

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

THE ENTERTAINMENT GOOGLY

Freedom First believes in an open society based on minimum government and maximum freedom tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow; we reject any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

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Freedom First

Between Ourselves...

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“The Descent Continues ...”. Cornucopia columnist Firoze Hirjikaka takes on where we left off our editorial last month with the question “Where do we, who love our country, go from here?” He too paints, in his inimitable manner, a sad picture and yet discerns faint silver linings. “Is there hope at all?” he wonders and points to the demand for accountability by political parties by bringing them within the purview of the Right to Information Act. “The public and the media have to keep relentlessly exposing the misdeeds of those who govern us, until a tipping point is reached and the people say ‘no more’. Babu Satyanarayana, our commentator on the political goings on in our land in his article “L’Affaire Srinivasan” draws attention to a double standard. He writes: “It is patently hypocritical that both the print and electronic media are building up a crescendo of opinion asking for the resignation of BCCI president and head of the IPL, N. Srinivasan on moral grounds. For the same reason what prevents these worthies from asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh?” This comment led us to find out what this “crescendo of opinion” was and discovered it in a series of headlines over ten consecutive days in a leading newspaper which in turn prompted Vivek, our cover designer, who also happened to be a cricketer in his school and college going days, to label it “Entertainment Googly” and nothing more! Perhaps, perhaps not!

Editor

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From Our Readers

Newspapers in India

Our attention has been drawn to an article printed on page 22 entitled “Newspapers in India – Their Origin, Growth and Some Interesting Sidelights”, by B. M. N. Murthy, in your issue of June 2013.

Whilst the article makes interesting reading, we would like to point out that The *Bombay Samachar* Co., which was established in 1812, started publishing a Daily and Weekly newspaper since 1st July, 1822 and, as you may no doubt be aware, has been doing so continuously ever since then. That makes us not only the oldest newspaper in India, but also in Asia.

It might further interest you to know that the second oldest newspaper in India is also a Gujarati language newspaper, which was established in 1832. This newspaper, the *Jam-E-Jamshed*, is still in publication, but, since the last couple of years, it ceased to be a Daily and is now a Weekly.

The *Bombay Samachar* Co. also publishes an annual almanac known as *The Bombay Samachar Panchang* since 1814, every year.

I trust you will rectify the omission in your article, in your next issue.

**The Editor, The *Bombay Samachar* Pvt.Ltd.
bharucha.samachar@gmail.com**

Our humble apologies to the editor of *Bombay Samachar* for this omission. – Editor, *Freedom First*.

*

According to my information and knowledge, *The Bombay Samachar* was established on 1st July 1822 and will complete 191 years of publication on 1st July 2013. It continues to be published with wide circulation all over India, as well as abroad wherever there is Gujarati population. It is considered to be one of the oldest newspapers in Asia. And, lastly and importantly, it is also the oldest running newspaper in India. All said and done *The Bombay Samachar*, in cricketing terms, is still batting.

Kashinath Divecha, Mumbai.

*

Police in Danger

I read with interest Point Counter Point in the May 2013 issue of *FF*. I was shocked to read the point: Police in Danger. It is not clear to me what the motive was of Mr. Ashok Karnik in writing that piece. Does he want to make us understand that the police force in the country

is doing its job and hence they should be respected? I am sure very few people will buy his argument. Day in and day out, we come across police persons who are thoroughly corrupt, brutal and inhuman. They join the police service for only two reasons - easy money and power unlimited, which they can use as they like.

Even in cities and towns, and even educated people avoid going to the police station. As far as the uneducated masses are concerned, they are always under fear of police. In rural areas, the word police is enough to frighten any one.

Nothing has changed in the country after Independence as far as policing is concerned. In fact, it has gone from bad to worse. Earlier the junior police persons were afraid of their seniors. Now even the seniors are of the same hue. Hence, the fear of seniors is completely gone. Under the circumstances, common citizens of the country are the worst sufferers. Getting an FIR registered is a big achievement. Thousands of rupees have to be paid for that. Recently, so many cases have come to light where FIRs were not registered even in cases of rapes, abduction etc. and in some cases the rape victims committed suicide in disgust.

I am unable to understand how Mr. Karnik is pleading that those police persons should be respected.

**Dr. Asrarul Haque, Gurgaon
Email:asrarulhaque@hotmail.com**

Ashok Karnik's response:

I fully agree with Mr. Haque that the police have lost credibility. They are regarded as a scourge. However, it is one force we cannot do without. They take bullets for us in J&K and in the Naxalite belt. Occasionally, they catch a few terrorists too. The question is how to make the force work more effectively. A little gratitude will not be misplaced. Attacks on the police that are becoming common is not a civilized response. The uniform needs to be respected if the sovereignty of the State is to be protected. Condemnation is fine as a way to give vent to our anger but that is not the solution.

**Ashok Karnik
ashokkarnik@yahoo.co.in**

*

Are We prepared?

Whew! At last China relented and withdrew from the Indian territory it had recently encroached on. And India too “withdrew”! As Omar Abdullah asked, withdrew

(Cont'd. on page 16)

The Descent Continues ...

Firoze Hirjikaka

Reading the editorial (Between Ourselves) in the June issue of Freedom First was almost painful. The anguish and frustration expressed by the editor at the continuous decline in the ethical and moral standards of those who govern us was palpable and disheartening.

Even worse, the decay has set in not just in conventional politics, but once cherished institutions like sports as well. The cricket betting scandal however, is just another symptom of the unconscionable greed that seems to be embedded in the Indian psyche. Our cricketers are by far the highest paid sportsmen in the country and yet somehow it is never enough. When it comes to avarice, I don't think they even have a saturation point.

Although the shenanigans at the BCCI have monopolized media coverage for the better part of a fortnight, it is a mere distraction and not a component of the malaise that infects the national polity. Every time we the people perceive a glimmer of hope for meaningful change, it is systematically extinguished by our obdurate, insensitive and shameless political class. Take the recent case of Ashwini Kumar trying to influence the CBI's report on Coalgate to the Supreme Court. The justified outrage of the honourable justices at this brazen effrontery gave rise to a hope that it would take shape in the form of granting genuine autonomy to the investigating agency. However, latest reports suggest that the government has dug in its heels and is prepared to make no more than cosmetic changes, like granting the CBI greater financial autonomy. There is further news that the government is refusing to grant the CBI permission to interrogate a senior bureaucrat who played a key role in the Coalgate imbroglio. In short, the government is determined to maintain the status quo. Not surprisingly, the opposition parties who are ready to pillory the ruling party at the slightest excuse are not saying a word. Why should they? All of them have indulged in unethical wealth gathering, which they cannot risk being exposed by the CBI. The clamour for Ashwini Kumar's resignation was a well-orchestrated charade, because they knew it would change nothing.

Recently, the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) opined that political parties should come under the purview of The Right to Information (RTI) act. Lo and behold, political parties, who lose no opportunity to castigate one another, formed a united front to oppose this measure.

Transparency is anathema to our politicians. They would find it highly inconvenient to expose the methods employed to multiply their personal wealth a hundredfold soon after they assume office. The holier-than-thou BJP has tentatively welcomed the move, but it is a sham. They know that the other political parties will never agree; and they just want to appear as the good guys at their expense.

While it is convenient and satisfying to blame the politicians for all the ills that blight our benighted nation, in all fairness, we need to look inwards too. If the politicians are perceived as greedy and avaricious, the general public is equally guilty of indifference. The prevalent attitude of most Indians seem to be: if it doesn't affect me personally, I am least bothered. Yes, there are conscientious and concerned activists and citizens groups, but their numbers are too few to make a difference. Moreover, as a vote bank, they are negligible and can be safely ignored by the politicians. It always amazes me that Indians abroad do so brilliantly. Many of the major scientific and technological discoveries in the past few decades have been made by teams that contain at least one individual of Indian origin. However, the same species at home seems to be afflicted with collective indifference and apathy towards their surroundings and quality of life in general.

Take the case of Mumbai, which is supposedly the country's commercial capital. Mumbai is to India what New York is to USA or Toronto is to Canada. Yet the contrast between those Western cities and our own could not be more stark or demeaning. Disgracefully uneven roads, encroached footpaths, litter everywhere you look: this is the face Mumbai presents to the rest of the world, yet Mumbaikars don't seem to care. They have no pride towards their city. They don't spare a thought about what they can contribute to make Mumbai more elegant, or even habitable. They just want to extract whatever they can from it. How can we hope to attain world-class status when our mentality remains firmly rooted in Third World attitudes?

It is said that Indians, particularly the youth, are

clamouring for change. That may be true, but the problem is that few have the persistence or commitment to make it happen. The same young bucks who participate in candlelight vigils, or come out on the streets after a brutal rape will happily forget all about it if they get a good job or admission to a college abroad. It is all about me-first. I am my first priority; I'll attend to the country if I have time to spare. I am not denying that the battle is a tough one, with the odds firmly stacked against those who want their nation to advance. Our rulers discovered that the laws left behind by our former colonial masters work very well for them. It enables them to maintain an entirely undeserved exalted status and to feather their own nests in the process. The lawmakers will continue to make and preserve regulations that maintain their power and negate any real sense of accountability. Our political parties, without exception, continue to make the right noises and express insincere outrage against corruption, but will not enact or encourage any meaningful legislation to that effect.

So is there no hope at all? A very faint one to be sure, but we have to keep hammering away. The public and the media have to keep relentlessly exposing the misdeeds of those who govern us, until a tipping point is reached and the people say 'no more'. The Supreme Court has become the last resort for many citizens and to their credit, they are becoming increasingly active, but they need to do more. Right now, they are adhering to the Constitutional separation between the judiciary and the legislation. This may be the proper thing to do, but it becomes ineffective when the legislators blithely ignore the Constitution whenever it suits them. India's democracy has become a farce. If it requires unconventional, even ruthless methods to restore it to its rightful place, so be it.

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired Civil Engineer, a blogger and a commentator on current affairs. He is a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. Leornado8_99@yahoo.com.

A Soldier's Tale

Help from On High

In October 1958, as a young Flight Lieutenant in our Air Force, I was driving from Simla (the 'h' was added later) to Delhi with my wife and six month old son. The little Morris Minor (our very first car) was running splendidly and we hoped to reach our home in Palam on schedule. Somewhere near Sonapat, about 60 km short of Delhi, the car had a puncture so I pulled off the road and positioned the jack to change the wheel. To my dismay I found the wheel brace slipping and I was unable to loosen the holding nuts on the punctured wheel. My efforts to flag down passing vehicles were unsuccessful. It was now getting dark and my wife, with the baby in one hand and a lit newspaper in the other, was trying to give me light while I laboured.

Suddenly a large white car, slowed down, pulled across to the shoulder ahead of us and a uniformed driver approached us.

Having ascertained the problem, the driver returned with his own tool kit and soon had my spare wheel fitted. I thanked him but he explained that he had been instructed to stop and help by 'Shastri Saab'. I then walked across to their car which seemed to be an official government vehicle as it sported the Ashoka Pillar emblem and a national flag on the bonnet.

On the rear seat sat a solitary little figure clad in kurta pyjama engrossed in reading by the interior light of the car. I introduced myself and thanked him profusely

for his kind and timely help. With a smile and in a very soft voice he asked '*aap fauji ho*'? and followed with a few friendly personal questions about our destination, profession, family, native place and so on. He expressed his concern about my driving onwards without a serviceable stepney and suggested that he would follow us. I was more than grateful for the mental comfort of having the headlights and red beacon of our shadow car all the way into Delhi where, at some point, we lost our guardian angel but made it safely to our home.

