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Kashmiris caught in middle of IWT agreement: Experts

'GOI's Trade, Resource Sharing Deals Impinge Upon Rights Of Marginalized States'

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Srinagar, June 16: Government of India's trade and resource sharing deals like Indus Water Treaty (IWT) impinge upon the rights of other states in peripheries like Jammu and Kashmir, experts said on Saturday.

Speaking at a seminar on "Jammu and Kashmir and Federal Models of Shared Sovereignty", academics from the Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi said it was time to relook at such deals which hit people in other states.

The seminar was organized by Kashmir University's Department of Political Science in collaboration with Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation, New Delhi.

"Agreements of Government of India under Article 253 with other countries bind the states within the Union and impinge upon their rights," said Professor Balveer Arora, former Rector and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. "This may be well understood in case of Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan. Who are caught in the middle of this agreement are the people of Kashmir."

Prof Arora said the concept of autonomy was not static but very much related and contextual in the contemporary political discourse. "Three kinds of autonomy – scalable autonomy, strategic and autonomy 2.0 are very much contextual in the present context, both for India herself as well as for other periphery states. Jammu and Kashmir does fit in all the three," he said, adding that India needed to "redefine her autonomy."

Comparing history of Jammu and Kashmir with that of Punjab, Professor Brar said both the states have gone through a period of resistance and people there have been the victims of extreme suffering. "Both the people of Punjab as well as of Kashmir were crushed and extremely discriminated upon," he said.

"The sentiment in Punjab was created on the idea of nationalism and same was the case with J&K. I think we should not relate federalism with nationalism. They are two different entities. Relating them with each other is only going to create a confusing cacophony, not a logical conclusion," Prof Brar said.

The JNU professor questioned the need of federalism in the Indian Union. "If the structure has to be based on nationalism then where is the need of federalism? Federalism can never go hand in hand with nationalism," he said.

Prof Brar said states cannot be governed by the idea of nationalism. "If we agree to have nationalism at the core of the structure then we have more than 30 nationalities within India itself. And that cannot be possible. I would rather prefer federalism as the core structure," he said.

In the seminar questions relating to Indus Water Treaty, Article 370 and Right to self Determination were posed to the experts. But they said they had not much knowledge about Jammu and Kashmir and needed to lecture in the ambit of the proposed topic. "Since the topic of the seminar is federalism we must not bring other things in between," they said.

Research scholars, postgraduate students of Political Science and Linguistics also attended the seminar besides few columnists, editors and journalists.