shockingly this tendency crept in state players as treason cases were registered against those Muslims who celebrated Pak cricket victory in UP and Assam.

This is an undeniable reality that BJP’s election narratives for the domestic audience were formed on anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim hatred. On the external front, New Delhi always endeavors to shroud the worsening situation of IIOJK with cross-border allegations coupled with the “Atoot Ang” mantra. It is not only the public celebrations on Pak victory which busted the reality of Modi’s false claims about J&K but the recent terrifying wave of civilian killings that has appeared as a renewed challenge for the occupational regime. Contradictory claims have surfaced from Indian top officials about the recent unrest in IIOJK. Indian Army Chief minced no words in expressing his dissatisfaction over growing violence in Kashmir.

A few days back, the J&K police chief claimed restoration of normalcy. Ex CMs Mehbooba Mufti and Farooq Abdullah, despite being past allies of New Delhi, are frequently criticizing upon state-sponsored atrocities especially lodging of treason cases against students for celebrating a sports event. Indian CDS General Bapin Rawat and Air Chief are openly spreading war rhetoric against Pakistan and China amid tensions at LAC and LoC. In the heat of battle, BJP’s hawkish face the home minister Amit Shah had his first visit of IIOJK under the umbrella of extra-ordinary security. Meaningfully, Amit Shah tried to charm the Kashmiris with the promise of statehood restoration which would be prefixed with delimitation and conduct of elections.

No one in J&K is ready to believe this promise except a few BJP hawks; not even the Abdullah and Mufti clans! Amit Shah tried to draw some strength for his hollow claims by rejecting Farooq Abdullah’s proposal to conduct dialogue with Pakistan. While Kashmir was celebrating Pak T-20 victory over India, Amit Shah predicted the birth of development and prosperity from the womb of statehood abrogation. Indian obsession with anti-Pak war rhetoric is oozing out of three recent most surgical strike threats from home minister Amit Shah, defence minister Rajnath Singh and PM Modi.

CDS and Tri-Services chiefs are adding more colors to the obsession by playing two front war rhetoric. What transpired in Indian society after a simple sports event defeat was the reflection of hatred injected in its veins by Hindutva hawks of BJP for years. T-20 defeat against Pakistan rubbed salt on the wounds of failed Balakot strike, the downing of jets, arrest of Abhinandan, lost space in Afghanistan, busting of Khalbhoshan’s network, and exposure of Disinfo campaigns. Regional peace cannot be restored by Pakistan or China unilaterally unless the mindset of state players changes in New Delhi. How sanity can prevail in a state like India over complex regional issues once hawks have created a new yardstick to measure the patriotism of its citizens through sports performance and CMs like Yogi Adityanath charging the students with treason for celebrating the performance of favorite teams.

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