The next morning, when I related the incident to my squadron mates, the more senior and knowledgeable assured me that our benefactor could be none other than Lal Bahadur Shastri a Union Minister who frequently travelled with no pilot jeep, security guard or staff. I was quite mortified and embarrassed at my failure to recognise and identify the occupant of the car. In the years to come, whenever we came across his name in the media, we remembered with gratitude his kindness to strangers. However, it was only in June 1964 that I realised that our good samaritan had given this *fauji* an opportunity to interact (briefly and unknowingly) with India's second Prime Minister to be.

Cecil Parker, retired Air Vice Marshal of the IAF and a freelance writer who can be contacted at shirleygloria70@yahoo.com.

The IB Versus the CBI

Ashok Karnik

We talk of strengthening intelligence operations whenever a terrorist attack takes place and the next moment we emasculate these organisations.

It is a national shame that two units of the national security architecture are locked in gladiatorial battle, with the PM being asked to be the referee. The case goes back to 2004 when the Intelligence Bureau (IB) sent a report to the Gujarat Government that a group of 4 L-e-T terrorists was moving to Gujarat with plans to assassinate Chief Minister Narendra Modi. One of the terrorists happened to be Ishrat Jahaan, a girl from Mumbra (Maharashtra). As a result of this IB input, the group was intercepted and allegedly eliminated in an encounter. The problem started when the mandatory inquiry into the incident concluded that it was a fake encounter.

The investigation was then entrusted to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) with a lot of bickering as Gujarat and the Centre were locked in a political battle where anything that Narendra Modi did was suspect and everything that the Centre did was an infringement of the State's autonomy. Nine years after the encounter, the CBI has determined that several state police officers and a senior IB officer, then posted in Gujarat, had conspired to eliminate Ishrat and her colleagues. CBI's insistence on questioning the IB officer (now a Special Director in Delhi) and treating him as an accused led IB to complain to the PM against CBI's interference in IB's operational matters. CBI insists that the IB officer 'generated' the report against innocent people and then conspired with the state police to eliminate them. IB keeps on insisting that Ishrat and her colleagues were indeed terrorists and it was the duty of the IB officer to keep track of the group. It is not known how the group was planning to operate and what clear and present danger it posed.

IB's complaint to the PM is seen by some as interference in the legal process. A question is raised whether IB officials are above the law. IB's contention is that no IB officer can 'generate' a report to suit his fancy as such reports are a product of elaborate, delicate operations, vetted by IB headquarters. The mechanics of the operations are not open to any outside scrutiny.

Operational sanctity is the fundamental principle of IB's functioning; the present case may be a single incident but if operational sanctity is not observed, IB's nationwide network would come to a halt and no officer would undertake any covert operation. Every operation has its grey side (bending of rules) which would place IB officers at the mercy of disinterested cases; any IB report which had led to an encounter in the past would be open to allegations of conspiracy, murder, etc. As Chanakya has said, state security is to be guarded by any available means and 'saam, daam, dand, bheda' are the foundations of intelligence work; morality plays no role in it. An intelligence official's personal integrity is the only dividing line between him and deceit. To respond to the question whether IB officers should be above the law, the answer is an emphatic no. Law can be used as a sledge hammer or a scalpel. In the present case, the CBI Director could have confided in the IB Director and asked for his advice whether the investigation would jeopardize any IB operation and what should be done with the suspected officer. It would have avoided all recriminations and embarrassment. Whether Ishrat was a terrorist need not be debated here. The fact is that even if she was linked to terrorists, she had the right to a fair trial.

On the other hand, the IB officer concerned is being accused of complicity, based on the statement of an officer who was himself an accused and is now supposedly helping the CBI. The genuineness of his testimony would always be in doubt. The CBI has no clue to the motive of the suspect officer for committing murder as he had no need to please the Gujarat CM like the state police officers. Even in the worst possible cases of encounters, IB officers 'generating' intelligence inputs cannot be asked how they got the information, why they were in touch with the 'encounter' men as IB officers are duty bound to check with the very same police officers as to what they did with the intelligence input given to them. The important point is that IB officers have no police powers and cannot arrest anybody or interrogate anybody; they have to

depend on the local police to do so. It is necessary for the CBI to take into account these circumstances where duty can be construed as complicity.

In the final analysis, security organisations have to evolve a standard operating procedure (SOP) to deal with situations when one agency has to tread on the toes of another. We deal with such matters in an ad hoc manner instead of formulating an agreed procedure. At all cost, IB's covert action capacity should not be jeopardized. The PM must draw the line somewhere. We talk of strengthening intelligence operations whenever a terrorist attack takes

place and the next moment we emasculate these organisations. No mature nation can afford to place its intelligence agencies under such constraints. Without knowing the full facts, it would not be correct to comment on the merits of the present case but it must be recognized that such cases go deeper than what a police investigation could uncover.

ASHOK KARNIK Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau(IB), Government of India. Postretirement he has been a commentator on issues involving national security, runs a column in *Freedom First* "Point Counter Point".

Mandate for Politics as Usual in Karnataka

The return of the Congress party to power in the southern state of Karnataka (population 61 million) with a near absolute majority in the legislative assembly election of May 5 represents the triumph of hope over experience. In the 65 years since independence, the Congress party has ruled in Karnataka for well over half a century and is overwhelmingly responsible for the state's slide into a malodorous pool of open, uninterrupted and continuous corruption and near anarchy.

Ably administered and developed by the relatively enlightened Wodeyar princely family under the advice of distinguished technocrats and administrators such as Sir M. Visvesvaraya and Shafi Darashah, right up to the 1970s, Karnataka was commonly acknowledged as India's most well administered state with clean governance and a prosperous peasantry. Bangalore, its capital, was the country's cleanest, greenest and most well-governed state capital defined by good roads, excellent education institutions, reliable bus service, national connectivity and its numerous great parks and lakes.

The gradual transformation of Bangalore (and Karnataka) from garden into garbage city began in the early 1970s after Mrs. Indira Gandhi split the Congress party, nationalised the banking system, expanded the public sector and ushered in an era of *neta-babu* (politician-bureaucrat) socialism in India. Simultaneously, Mrs. Gandhi and her handpicked chief ministers in the states began practicing caste-based and minority politics - buying off historically neglected and gullible scheduled castes and tribes as also OBCs (other backward castes) and Muslims with meagre subsidies and handouts - for electoral support. In

Karnataka, the art of playing caste-based politics in which regressive caste combinations are engineered for electoral success was perfected by the late Devaraj Urs who ruled the state as Congress chief minister for eight years from 1972-1980.

Since then, caste - rather than ideas or ideologies - based politics has dominated the public discourse in Karnataka which has transformed into a seething cauldron of caste antagonisms. With political formations which win hardly 25-30 percent of the popular vote elected to power in the state, the first priority of political parties is to infiltrate their supporters into government where they are given free rein to exploit the other 75 percent of the population. This sordid corruption has driven up the cost of doing business and has adversely affected investment and employment.

The first initiative of the new chief minister, K. Siddaramaiah - who boasts of having presented seven state budgets as finance minister representing various political parties - has been to announce a massive additional subsidy of Rs.4,400 crore to provide 30 kg of rice at Rs.1 per kg monthly to an estimated 14 million EWS (economically weaker sections) households. This in a state in which the education and health systems - which would enable citizens to learn to help themselves - are in urgent and desperate need of reform and investment. All indications are that for the foolishly optimistic public of the state, it will be politics as usual.

Dilip Thakore's editorial in *EducationWorld*, June 2013.

Courtesy: EducationWorld

L’Affaire Srinivasan

Billions Cheated, Hypocrites All

Bapu Satyanarayana

It is patently hypocritical that both the print and electronic media are building up a crescendo of opinion asking for the resignation of BCCI president and head of the IPL, N. Srinivasan on moral grounds. For the same reason what prevents these worthies from asking for the resignation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on moral grounds when there is overwhelming evidence of his silent complicity be it the 2G, CWG and now the Coalgate, scams?

Obviously, these self-same media persons have double standards and thereby hangs a tale.

BCCI Bubble Bursts

The above comment is a slightly edited version of what I wrote in a letter to the press late last month. Needless to say, it was not published. Not surprising. By now it is clear that the majority of the mainline TV channels and newspapers have their biases and their policies are strictly structured to ensure no material that goes against the interests of the Congress Party are reported or commented upon. The unwritten truth is that the Congress has ruled India for five decades and the media, being accustomed to eating out of this Party’s hand cannot now go against it.

I have been following the ‘panel discussions’ on the mainstream English channels anchored by persons who have impressive credentials who, despite giving an impression of impartiality, ensure that in most cases the discussion is steered in such a way it does not upset the Congress. So is the case with most newspapers. The discussions on ‘Spot fixing’ in the IPL cricket matches is a case in point. The glare of publicity was focused on Sreesanth for a combination of reasons. This gradually led to unearthing ‘Match fixing’ and so on. The object was also a race among the channels to increase their TRP.

As the investigation by both the Maharashtra and Delhi police progressed, more and more cricketers and bookies were found to be involved with the trail leading all the way to the Dawood gang based in Pakistan and Dubai. The latest news, as we go to press is that Raj Kundra who is connected with the team Rajasthan Royals has reportedly confessed to betting. The arrest of Meiappan son-in-law of BCCI president Srinivasan and the former’s link with Bollywood’s Vindoo, son of late Dara Singh, has taken a new turn. As murky details kept tumbling out, it looks as if no franchise is without its share of culpability.

People in the know are now saying that this is not

a new development and has been going on for a number of years. The reason why it did not make news earlier is because those controlling the affairs of BCCI managed to play it down or suppress it. The truth is that everybody who mattered, including cricketers of repute, kept silent because of the largesse doled out to them. This is quite apparent from the fact that when the mainstream TV channels went berserk raising the pitch demanding the resignation of Srinivasan on the ground of propriety and morality, he kept a phlegmatic silence. The only comment apart from saying that he will not resign, as he had personally committed no wrong was that he was being targeted because he is a South Indian! The surprising phenomenon was that none of the worthies including leading cricketers uttered a single word supporting the call for his resignation at the relevant point of time.

The tentative statements came later calling for resignation, first by the young MP Jyothiraditya Scindia followed by the minister of sports in the UPA government, lending suspicion to the fact that it was a well orchestrated move. It is not unlikely that the strong man, Union Minister Sharad Pawar, who wields considerable influence in the BCCI must have been prevailed upon to blunt the move. After all, it would be in the interests of politicians like Farook Abdullah, Praful Patel, C. P. Joshi et al who are on the Board of BCCI to see that RTI would not be made applicable. Of course, there is the case of the leader of the opposition Arun Jaitley belonging to BJP who is also on the Board but not touched by allegation of corruption. Significantly, he also kept silent. It only shows that when it comes to protecting their interests, politicians of all hues and ideology close ranks. The fact should not be lost that it is the powerful politicians, heading various State Cricket Associations, who form the power centres of influence in the BCCI and not the cricketers who are only dancing to their tune as puppets.

This state of affairs is a true mirror reflection of what is happening in the UPA II government mired in corruption. Just as the affairs of this government headed by Manmohan Singh is in a perpetual denial mode to thwart all attempts to escape accountability using the very institutions to subvert the system, so is the case with the BCCI. How politics has intruded has been succinctly expressed by A. G. Noorani (*The Hindu*, June, 10), “One wishes there was more cricket in India’s politics and no politics in India’s cricket. But the reality of an insufferably scandalous state in both spheres stares us in the face.”

High Drama - Some Plusses and Some Minuses

All circumstances point out that Srinivasan’s legitimacy to continue as BCCI president is based on narrow technicality. Probably his position would have become untenable if BCCI had come under the RTI because this would have exposed all the wheelings and dealings going on. All circumstances indicate that it should come under RTI as it is a body representing India in the international forum of cricket enjoying many facilities and concessions and yet has remained above the pale of accountability.

Even the amendment to the Regulations, when Srinivasan as treasurer of BCCI as well as the managing Director of India Cements Ltd. was allowed to bid in an IPL auction for ownership of CSR, is immoral and in my view unsustainable as it amounts to insider trading which is a crime. However, we know that politicians and corporate giants are not squeamish about it for they have mutual *quid pro quo* relationships for pecuniary gains. Jagmohan Dalmia supposedly holding temporary charge comes with an unsavoury history behind him and being street smart it is anybody’s guess how it will all turn out for Srinivasan in the end.

For the media it was not all a wasted effort since it brought all the mess of corruption into the open and the political manoeuvrings resulted in widespread public revulsion. For the TV channels hosting panel discussions for several weeks helped increase their TRP which is the major reason for their existence. Public good is relegated to second place. It must be granted that the media is doing a good turn to society and to its credit, they have created awareness in the public.

Nevertheless, the impression is that when it comes to scams connected with the leaders of ruling Congress Party, the media appear to be following a hit and run policy.

ⁱ The *New Indian Express* of 30th May and 7th June, 2013 by S. Gurumurthy, commentator on economic and political issues and M. N. Buch a former civil servant and chairman, National Centre for Human Development respectively.

That is how the Vadra affair has been left in a limbo while the media has jumped to take on BCCI president Srinivasan hounding him with ferocity. The irony is that the Congress must be mightily pleased for it has taken the focus off from various huge scams in which it is involved neck deep. The moot question is now that the initial excitement has faded will the opposition and the media focus on substantive issues concerning both BCCI and the affairs of the UPA government.

Some Telling Comments

In their writings S. Gurumurthy, and M. N. Buchⁱ have come up with a detailed analyses of the bias in the media and the different yardsticks followed by the Congress showing the contrasting tale of two sons-in-law and the Dawood gang’s takeover of Indian cricket. The three cricketers who were arrested were only bit players, scapegoats, but its ramification reaches higher levels involving the high and the mighty. Gurumurthy refers to an article in *Outlook* magazine of 4th February wherein it is claimed (based on Home Ministry documents) that Sharad Pawar has had close links with Dawood.

Buch, on the other hand, refers to how the media is biased in its role in giving a platform selectively to those individuals and organizations claiming to be human rights activists who support the Naxalites who advocate the overthrow of the Indian State through armed insurrection. When some months ago, Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Sonia Gandhi, was in the news for building a real estate empire worth couple of billion dollars (Rs 11,000 crore) in just four years, (according to California’s celebrity networth.com), the media did take up the issue in right earnest but within hours of the exposure, Sonia Gandhi certified Vadra as honest and directed her party to defend her son-in-law. The farce that followed is in the public domain - an honest IAS officer, Ashok Khemka, handling the Vadra case dared to initiate steps that would have revealed the truth but was hounded out by being transferred. The IPL cricket mess diverted the attention of the nation from mega scams of 2G, CWG, Coalgate, etc. in which corruption involved is so huge when compared to measly amounts in the BCCI/IPL scam.

Conclusion

We should initiate steps to see that the menace of corruption is addressed. Though laws exist against crimes of many types there is no law to control the phenomenon of the type of ‘fixing’ that has come to light in cricket. Minister of Law Kapil Sibal’s promise for a law to deal with it is welcome. Gurumurthy writes that if cricket has to be saved from the D-gang, the first casualty has to be the IPL format. He says it is impossible to ‘fix’ a five-day

Test match or a one-day match. Therefore, he suggests banning 20-twenty matches that lend themselves to fixing. It is easier said than done for millions of Indian cricket fans, mostly young men and women, are addicted to the 20-twenty format. There is no other way but to make strict rules to regulate besides making betting legal. Of course, the BCCI needs to be cleaned up; the first step is to make it accountable, and its dealings made transparent by bringing

it under the RTI Act. Ultimately, the best guarantee of bringing in all round reformation and restoring cricket's pristine glory as a gentleman's game, lies with the millions of cricket fans themselves.

H. R. BAPU SATYANARAYANA a regular contributor to *Freedom First* is a freelance commentator on current affairs is based in Mysore. Email: what_option@yahoo.co.in.

The Entertainment Googly

For ten consecutive days in May and early June, a leading English newspaper bowled bouncers to one Mr. N. Srinivasan to get him out of his position as Chairman of the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India). The ten bouncers are reproduced below along with two "no-balls". They succeeded in getting him to retire on 'getting hurt'. In the process, Mr. N. Srinivasan became a nationally known figure and even those who have no interest in cricket came to know him. It is a mystery why this paper, when there are so many more important news to report, was determined to clean bowl him?

In the article you have just read there is this speculation: "The IPL cricket mess diverted the attention of the nation from mega scams of 2G, CWG, Coalgate etc". There is another speculation that it added to the entertainment already provided by 20-20 matches.

May 25, 2013

Guru Arrested, Srinivasan May Lose Crown

After Hours of Grilling, Cops Say BCCI Chief's Son-in-Law 'Involved In Offence'

May 26, 2013

Salwa Judum Founder Killed in Maoist Raid

17 Massacred,
V. C. Shukla Critical,
C'garh Cong, Son Abducted

As Heavyweights Turn Against Him Defiant BCCI Chief To Save Job

Real Final: Srinivasan Vs Rest of India
Ouster Plan: First Nudge, Then Shove

May 27, 2013

Mixed Fortunes: Super Kings Lose Final But Superboss Holds on to Crown

Weak-kneed BCCI falls in line as Srinivasan flatly refuses to walk.
Chhattisgarh Cong chief found shot dead

May 28, 2013

Why are they so silent?

(six mugshots of Narendra Modi, Arun Jaitley, C. P. Joshi, Rajeev Shukla, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Farooq Abdullah)

May 29, 2013

Scindia is 1st neta in BCCI to say Srinivasan should quit

May 30, 2013

Finally, Shukla & Jaitley say they too want Srinivasan Out

May 31, 2013

Majority now against Srinivasan, can call BCCI Meet to remove him

At least 18 of 31 Likely to Vote for Ouster,
Treasurer May Quit.

June 1, 2013

Six Days After BCCI Boss Declared He had Board's Unanimous Support, He's Running Out of Partners

Game All But Over for Srinivasan

June 2, 2013

Key Issue in Today's Meeting: Should He 'Step Aside' or 'Step Down'

Srinivasan sets conditions for exit,
BCCI members unwilling to play Ball.

June 3, 2013

Srinivasan to 'Step Aside'. Some Say It's A Face-Saver for Him,

Others Call It An Anti-Climax And A Sham
Match Result: All Out For No Loss

Painting a Mirage: UPA II's 'Report Card'

Sunil S. Bhandare

Self-glorification is the name of the game, and this is what the UPA II government's recently released "Report Card" is all about!

Self-glorification is the name of the game, and this is what the UPA II government's recently released "Report Card" is all about! From the perspective of the UPA II, this happens to be the most opportune time to submit a Report to the people of this country on its performance during the nine years it has been in office. It reads more like the prospectus of a corporate enterprise launching its Initial Public Offering (IPO). The difference is that the Report Card is neither a legal declaration nor is it likely to meet the transparency standards normally expected of a prospectus.

The UPA II Report Card is a political document as tedious as a prospectus, but inspirational only to those currently in power! In terms of structure, style and content, it makes all the right noises from the viewpoint of the UPA II government - meant as it is to be trumpet call to the voter before the next general election early next year. Indeed, it's a 'massive 'sales pitch' highlighting its 'achievements' across a broad spectrum covering socio-economic activities, from social welfare to rural renewal, transformation of cities, economic consolidation, sustaining the environment, strengthening science and technology, managing disasters, successfully tackling issues of internal and external security, building bridges in external/diplomatic relations and so on. All these are meant to impress the voter including the middle-class and of course the minorities. Besides, there are a whole set of proclamations of achievements on the economic front including expectations of growth recovery in 2013-14, softening of inflation, fiscal consolidation, et al as well as about a series of policy initiatives taken or in the pipeline to promote investment (including FDI).

What is perhaps most significant is that social sector initiatives are flagged off upfront occupying almost half the Report Card. The objective is to symbolize and strategize the UPA II government's "inclusive development" strategy. At the same time, witness the fact that economic initiatives taken during 2012-13 find place almost at the very end of this document! Clearly, the Report Card shows that the UPA II government has shifted its

goalpost decisively towards social welfare programs rather than an economic growth agenda. In the process, it has revealed the worrisome fact of more government and less governance relying increasingly on State intervention rather than market-driven economic forces. We believe that the Report Card would have done a great service if it had provided an aggregate estimate of all the public spending on social welfare in the last four years and its audited outcome so far.

Surprisingly, perhaps strangely, within a few days of its official release the outstanding civil society activist, Dr. Aruna Roy resigned from the National Advisory Council (NAC) accusing the government of giving priority to growth over poverty-alleviation! The fact of the matter is that the economy is suffering from growth pangs in recent years – and this is becoming quite obvious. That both consumers and investors are currently going through a 'crisis of confidence' is also visible. That no major large investments – a la mega projects are getting off the ground is well recognized. So, if the government were to be really obsessed with growth concerns, it would have given a high sounding growth agenda. However, that, unfortunately, is not the case. Thus, in the context of Aruna Roy's resignation, the moot question is whether the government has also failed in delivering on its social sector inclusive development strategy and this has led to acute frustration and dismay to protagonists of social sector agenda.

Further, as was to be expected, the document remains virtually silent on many burning issues of mis-governance, corruption, nepotism and related matters. Yes, in the section dealing with governance and civil society, it talks about anti-corruption measures and enactment of various legislation proposed including the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill. However, all such propositions fail to carry any conviction and commitment. All in all, we have a document which is completely one-sided and overtly biased. What impact it makes on the political fortune of the UPA needs to be seen, but in the meantime the country has already lost two or three years of potential high growth

thanks to the prolonged phase of policy paralysis!

Growth Pangs & Other Challenges

Against this somewhat sketchy backdrop, let us reflect essentially on claims and proclamations made in the report card on four key economic issues, namely, (a) economic growth; (b) fiscal consolidation; (c) external vulnerability; and (d) investment climate. Doubtless, the most stubborn challenge over the last about three years has been surging inflation. Granting a welcome softening of inflationary trends in the last couple of months, there is now a growing perception that the intensity of this problem is behind us. Yet, it is too early to celebrate as most of the gains on the inflation front have accrued due to the recent ebbing of global commodity prices, especially crude oil, and the rigours of RBI's monetary policy of the previous two years.

On economic growth, the Prime Minister in his foreword to the Report Card observes "we delivered an average growth of nearly 8 percent in the first 8 years of our government. The past year has however been disappointing and our growth rate has dipped to 5 percent". Yes, there is validity in this claim. However, witness the ongoing growth pangs: first and foremost, the Twelfth Plan had to scale down the real GDP target from its earlier goal of annual 9% growth rate to 8%. Now, there are some reports suggesting that the Planning Commission is reworking its growth projections, leading to a likely further downward revision in the real GDP growth target to 7%.

Incidentally, with the first two years of the Twelfth Plan (2012-14) likely to yield an average growth rate of just about 5.5%, the remaining three years must generate an average annual growth rate of over 8% (in case of 7% growth target for a five-year period) and as much as 9.7% growth (if growth rate target is retained at 8%). While 8% growth rate in the last three years of the Twelfth Plan per se is tough, the growth rate of 9.7% is an impossible proposition. The growth pangs manifest themselves across most sectors of the economy, but are more acute in the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. In particular, the performance of the manufacturing sector has been disastrous; it had recorded 11.3% growth in 2009-10, but has seen a secular and precipitous fall to less than 2% in 2012-13.

The report card talks eloquently about 42 major reforms measures taken by the government in the sphere of finance, banking, industry, infrastructure and taxation since May last year. It also talks about National Manufacturing Policy and Investment Corridors. It however

fails to evaluate why there has been no positive impact of these measures on consumer and investment confidence so far. Every single financial/economic newspaper is replete with reports of massive delays/ postponement or straightforward abandoning of major investment projects. At the macro level, investment/GDP ratio has dropped from the all-time record of 38% in 2007-08 to 35%. If the policy measures are right, then what is missing in the picture? Or is it a case of a huge transmission gap thanks to the lack of credibility about the government's intentions and implementation record!

A large part of the growth pangs is associated with the ÚPA II government's failure to manage fiscal consolidation. The Report Card however proclaims that "with concerted effort, the fiscal deficit was contained at 5.2% in the financial year 2012-13". It may be recalled that fiscal deficit to GDP ratio (FDR), which averaged slightly below 3.5% [the norm prescribed under fiscal responsibility legislation] during the period 2004-05 to 2007-08, crossed this limit in the subsequent years – reaching a high point of 6.5% in 2009-10 and averaging around 5.5% for the entire period from 2008-09 to 2012-13. Such high FDR constricts the RBI's policy space with respect to appropriate interest rates structure for the economy and crowds out private sector investments.

Equally worrisome has been the adverse impact of domestic fiscal imbalances (revealed in high FDR) on the external stability of the economy, which is measured in terms of current account deficit (CAD) to GDP ratio. This ratio was well below 1% during the period 2004-05 to 2007-08, but progressively rose to an average of 2.5% in the subsequent three years and surging to 4.2% in 2011-12 and to an estimated 5.1% in 2012-13. High FDR ultimately impinges on CAD ratio. In the absence of adequate capital inflows, CAD triggers depletion of valuable forex reserves, thereby leading to volatility in the exchange markets – and eventually leading to depreciation of the rupee, as is being currently experienced. Persistent depreciation of the rupee would undermine the prospect of any sustainable fall in the inflation rate. Surprisingly, the Report Card is completely silent about the external economic vulnerability, while talking about many other things concerning external affairs and foreign policy.

To sum up, the UPA II government is attempting to project through its Report Card a mirage by constructing a self-comforting ambience before the next general election. Whether this can be encashed politically remains to be seen. Will the deficient balance sheet of its economic performance generate popular votes? Surely, no major structural reforms can now be expected from the government in the remaining part of its tenure, except the

long-pending reforms like land acquisition legislation. The National Food Security Bill is looked upon by the official spokespersons of government as a likely political game-changer; and they are, therefore, proposing to make it a reality even if it is through an ordinance. Be that as it may, what should worry most keen observers of the economy is that in the quest for a whole range of social

sector programs in the name of “inclusive development”, both economic growth and employment generation will be the major victims. As to how things would pan out prior to, and immediately after, the general election period We will have to wait and watch!

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Rupee Depreciation: Foolish Government, Intelligent Indian

M. R. Venkatesh

A theory that is doing the rounds is that with election nearing, this depreciation of the rupee will allow politicians of all hues to bring back their ill-gotten wealth.

Speaking at an award function in Chennai a few weeks back to honour excellence in financial journalism, the Hon'ble Finance Minister Mr. P. Chidambaram frowned on the titillating language used by sections of the media, especially in the world of finance.

As a case in point the FM referred to the oft-repeated headlines of “Rupee Plunges” even as our currency would have depreciated by a few Paise against the US dollar. Pointing to the fact that only bungee jumpers plunge, the FM reiterated, the rupee never plunged.

That, to me, seemed ominous. The reason for it is not far to seek for whenever any FM, especially the present incumbent opines on the state of the economy, it is a remarkable coincidence that the Indian economy faces significant turbulence! The joke in Dalal Street is that whenever the FM bats for the markets the Sensex loses a few hundred points.

Interestingly, even as the FM had claimed a fortnight ago that the Indian economy is witnessing copious flows of foreign investment, the rupee came under severe strain.

What the FM failed to mention is that the rupee has depreciated by approximately 7.5 per cent this year. But so have several currencies across continents. That includes Indonesian Rupiah (4.5%), Brazilian Real (4.7%), Philippine Peso (5.5%), Turkish Lira (6.1%), Korean Won (6.2%), Russian Ruble (6.9%) and South African Rand (17.2%) - (Source: *The Hindu Business Line* – June 21, 2013)

Obviously, when compared to its peers, the Rupee has not performed badly.

However, none from our establishment could put his finger on one precise reason for this depreciation till date. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that the Indian Rupee is under pressure on account of a variety of reasons.

Gold – the Gorilla in the Room?

And at the core of the issue is the current account deficit [explained as imports over exports leading to a

deficit] that makes India vulnerable to external shocks. And as one looks at the basket of goods imported, economists within the establishment somewhere down the line hold surging gold imports as the villain of the piece.

Professor R Vaidyanathan of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore puts the matter rather humorously when he says that even as such lecturing goes on by sarkari experts, ladies in their own household could well be shopping for gold! And that would include the FM's household too.

What else would explain the sudden spurt in gold imports to about 150 tons per month on an average in the first two months of this fiscal when it was 75 tons per month the previous fiscal?

Surely this near doubling of gold imports in recent months despite the sharp fall in international prices has flummoxed our economists who expected Indians to refrain from purchasing gold even as renowned international experts predicted its collapse. Even as the lady in every Indian household sees this drop in gold prices as value purchase, our economists fail to do so!

But our economists have a point. Year on year we Indians do buy huge quantities of gold. For 2012-13 our gold import bill was \$55 billion. This import creates huge pressure on the rupee as it converts precious foreign currency into gold. Crucially, it is actually unproductive from an economist's standpoint. Significantly, gold purchases are usually sourced through unaccounted income.

In the process, the government suffers from a double whammy. First gold import causes current account deficits and secondly, it is the cause and consequence of proliferation of unaccounted money within the national economy. Surely it is a gorilla in the room. But yet to this date the Indian establishment would offer nothing concrete except to wish it away!

Excerpted from his blog MRV.net.in posted on 17 June 2013

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Cricket in the Dock

1. The Indian Premier League (IPL), which was the envy of the world of cricket, got entangled in a mess of fixing, betting, 'insider trading' and gross mismanagement. In India, no financial activity is let alone by the corrupt. There is now an anguished demand for ban on the IPL, take over of the BCCI etc. Initially, three IPL players were found spot-fixing but more and more skeletons came tumbling out with the final nail being the arrest of the son-in-law of BCCI Chief N. Srinivasan (Srini), who clung to legalities instead of resigning to help cleanse cricket. Moral responsibility is a concept that has disappeared from our public life. The BCCI is a law unto itself and rejects every attempt to check its functioning. It forgets that it represents the country in international cricket and deals with a billion people's aspirations. Not heeding to the national uproar over its functioning, the BCCI allowed Srini, in its usual incestuous manner, to 'step aside' temporarily while the same discredited dispensation would continue to run the BCCI in the interim. All thoughts of a new broom sweeping away the dirt were dispensed with. No wonder the people want the entire cricket administration scrapped and even ask the Government to take it over although it would be worse than the original disease. BCCI must become a professionally managed unit and work in close coordination with the police instead of pretending to be omnipotent. The damage to the game of cricket and betrayal of the trust of the cricket loving country are the consequences of its high-handedness.

1. The wonderful legal mantra, "everybody is innocent till proven guilty" has become a bane of our society. Every accused claims innocence and declares that he/she would sacrifice every thing if proven guilty, knowing that it would not happen in 10-15 years. The result is that various shady characters keep strutting around without shame. In BCCI's case, it would prefer to wait forever for the guilty to be declared guilty. Meanwhile, it denies responsibility for every thing: It has no control over bookies; it is a private club and therefore not open to public scrutiny. If the BCCI Chief's son-in-law is caught with his hand in the till, the Chief claims that it is not his hand. If another franchisee is caught betting, he is found to be only a minority shareholder. BCCI should recognize that without Government help its edifice would crumble. To BCCI's credit, it must be said that it has distributed its largesse for the benefit of cricketers and cricket; the flip side is that it renders the cricketing fraternity deaf and dumb. On the other hand, BCCI's critics offer no solution but demand a ban on the IPL, scrapping of all cricket for a while etc. There are fixing incidents in football, hockey, tennis and other sports too. Even Olympics are not free from cheats. None of these sports have been closed down. The solution lies in eliminating the cheats. Thankfully, the Government is thinking of legislation to deal with fixing in sports. It is also toying with the idea of legalizing betting. The puritanical approach of throwing away the baby with the bath water is self-flagellating! It injures nobody but us.

Chhattisgarh Massacre

2. The gruesome killing of 24 members of a Congress yatra in Chhattisgarh (May 25) underlined the ruthlessness of the often romanticized Naxalites. It is fondly believed that the revolutionaries are fighting to better the life of the poor; it is only partially true since they first want to use the poor as a weapon to destroy the present order; they would not like the poor to be contented enough to forget to fight. Any development in the Adivasi belt is, therefore, anathema to the Maoists. The movement, which was revived in Naxalbari in the 60s, continues to expand. The Maoist-Leninist dogma is well delineated: it aims to spread disaffection among the poor (Adivasis), launch guerilla attacks to weaken the Government, establish area domination and then liberate the areas to challenge the

2. The main target of the May 25 attack was Mahendra Karma who was the brain behind the much-maligned 'Salwa Judum'. 'Salwa Judum' was intended to be a volunteer force of Adivasis, equipped with weapons to fight the Naxalites; unfortunately, it turned into a bandit force without control. It was no surprise that the Naxalites would target Karma, walking into their den. Whatever be the failures of intelligence, planning and road sanitization that led to the tragedy, Naxalite ruthlessness should wake up the romantics. The Government's strategy is to establish area domination over forest tracts that function as Naxalite strongholds. There is a stalemate of sorts as Naxalites are unable to move from area control to liberation and the Government is unable to spread its area domination. The

State. According to their theory, the ever-expanding liberated zones would surround the urban areas and liberate these too. That would be the end of the existing socio-economic order and beginning of the Marxist Utopia. The Centre is unable to get all the affected states (9 states-173 districts) on the same wavelength to initiate coordinated action. The debate is stuck on the issue of tough police action versus development, with a host of sympathizers justifying the militants. The sympathizers still believe that it is a battle between the militarized State and the hapless poor. They refuse to believe that it is a battle for survival of civilized governance.

Naxalites continue guerilla attacks and the Government is divided on whether to go all out to militarily crush the Naxalites or win their hearts through development projects. The tragedy is that no development is possible since the militants keep destroying everything the Government tries to build, including schools, first aid centers, agricultural units, roads, etc. The Government must formulate a strategy for the next 10 years or so and not budge from it despite reverses through terrorist attacks. It will be a gradual and painful operation but there is no alternative. It is a war that can be won only through great political will and less of intellectual hair-splitting.

BJP's Brinkmanship

3. BJP aspires to capture power in 2014 because it sees that the Congress is losing ground rapidly. UPA II's scam-ridden rule is not likely to survive and a power vacuum seems to invite the next party in line. It may look simple but the party in line does not know which way is forward! It cannot decide on its leader, its priorities, and what to offer to the confused voter. Modi is a tempting choice as he presents an undiluted aggressive alternative to a blurred ideology. There are several leaders who think they fit the bill but the octogenarian Advani keeps rocking the boat most. Narendra Modi's elevation as Chairman of Election Campaign Committee was accompanied by unedifying drama because Advani chose to sulk. The next day, he resigned from all party posts, plunging the BJP in to a crisis. Another day and lo and behold, Advani withdrew his resignations.

3. Narendra Modi emerged the BJP's point man but Advani obviously did not want him to be the undisputed leader. Advani did not seem to have given up his Prime Ministerial ambition although he is 85. His open attack on the party was a shock to those who were disciplined in the RSS mould. A man like Advani had to be 'educated' by the RSS Chief to understand where he stood; instead of retiring as a wise patriarch guiding the party from behind the scenes, Advani risked being ostracized by the 'parivar'. A swayamsevak is taught to submerge his self to the higher goal; Advani in his autumnal years defied the rule. Unfortunately, after life long service to a cause, he might have ended up as its betrayer. His second thoughts might save him much embarrassment but the damage to his reputation is irreversible.

Readers are invited to email their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in.

Readers who do not have the facility of a computer can also post (mail) their points of view on serious issues of the day to "Point Counter Point", c/o Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.

From Our Readers (Cont'd. from page 4)

from where to where? Was it a retreat from our own land? In any case, China can never be trusted. Its territorial ambition goes beyond all geographical boundaries. The dragon could spit fire without any provocation, and without warning. China is slowly and steadily encircling our country, with the cooperation of some of our neighbours. We should be frank enough to admit that we are surrounded by more of enemies than friends. 78,000 sq. km of Indian territory is occupied by a small fry like Pakistan. China has 43,180 sq. km of our land in its possession. And we have virtually ceded the areas to them. Are we not a soft state? Why are we afraid of China? Despite knowing full well that we are no match to China, we have not been making any sincere efforts to strengthen our defence. Worse, we are demoralising our defence forces by

restricting their freedom, and neglecting them. Does our government have a strategy for defending ourselves, in case of an aggression from either China or Pakistan? It is for the government to answer this question.

V. V. Vijayan, Mumbai 400 089.
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In the lobby of a Moscow hotel opposite a Russian Orthodox monastery:

You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily every Thursday.



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

An Open Letter to Rahul Gandhi

You can do it because you are not a politician.

Dear Rahulji,

I do not claim to be privy to the working of your inner mind, but I am reasonably confident that the current, unsavoury goings-on in the national party nurtured by your illustrious great-grandfather must leave you with a sense of bewilderment, shame and despair. Rarely in the history of independent India has a political party seemed so intent on hurtling down an ever-increasing slope towards self-destruction. If nothing else, a sense of self-preservation ought to compel you to stem the rot before the Congress implodes and fades into irrelevance.

The popular perception is that corruption on an unprecedented scale has brought the Congress virtually to its knees. Although the proliferation of massive financial scams in rapid succession may appear to bolster this belief, it is not entirely accurate. Corruption is certainly not the monopoly of Congress; and no political party in India can claim to be holier-than-thou because of the abundant skeletons in its own closet. Where the Congress has blundered is in its disastrous sense of timing and the misguided belief that it can brazen its way through any embarrassment. Coalgate, the Commonwealth Games and 2G Spectrum fiascos were fait accompli; and perhaps the government could do little more than damage control. But for the Law Minister to attempt to hoodwink the Supreme Court; and the Railway Minister to allow his nephew to be caught with his hand in the till, at a time when the government is under intense scrutiny by the media and opposition parties, displays either arrogance or stupidity of the highest magnitude. If the intention was to shield the Prime Minister, it only succeeded in reinforcing the public belief that Manmohan Singh is weak, ineffective and quite incapable of fighting his own battles.

Although it may be unpalatable and hard to digest, it is a stark reality that politicians as a breed have a disastrous reputation among the common people of India. There is an overwhelming perception that the Indian politician, regardless of what party he/she belongs to, is a greedy, grasping, often crooked parasite who is out to amass personal wealth by any means fair or foul; and who affords the lowest priority to the welfare of the very constituents who elected him. We both know that this is not an entirely accurate conclusion. If a detailed survey was done, it would find that probably a third of Members

of Parliament are reasonably honest, conscientious and do work for the constituents. Unfortunately, this silent minority - and to his inexcusable shame, that includes our Prime Minister - prefers to look the other way when they observe their more flamboyant brethren engage in shameless chicanery. You have it in your power to change, or at least ameliorate, this negative image. An often-repeated criticism of the Congress party is that they display excessive sycophancy and obeisance to the Gandhi family. You can use this very servility to insist that the senior members of your party adhere to a minimum code of conduct; and to impose meaningful penalties if they do not.

At the risk of sounding presumptuous, allow me to venture an opinion about your illustrious mother. Although far from ideal, I believe she has done a reasonable job under difficult circumstances. The consensus is that she is well meaning and that her concern for the poor of this country is genuine; although the measures she forces through a compliant government to address this concern are not always effective or practical. Her most unfortunate weakness is that she values loyalty over competence. This has become most painfully apparent in the series of disastrous Home Ministers - with the exception of P. Chidambaram - imposed on this nation during the past decade. At a time when India faces a plethora of internal and external security threats, these bumbling nonentities have earned us the reputation of being a soft state and the contempt of the international community. The present incumbent is particularly galling. He is plainly out of his depth and it is glaringly obvious that he has neither the affinity nor temperament for the job he has been thrust into. I believe this misguided partiality annoys and frustrates you as much as it does many citizens. Perhaps you have held your peace thus far out of deference to your mother, but it is time you emerge from her shadow. The very continuation of the Congress as a viable political entity may depend on it.

The harsh reality for the Congress is that it is a sinking ship and for it to persevere on its current course will only lead to inevitable capsizement. A non-functioning government desperately clinging on to power lays itself open to public ridicule and disgust. I and many of my fellow countrymen appeal to you to use the power of the

family name to take the leadership role and end the current impasse with whatever shred of dignity the Congress has left. You can do it because you are not a politician. Wealth and power are not the powerful aphrodisiacs for you as they are for your party members. Hoist the Opposition with its own petard by demanding a Vote of Confidence in Parliament; and let the chips fall where they may. It is

important that you curb the natural tendency of your party leaders to try to manipulate the result. This will only lead to exposure and defeat.

Yours respectfully,

A Concerned Citizen

Ashwini Kumar : Reluctant Folk-Hero

Let's face it. There is not a single political party in India, including the Gandhi cap brigade that does not have ample skeletons in its closet.

If the Congress gives the CBI real autonomy before it demits office, not only will it earn the public's reluctant gratitude, but it will also cause genuine apprehension in the next party or coalition that forms the government

Law Minister Ashwini Kumar may turn out to be India's unlikely and reluctant folk hero of this decade. His amateurish meddling in the CBI's investigation report on Coalgate - and subsequent exposure - may well be the final straw that broke the Supreme Court's back. The country's top judiciary is so incensed with the blatant political interference, which was in direct contravention to its specific instructions to the CBI that it is inclined to order what the nation has been asking for decades: real autonomy for the investigation agency.

If this miracle happens, it will overturn what has been a cherished cornerstone of the Indian political establishment since Indira Gandhi. Subtle control and dominance over the police and central investigation agencies has allowed the charlatans who populate the national parliament and state legislatures to not only amass large amounts of unaccounted personal wealth with impunity, but also to ensure that their criminal precedents and current nefarious activities go unpunished. The CBI has also become a convenient tool for settling scores with political rivals.

Tentative steps towards this long awaited reform have already begun. Under pressure, not just from the Supreme Court, but also from the media and public, the Congress government has set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) to formulate procedures and statutes to free the CBI from political interference. The natural inclination of the GoM would be to dither as long as feasible and then come up with cosmetic changes that will keep financial control in the hands of the ruling party; as well as the all-important power of postings and transfers. That may be the natural inclination but in this case, I believe the government is aware that a highly incensed and disgusted

public will demand meaningful changes that make a real difference in the CBI's functioning.

If I were advising the government, I would recommend that it do a professional job and satisfy public opinion by enacting legislation to give the CBI real teeth. This goes against the grain, I know, but there may be a Machiavellian method to this madness. Whichever way the Congress party may attempt to spin it, the harsh reality is that its days in office are numbered. If the Congress gives the CBI real autonomy before it demits office, not only will it earn the public's reluctant gratitude, but it will also cause genuine apprehension in the next party or coalition that forms the government. Let's face it. There is not a single political party in India, including the Gandhi cap brigade that does not have ample skeletons in its closet. Chicanery, underhand financial dealings, even murder: you name it and they've done it. So far, the lawmakers have enjoyed immunity because they controlled the law enforcement agencies. An independent CBI could ask ministers really uncomfortable questions – and horror of horrors – they might even be held accountable for their criminal actions. The same opposition parties who are now pillorying the Congress over corruption and advocating independence of law agencies - confident in the knowledge that it is all a song and dance and nothing will actually come of it - would discover to their discomfiture that they have created a Frankenstein monster. Talk about sweet justice.

So let us hail Ashwini Kumar. His clumsy cover-up attempt has awakened the sleeping giant. A Supreme Court that for decades has endeavoured to maintain a constitutional distance from the Executive has been goaded beyond limits. If the CBI does succeed in gaining reasonable autonomy, he will indeed be remembered as a reluctant hero.

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India's Foreign Aid Programme: An Untold Story

B. Ramesh Babu

India's aid is primarily demand-driven and responds to the priorities of the partner countries. No conditions are attached and no policies are prescribed.

India's story as a long time recipient of foreign aid is well known. In the global discourse on foreign aid, India was always seen as the classic case of a richly deserving poor country – a “sadbrahman” of sorts! However, the long and fairly impressive story of India as foreign aid giver has not received the popular and international attention it richly deserves. Here is a brief effort to undo the undeserved neglect.

Surprising as it may seem, India's ‘foreign aid’ is as old as its own planned development at home. With a view to help her immediate neighbours, India began giving aid to Nepal and Bhutan in 1950. For obvious reasons Pakistan was not included. Soon afterwards Indian aid was extended to Commonwealth countries (Technical Assistance under the Colombo Plan) and some countries in sub-Saharan Africa in a modest way. India's overseas aid really began in 1964 with a separate budget head and has grown in size and scale since then.

Development Assistance for Mutual Benefit

India's aid programme is conceived and implemented very differently from western foreign aid, which is essentially driven by the interests of the donor and always came with preconditions, i.e. visible and invisible strings. In the receiving countries, western aid is seen as getting trapped into an unequal donor-recipient relationship and also unwelcome interference in internal affairs. In the western discourse on foreign aid, it is acknowledged that there is no such thing as aid without strings.

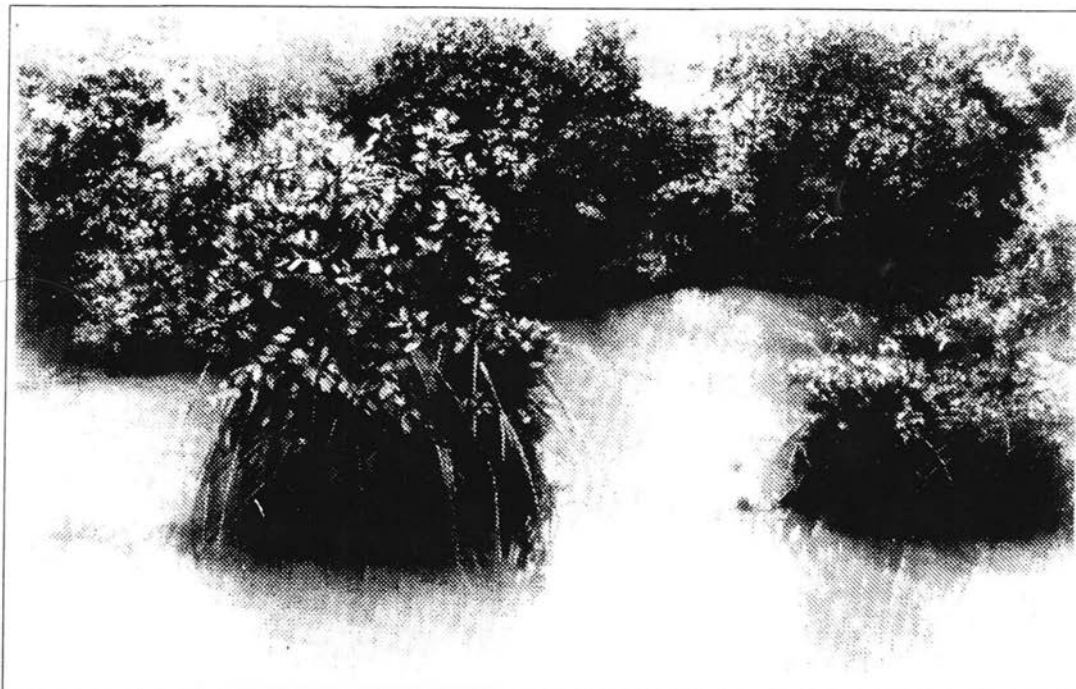
On the contrary, India's aid is primarily demand-driven and responds to the priorities of the partner countries. No conditions are attached and no policies are prescribed. There are no expectations in return either. Development assistance is conceived as a voluntary partnership for mutual benefit and an integral part of South-South cooperation, an enduring policy goal of India. An equally important purpose of the programme of assistance is to learn from each other's development experience and adopt best practices. India is in a better position to

understand the development needs of most Asian and African countries, which are at a similar stage of economic and social development. Independent studies confirm that countries at a shorter “development distance” from India are most likely to join its aid programme. It is pertinent to add that India's aid programme was subsequently called Development Assistance Partnership (DAP).

India's accumulated aid over the last three decades currently stands at 2.5 billion US dollars, according to indiabudget.nic.in. Another estimate (AidData) says that the Ministry of External Affairs gave up to 3.55 billion US dollars in foreign aid during 1992-2009. Obtaining reliable and comprehensive data on aid is one of the difficulties this study had to contend with. Moreover, these figures do not include the large-scale aid being given to Afghanistan since 2009. India pledged 2 billion US dollars of aid to Afghanistan. Out of this sum about 1 billion US dollars has been utilized for infrastructure development. At the 2011 India-Africa Forum Summit, India pledged 5 billion US dollars as aid to Africa in the form of concessional loans. Apart from the DAP, India will give aid worth 700 million US dollars to build institutions and establish training programmes in Africa. Aid worth 300 millions is granted to develop railways in Ethiopia. 22,000 higher education scholarships are announced for African students.

As many as 125 countries have received aid of varying dimensions over the years, it is estimated. During 2004-2010, foreign aid grew at the rate of 6.9 per cent annually. An overwhelming part of the aid (ranging from 70.9 to 93.7 per cent) was in the form of grants. Loans, investments in International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and contributions to international organizations are the other components of the growing aid. Bulk of the assistance is given to neighbouring countries (Nepal, Bhutan, and Afghanistan). About 60 per cent of the aid is devoted to training civil servants, engineers, and managers of public sector enterprises, etc. as per the policies and priorities of the recipient countries. About 30 per cent is utilized for soft loans to enable foreign countries to buy

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Indian equipment (trucks, ground water pumps, medicines, health infrastructure, or railway equipment) or services. Remaining 10 per cent is spent on project related costs abroad (feasibility studies, technical expertise from India). Very little is given as outright cash grants.

India Says “NO” to Foreign Aid

Of late India moved out of the aid recipient syndrome in a decisive manner. The British Government’s decision to stop its aid to India was literally shrugged off by New Delhi. The \$ 450 million aid for “health care and education” in question was dubbed “peanuts” by the then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee! However, for a variety of political and other considerations, India was persuaded to continue receiving the paltry aid from UK for the present.

Furthermore, India refused to receive foreign aid during the 2004 Tsunami, the 2005 earthquake in Jammu & Kashmir, and the 2006 floods in Mumbai. On the other hand, India extended humanitarian aid and the services of Indian doctors to USA after the Hurricane Katrina disaster! During 2008-2009, India raised its share of IMF quota by 2.1 billion US dollars. Gradually, India is growing into a major player as a donor in the field of overseas development assistance. The reasons for such a transformation are not far to seek: simple geopolitics, quest for status of a regional/global power, membership in the Security Council of the United Nations, countering the growing clout of the Chinese in the immediate neighbourhood (South Asia) and in the Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusion

There are many inadequacies in the country’s foreign aid programme. Foremost among them is the absence of a single Agency to plan, monitor, and implement the vast and scattered programme. An attempt to establish unified DPA was made in 2007. However, it failed because of lack of agreement between the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Finance over its location. Such inter - departmental rivalry should be resolved quickly. It

is logical to place DPA in MEA. There is no coherence at the policy level and no coordination at the operational level. It is difficult to even get comprehensive data on what all is being done at various levels of the vast bureaucracy called the Government of India. Our DPA urgently requires more funds, better focus, more efficient delivery of services, and administration that is more professional. That is however true of governance at all levels of the country.

North-South cooperation is a historical responsibility of the North, i.e. the western colonial powers. South-South cooperation, on the other hand, is a voluntary partnership among the poor and developing countries to help one another. As far as India is concerned, South-South cooperation has been an important goal from the beginning. It is seen as a desirable and viable instrument to influence the overarching North-South equation on crucial global issues in favour of the developing and poor countries of the South. India’s declared faith in South-South cooperation is being transformed into a reality now because the country is putting money where its mouth was before. Of late India has emerged as a significant donor of aid to developing countries in Asia and Africa. China is miles ahead of us in the race, it must be added. However, India has a number of distinct plus points in this context: IT and other knowledge based skills, English language skills, HR, and capacity building at a very low cost. Indian tradition of democracy is also more relevant for governance reforms in most countries of Asia and Africa. Above all, the entry of India in the field does not arouse fear or mistrust unlike the aggressive rise of China.

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Commenting on a report that Amartya Sen has backed the Food Bill, and has slammed the Opposition for stalling it, Dr. Subroto Roy says Amartya Sen is apparently clueless about the economic policies India really needs. India needs the idea he and his friends have promoted through Sonia of practically zero-price cereals for 60% of the population paid for by public subsidy as much as, in the old phrase, a fish needs a bicycle... What rural India and the urban poor all know about in fact and are fully adapted to is where to find work and how to sustain their families’ calorie intake throughout the year. They do not need Sonia or Amartya and their friends pretending to hand them out food or work paid for by out-of-control deficit finance and money printing of an inconvertible soft currency. Sonia and Amartya have likely ruined rural labour markets already and now will ruin rural and urban food markets. If Sonia is imagining she is doing an Indira “Garibi hatao” thing, she is living in a time-warp – let her dare to use the same slogan publicly and watch herself lose... Meghnad Desai is *completely* right to critique the utterly misguided “Food Security Bill” even though he is a British peer and not an Indian legislator; but he has to take on his LSE colleague Amartya Sen’s bizarre ideas directly.

Courtesy: Dr. Subroto Roy posted on May 7 in his facebook page ‘Kashmir and World Politics Seminar’.

The Deepsang Aggression:

Chinese Reminder on the 50th Anniversary of the 1962 War

Nitin G. Raut

China, by pitching an armed camp at Deepsang with a back- up supply chain and that too 70 kms. away from Leh, is a replay of creeping aggression that led to the 1962 Chinese War.

On April 15, 2013, about 40 to 50 Chinese troops crossed the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), pitched tents 19 kms inside on our side of the LAC. This ‘discovery’ sets off alarm bells. In midst of diplomatic activity and military standoff, the Chinese ‘withdrew’ in what was described as a simultaneous pull out (by India and China) from Daulat Beg Oldie to pre-April 15 positions. Nobody has cared to explain the oddity of India ‘withdrawing’ from its own territory! China, by pitching an armed camp at Deepsang with a back up supply chain and that too 70 kms. away from Leh, is a replay of creeping aggression that led to the 1962 Chinese War.

In the 21 days military standoff India did nothing militarily; diplomatically India handed China a victory on a platter. External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid’s unthinking response that “...face to face situation between the border personnel was due to difference on alignment along the Line of Actual Control...” only gave credence to a Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson quick to comment, “Our troops are patrolling on the Chinese side of the LAC and have never trespassed the line.” By conceding that “incursions” are due to “difference of alignment” Khurshid only bolstered China’s claim that the LAC is not demarcated – therefore what is India claiming! It was a foolish comment and devoid of even a modicum understanding of China’s long term objectives. China is only flexing its muscle on the border dispute and will choose its time to settle it either by hard and uncompromising negotiations or by war. In 1959 itself, the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai had made clear to the then Indian Prime Minister Nehru of China’s claim to Indian territories. Nehru treated it in a cavalier fashion.

China’s Long-term Strategy

China’s policies are planned well ahead of time and pursued aggressively, militarily and diplomatically. Even with full preparedness, it chooses its time appropriately. China attacked India in 1962 when there was a nuclear face-off between the U.S. and the then USSR over the

latter’s attempt to set up a nuclear missile base in Cuba just a few hundred miles from the nearest U.S. State, Florida and world attention was focused on the possible showdown between the Big Two of the Cold War era. The Nehruvian mindset of refusing to heed the warning of impending Chinese war humiliated India and even at that time China, having achieved its military and political objective ‘graciously’ offered to withdraw 20 km. provided India also withdrew an equal distance; meaning China will remain in Indian territory and India will retreat further! Nehru’s belated comment after the 1962 debacle that “We have been living in an unreal would...” was a balm that could not cure even an ‘acne’ of 1962 war. In the present Daulat Beg Oldie incident, China achieved what it wanted. Only India has retreated!

The People’s Liberation Army unit withdrew from the Depsang Plains in return for India dismantling its bunker fortification in Chuma area 500 kms. from the incursion site which the External Affairs Minister nonchalantly and dismissively described as a “Shed”. Would China be so naïve as to agree to a withdrawal *quid pro quo* for a “Shed”? Are not the Minister and the Congress – UPA Government suppressing the real nature of the deal?

India need not be unduly elated that the Chinese Prime Minister, Li Kequang, chose India for his first overseas visit. The joint statement made no reference to ‘incursion’ or even touched the river water issues or border disputes except a loose reference to a mechanism to resolve the border dispute. China did not even offer an explanation for the Depsang incursion and neither did the External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid raise the issue on his visit to China.

Our Response to Chinese Provocations

It is not as if the Indian Army is weak; 2013 is certainly not 1962. In September 1967, China objected to India building a fence on the north shoulder of Nathu La Pass. The friction was followed by five days of firing and

the Indian Army, under Lt.General Sagat Singh, gave a bloody nose to the Chinese. The 2nd Grenadiers and Artillery Regiment not only showed their resolve but frustrated the Chinese. Sixty-two Indian soldiers were killed. Brigadier Rai Singh Yadav was awarded Maha Vir Chakra and Captain P. S. Dagger was awarded Vir Chakra.

On October 11, 1967 the 7th Gurkhas, after a bloody battle, regained Point C 5450 clandestinely occupied by the Chinese and forced the Chinese beyond the LAC. Twenty-one Indian soldiers died fighting bravely. Rifleman Limbu (posthumously) and Battalion Commander, Major K. B. Joshi were awarded the Vir Chakra. In 1986, before the Indian troops could arrive in the summer, China deployed its troops in Sumdorong Chu Valley of Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) and built the helipad at Wadung. Generra Sundarji, the Chief of Army Staff (C.O.A.S) acted swiftly by sending a brigade and pushed back the Chinese.

India's reactions to China's aggressive policies have always been weak. China acts like a bully and India's failure to project its resolve gives tactical advantage to China.

The last time when China upped its ante on Arunachal Pradesh, India's Prime Minister on a visit to Arunachal Pradesh actually did not visit Tawang in 'deference' to China's objections! If the Indian PM had shown diplomatic resolve, a strong message would have gone to China and would have also boosted the morale of our troops. China's present aggression in Ladakh is perhaps to force a territorial swap in Arunachal Pradesh by illegally occupying more Indian territory in Ladakh.

The Depsang incursion, fifty years after the 1962 aggression, is China's way of reminding India that all is not well with India-Chinese relations. Will China co-exist peacefully? The Depsang aggression should, once and for all, banish this illusion. China will respect India only if India has a strong leadership and well-equipped Armed Forces. Otherwise, China will ensure that the borders are re-drawn to India's disadvantage.

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Myanmar – The Latest to Liberalise

Brig. Suresh C. Sharma

Each foreign country considers the presence of other powers to be a setback to its own political and commercial interests.

Aung San headed the negotiations for independence and was the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council established by the British Government for transfer of power. He was assassinated by political rivals. Sao Shwe Thaik was President and U Nu Prime Minister when the country became independent on 4 January 1948. Four years of democratic rule was followed by a military coup. General Ne Win carried out another coup on 2 March 1962. A students' revolt was put down brutally and the universities were closed down for two years. The ultra-nationalist Government of the military junta forced 40,000 Indians to leave the country. The military junta ruled from 1962 to 1974 which was followed by one party rule till 1988. Ne Win resigned on 23 July 1988 after the UN declared Myanmar to be the least developed country.

Suu Kyi, daughter of General Aung San, founded the National League for Democracy [NLD] in 1988 against military autocracy. She was placed under house arrest and most of the leaders of the NLD were imprisoned. The NLD won 392 seats out of 489 but the military declined to hand over power. India's sympathy for the democratic movement and safe bases for anti-Indian insurgents in Myanmar created a distance between the two countries. A shift in 1991 to look East brought the two countries closer and a joint 'Operation Golden Bird' was launched to flush out the insurgents of the United Liberation Front of Assam [ULFA], the National Socialist Council of Nagaland [NSCN] active in Nagaland and Manipur. It ended after 44 days when the Jawaharlal Nehru award was given to Suu Kyi, the rebel leader. India suspended military aid but maintained their commercial ties. The general elections conducted in May 1990 were annulled. In April 1992, Saw Maung resigned and was succeeded by Than Shwe. Suu Kyi was not allowed to participate in the elections held in 2010. She was released a week after the elections.

Move Towards Liberalization

In 2011, Thein Sein became President and started the process of political liberalization. Trade of \$70 billion by 2012 was envisaged. State control over media which was imposed in 1964 was abolished and privately owned

newspapers resumed publication. Sixteen weekly journals were allowed to become dailies. The President removed restrictions on Suu Kyi. Her party, the NLD, was allowed to register and won 40 out of 45 seats in the 2012 elections. NLD is likely to win the 2015 elections and Suu Kyi aspires to be the President for which a constitutional amendment would be necessary. The present constitution debars the spouse or parents of foreign nationals from becoming President.

Sanctions imposed by the USA and the EU against Myanmar due to violations of human rights led to closer economic relations with China. China is laying a pipeline from a new port terminal at Kyokphyu, near Sittwe. The line goes to Mandalay and on to the capital of Yunnan province. China would be able to ship oil from the Middle East and Africa through this pipeline and avoid the narrow Malacca Strait. The operation of the pipeline is not likely to be trouble free. Security will be a major concern as it is with pipelines from South America to USA. Locals protest about their own oil wealth flowing to a foreign land. USA has to deploy considerable resources for safety of the pipelines from South America to USA. China may have to take similar measures. It has plans for a highway from Bangladesh to Myanmar and on to China. China has projects for power stations, extraction of oil/gas and mining copper. Chinese traders in the border town of Ruili have done good business in jade from Myanmar, often in collusion with corrupt officials from Myanmar. The Myanmar citizens have benefited little from this trade. Besides trade, China has helped in political stability by containing the violence by Kachin rebels and stopping the flow of drugs from Shan State.

The country has made impressive economic progress during the last two years. The economy has taken a momentum of its own. It has paid back their outstanding loans to the World Bank and has obtained a new loan of \$440 million from it and another loan of \$400 million from ADB. The Paris club of creditor countries has agreed for a loan of another \$6 billion. President Obama's visit on 19 November 2012 signaled the end of sanctions. Myanmar has tilted towards USA. The USA is aware that sanctions

drove Myanmar to China who has a strong presence in energy and transportation sectors. The USA seeks deeper relations with Myanmar and had announced participation of Myanmar as observer in the regional military exercise.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and leaders from other countries have visited Myanmar. India-aided projects include 1200 MW hydro-power installation on Chindwin river, 160 kms Tamu-Kalwa road and two blocks in Sittwe for gas exploration. No pipeline has yet been planned and gas may have to be exported from a port. Myanmar was the biggest exporter of rice which was shipped from Sittwe port. The old rice mills and steamers are now rotting away. A large new terminal is being constructed as a \$ 100 million joint project between India and Myanmar. Containers offloaded at Sittwe port will be ferried up the Kaladan River and on to India by bus. India is helping to dredge the river for increased traffic. It may look complex but it will cut down the time taken overland from Indian mainland to the North East. A more ambitious project is being planned for developing Dawai project on the Tenasserim coast. A deep water port and highway connecting it to Bangkok is estimated to cost \$ 8.5 billion.

Japan has also decided to take advantage of the liberalized policy to build a riverine port at Thilawa, south of Yangon at a cost of \$200 million. In his recent visit, the Prime Minister of Japan promised all help for economic development. With all these works, the Bay of Bengal is going to see heavy sea traffic which may damage the coastal fishing business. About 30% of the world's coastal fishermen live and work on the Bay of Bengal. Their livelihood will be in danger. Already there are reports of collision between commercial ships and fishing vessels.

Each foreign country considers the presence of other powers to be a setback to its own political and commercial interests. The people of Myanmar are not happy with the Chinese way of conducting business. China had built good relations with officials and had ignored the people. They resent Chinese exploitation of Myanmar resources and its long-term consequences on balance of power. The resentment of the people led President Thein Sein to cancel the construction of dam on River Irawady. Villages were to be flooded and people displaced and the major part of energy would have gone to China.

Dampers for Development

Recent ethnic violence is a matter of concern. Minorities constitute 40% of the population. The seventeen year truce in the Christian majority Kachin State on the northern border collapsed in January 2011. The army has pounded the capital town Liza with artillery and

fighter aircraft. It has captured all the hills surrounding the Kachin capital Laiza. A rush to Laiza may send large number of refugees to China which may foul up relations with China, a political and economic ally. There is support for the Kachins amongst the minorities in Yunnan who have sent \$24,000 to help the Kachins. Having cut off the last Kachin controlled pockets, the Army may be expecting the rebels to sue for peace. The Kachins have instead started talking of moving their HQ. This may give the Army a pretext to hold on to their gains. President Sein has signed peace agreements with ten ethnic armies. A more durable settlement is required. There is hope in the talks conducted with 11 minority groups. The minorities do not have a separatist movement. Three days peace talks with the Kachin representatives have ended with a seven point peace plan which appears to be a cease fire agreement and not a political settlement desired by the Kachins. The Government representative has said that the President wants a political settlement with all the ethnic minorities by June-July end.

Disruption in the logging and jade trade has cut off their source of income. The State has considerable mineral wealth and strife may harm economic progress. The West would not like to invest in insurgency prone areas. USA has also been making pleas for peace and the two parties have agreed to continue talks. It is a sensitive area due to the border with China, oil pipeline and border trade.

About eight lakh Muslims of Indian and Bangladeshi origin, mostly unskilled workers, live in Rakhine State on the western coast. The Citizenship Law of 1982 deprived them of citizenship and their movements are restricted. They cannot go to the cities for work. The Myanmar citizens have always disliked the Muslim immigrants who came with the British in the 19th century and cornered all the good jobs and established successful business ventures. The military Government nationalized all business units in 1962 which resulted in a number of them fleeing to East Pakistan. On 20 March 2013, riots broke out against Muslims after an argument at a goldsmith's shop. About 30 people were killed, 70 injured and 1,200 displaced. The riots spread to other towns which were placed under curfew. Some of them fled to Thailand. The Buddhists have denounced Turkey and other countries wanting to give aid to the displaced personnel. Part of the reason for this violence is the new liberal administration. The once hated Army had protected the Muslims. Overpopulation is one of the causes of tension. The Government-appointed commission noted that the population growth of Rohingya Muslims is ten times higher than that of Rakhine Buddhists. The Government has

imposed a two child norm for Muslims in Buthidaung and Maundaw towns which are close to the Bangladesh border. Polygamy has been banned. The Muslim population in the two towns is about 95%. The two child norm will not be applied to other towns. The method of enforcing the measure has not yet been finalized. Suu Kyi has expressed opposition to the two child norm.

Some of the social activists have criticized the visit by President Obama due to violence against Muslims. It took some time for the USA to realize that Myanmar is vital to the region geopolitically and not economically alone.

The ASEAN had a better understanding of this issue and have tried to check its falling into the Chinese orbit. India too was misled by concerns for human rights. India must pay close attention to the East in view of two hostile neighbours - China and Pakistan. Chinese grip on Myanmar will give it easy access to raw materials and a gateway to the Bay of Bengal. Minorities demanding favours are a constant feature of former colonies which may be left for the home country to solve.

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“Burmese Daze”

Christie Davies

An old Buddhist monk complained to me in perfect English that the school where he had learned his English from Australian teachers had been closed by the government and that young people no longer spoke the language properly. There is a parallel with Sri Lanka where a violent linguistic and religious nationalism led by Buddhist monks eventually led to a Sinhalese war of elimination against the Tamils who were Hindus and often skilled in English as well as the Tamil language.

Buddhism, a religion of peace, was once the dominant religion in Pakistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan and much of central Asia until, as the ruins of stupas and temples there show us, the gentle religion was destroyed by the armies of Islam, the religion of war. The Muslim destruction of the giant cliff-carved Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan in 2001 was just the latest act in more than a thousand years of Islamic vandalism. But in the Burmese state of Rakhine close to the border with Bangladesh it is the Rohingya Muslim minority who have long been the victims. A quarter of a million of them have fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution by their Buddhist neighbours. Buddhist monks have been particularly active in stirring up hostility against them; more shades of Sri Lanka. The Rohingyas were already trying to escape the rule of the violently expanding Burmese Empire and find refuge in British-ruled Bengal in the late eighteenth century. Even religions of peace, including Christianity, have a capacity for ferocity against those of other faiths.

When Burma became independent in 1948, it denied citizenship to anyone whose ancestors had not been in the country in 1823, the year when Burma began to be absorbed into British India. During the time when Burma was administered as part of Britain's Indian empire, Indians emigrated to Burma in large numbers to become merchants, doctors, engineers and civil servants as well as mere labourers. In the early 1960s the Burmese government confiscated the property of and expelled about three hundred thousand Indians as part of the drive to establish Burmese socialism. A pan-Third

Worldist Indian government provided transport for them to go to India; leftist agitators in Britain had a rare moment of silence and, deprived of its Indian and overseas Chinese entrepreneurs, the Burmese economy collapsed.

Suu Kyi is often silent and at best ambiguous about the religion, ethnic and indeed racial conflicts (the Rohingyas and those from India or Bangladesh are often referred to as 'the blacks') in Burma. If she were in power she would be unable to resolve them, for the Burmese majority, though at a personal level absolutely charming, are intensely nationalistic and extremely pious Buddhists. The minority nations want federalism and the Burmese majority want complete unity and dominance. The army has been the instrument of that dominance and Suu Kyi is not able strongly to challenge this.

With the opening up of Burma to trade, investment and tourism, the economy has recovered from the worst days of socialism and will continue to grow, but with a very large input from China. The Chinese in alliance with the military elite now control the natural resources of Burma, notably its copper and jade, and will soon have chopped down the last teak tree. They expect to construct a huge dam, which will provide electricity across the border to China, and have nearly finished building a major oil and gas pipeline going to Yunnan in the interior of China, from a new port on Burma's Indian Ocean coast, which will receive tankers from the Middle East. Chinese exports by container ship will follow and then possibly a naval base to outflank America and overawe India. Burmese isolation is dead. A problem that now arises is that these new developments run through the territories of the minority ethnic nations and displace local people, while the benefits go elsewhere. Armed rebels may well decide to attack the new installations provoking Chinese intervention. Wild jihadists may decide to take up the cause of the Rohingyas. The age of empire is back.

Excerpted from “Burmese Daze” by Christie Davies.
Courtesy: *The Salisbury Review* - Summer 2013.

The Demonization of Narendra Modi

Madhu Kishwar

When some pockets of Gujarat were convulsed by violent riots in February 2002, I too accepted the version presented by the national media as well as our activist friends and assumed that Modi was complicit in the Gujarat riots of 2002. Therefore, I too, signed statements against Modi, published articles sent to Manushi indicting the Gujarat government. We also raised funds for the riot victims. However, I refrained from writing anything under my name because I did not get the time to visit Gujarat to experience and assess the situation first hand. My earlier experience of covering various riots as well as conflict situations in Kashmir and Punjab had taught me that media reports cannot be trusted enough to take a definitive stand on such issues since they are often coloured by the ideological prism used by the writer. Therefore, I refrained from making statements on Gujarat.

Having spent a lot of time covering major riots – including the 1984 massacre of Sikhs, series of riots in Meerut, Malliana in the 1980's, Bombay 1993, Jammu 1989 and having closely studied several others like Biharsharif, Bhiwandi, Jamshedpur, and series of riots in Ahmedabad and Surat, I knew that barring Delhi 1984, all others were jointly orchestrated by the BJP and Congress. Even in the communal polarisation due to the Babri Masjid demolition, the Congress Party had been an equal partner in crime with the BJP.

This dubious role of the Congress Party – at total variance with the ideological grounding of the grand old Party crafted by Mahatma Gandhi – played an important part in marginalizing the Congress in large parts of India. Knowledgeable Gujaratis told me that even in 2002 Congressmen avidly joined the Sangh Parivar mobsters in carrying out communal killings, arson and loot. One also knew from earlier reports and later heard through informal networks that there was a lot of retaliatory violence by the Muslims that led to thousands of Hindus also suffering substantial losses and ending up in refugee camps.

Therefore, when the BJP in general, and Modi in particular, began to be singled out for attacks and demonized as no other politician before or after in known history, one felt an instinctive uneasiness about the Hate and Oust Modi campaign. This uneasiness grew as it became obvious over the years that most of the NGOs, activists, journalists, academics involved in Modi's demonization enjoyed the active patronage of the Congress Party and some even got huge financial support for carrying out a sustained campaign against Modi.

Even during the anti-Sikh massacre of 1984 in North India, the slogan of those of us who worked with victims and documented the unprecedented massacre was: "Punish the Guilty". Though the complicity of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Home Minister Narasimha Rao, Lt.Governor of Delhi P. G. Gavai was brazen; neither the PM nor the Home Minister nor the Lt.Governor were personally demonized. However in the case of the Gujarat riots of 2002 the entire discourse came to centre around just one man!

In a recent interview with me, film script writer Salim Khan made an interesting comment: "Does anyone remember who the chief minister of Maharashtra was during the Mumbai riots which were no less deadly than the Gujarat riots of 2002? Does anyone recall the name of the chief minister of UP during Malliana and Meerut riots or Bihar CM when the Bhagalpur or Jamshedpur riots under Congress regimes took place? Do we hear the names of earlier chief ministers of Gujarat under whose charge hundreds of riots took place in post-Independence India? Some of these riots were far more deadly than the 2002 outburst. The state used to explode into violence every second month? Does anyone remember who was in-charge of Delhi's security when the 1984 massacre of Sikhs took place in the capital of India? How come Narendra Modi has been singled out as Devil Incarnate as if he personally carried out all the killings during the riots of 2002?"

Why just distant riots, does anyone remember the fate of hundreds of thousands of Bodos and Muslims who were uprooted from their villages in July 2012 because their homes were torched and destroyed? As of August 8, 2012, over 400,000 people had taken shelter in 270 relief camps, after being displaced from almost 400 villages. The Assam

chief minister delayed deployment of the Army by four days even though a large number of Army units are stationed right there in Assam. Thousands are still living under sub human conditions in refugee camps. Why are these riots already forgotten?

I also found it puzzling that almost all of those who have led the Hate Modi campaign are neither Muslim nor residents of Gujarat. Three of the most prominent figures of the anti-Modi Brigade from within Gujarat are not Muslims. Whenever a Gujarati Muslim has tried to speak in a different voice, he has been attacked viciously and made to pay such a heavy price that people just shut up in terror. The highly respected and eminent Muslim scholar, Maulana Vastanvi was forced to resign as Vice Chancellor of Deoband simply because he said Gujarati Muslims had benefited from the inclusive development policies of Modi's government. Shahid Siddiqui, the editor of Urdu daily *Nai Duniya* was attacked and abused endlessly for simply doing an interview with Modi in which Modi defends himself against various charges levelled against his government. Siddiqui fell in line within no time and began singing anti-Modi songs on TV.

The political discourse in India is so vitiated by Modi phobia that even if you express happiness at the quality of roads in rural Gujarat or 24x7 power supply in the villages and towns of Gujarat, you are branded a "supporter of fascism." It is politically fashionable to defend Kashmiri secessionists, press for peaceful engagement with the Pakistani establishment, which sends terror brigades to India, and project murderous Maoists as saviours of the poor. But to say a word in appreciation of governance reforms in Gujarat is to commit political harakiri – you are forever tainted and tarred with the colours of fascism.

This intellectual terror created by the anti-Modi Brigade pushed me to find out for myself why this obsessive anxiety about Modi? Why do 'secularists' not want to be reminded that Gujarat has been riot-free since 2002? Why don't they want to document what made Gujarat – a state that witnessed hundreds of riots post Independence leading to deep mutual estrangement between Hindus and Muslims – experience its first riot free decade after Independence under Modi's rule? What do Gujarat Muslims have to say about it? Why are they not allowed to speak for themselves?

The demonization of Modi is based on the following charges:

- * Modi is anti-Muslim and anti-Christian
- * Modi allowed Muslims to be massacred in order to

consolidate the Hindu vote bank

- * Religious minorities live under terror under Modi's regime as second or third class citizens
- * Muslims are being ghettoized and impoverished through discriminatory State action
- * They have begun voting for Modi because of fear of reprisals by Hindutva forces

I began my study of Gujarat riots driven by the following questions:

- * What is unique about the Gujarat riots of 2002?
- * What was Modi's personal role during these riots?
- * What do Muslims of Gujarat have to say about these riots?
- * If Modi critics are right about Gujarat being a deeply communalized society with Muslims living as a terrorized minority, how come the State has witnessed no riots since 2002?
- * Why is the percentage of Muslims voting for Modi increasing with every election? Is it out of terror?
- * How come hundreds of Muslims have won panchayat, zilla parishad and municipal elections as BJP candidates?

The Godhra Train Massacre and after: Narendra Modi's Response

Here is a simple fact sheet on actions taken by Narendra Modi in the wake of the Godhra incident.

Fifty-eight train passengers, including women and little children, were charred to death on 27th February 2002 when their compartments were set on fire just as the train moved out of Godhra railway station.

The first incidents of retaliatory mob violence were reported on February 28. They continued in full intensity on 1st and 2nd March. By 3rd March situation was under control. After that, small incidents were engineered in a few pockets but they were put down firmly.

Normally, record of actions claimed to have been taken by governments during riots is not trustworthy because no proper inquiries are held to authenticate those claims. In the case of Gujarat, the record of actions can be taken seriously for the following reasons:

- Inquiry Commissions and SIT investigations have been conducted under full glare of a media which cannot be accused of being friendly towards the Modi



government. Moreover, SIT investigations were monitored by the Supreme Court.

● **S t a t e** governments cannot fudge facts about the deployment of army and para-military forces because of elaborate protocols involved in the

movement of troops.

- The number of bullets fired, pattern of arrests – how many Hindus and how many Muslims held under preventive detention laws – can't be fudged when high level inquiries by central agencies are going on.

If these facts had been proven to be wrong, Narendra Modi could not have escaped indictment by the Supreme Court monitored Special investigative Team or the Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice Nanavati in 2005 or the High Court of Gujarat.

Economic Profile of Muslims in Gujarat: Some Key Indicators

I began my Gujarat journey by talking to a section of Gujarati Muslims and visiting their homes and neighbourhoods. I started with an account of the 2002 riots because the stigma of those days has stuck to Modi like a leech casting a dark shadow over all else he does. It is based on interviews with key people whose experiences and statements deserve to be taken seriously. I am well aware this will upset many of those who have convinced themselves or have been persuaded by others they trust, that Modi is the Devil Incarnate. However, my appeal to those well-meaning people who have caught the anti Modi virus because it is in the air is simply this: I am sharing with you factual accounts by people who are widely respected in Gujarat. They are providing concrete evidence of why they find the demonization of Modi unacceptable.

One of the oft-repeated charges against Modi's government is that Muslims are being economically marginalized in Gujarat. It is believed that the political atmosphere and government policy is so hostile to Muslims that they are being crushed economically. After the 2002 riots, Zafar Sareshwala – a Gujarati Muslim – was among those who led an international campaign against Modi.

He became a celebrity when he announced his intention to take Modi to the International Court of Justice.

However, very soon he decided to change track. At a time when Modi had been made into a national and international hate object, Zafar had the courage to start the process of engagement with Modi. He did this despite the fact that his own family suffered huge losses in the riots of 2002. Their factory was totally gutted. They had also suffered similar losses in numerous earlier riots as well in the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's. Every time their business establishment was burnt down, and they had to start afresh. Yet, this is what Zafar Sareshwala first and foremost a businessman and part of a versatile entrepreneurial community, had to say:

“If you take the latest figures, the economic position Muslims have now, they never had that before. It is much better than ever before.

Here are some revealing indicators:

Zakat is the easiest indicator to judge a Muslim's wealth profile because you pay zakat on your wealth. Zakat is what you pay to the needy. It is essentially used for helping meet some poor man's basic needs. Suppose this year I paid Rs.2,500 zakat, you can immediately extrapolate that I am worth Rs.100,000. Next year if I pay Rs.5,000 zakat, it means my wealth has increased from one lakh to two lakhs. Zakat has been continuously increasing in Gujarat year after year. In fact, you will find that 50% of the zakat of madarasas across the country comes from Gujarat and 50% from the rest of India. If Modi had destroyed Muslims, their share of zakat should have fallen. But in the last 10 years, the wealth of Muslims has increased.

I give another important indicator, that of BMW sales figures: We sell BMW cars. The cheapest BMW is for Rs.30 lakhs; the highest goes up to Rs.1.5 crores. When we started the BMW dealership, we never thought that we could sell more than 2 to 5 of these cars to Muslims. Last year, in 2011, we sold 11% of our BMWs to Muslims. The population of Muslims in Gujarat is 9%. This year again, we maintained that sales figure; we sold about 59 BMWs to Muslims. How on earth did this wealth come to them? Forget about Juhapura, you go to any Muslim dominated area in Ahmedabad or Bharuch, there is massive construction activity going on there. You say they are marginalised, ghettoized, but to build a house even in a ghettoized area, you need money.”

One of the criticisms levelled against my earlier articles on Narendra Modi is that I am relying over much on the accounts provided to me by Zafar Sareshwala. I do so without any apology because:

- Zafar does not centre the conversation around himself. He is a very perceptive observer of emerging trends in Gujarat's economy, polity and social life. He provides concrete examples to illustrate every point. The facts he puts forward can be crosschecked by anyone. They allow you to reach your own conclusions. Thus far, I have not found any discrepancy between what he described and the actual situation on the ground.
- Zafar is not just a complainer and faultfinder. He is actively engaged in solving the problems of the Muslim community in concrete ways that go beyond sarkari dependence. Therefore, his approach is practical and exudes the optimism of a real doer.

One of the most unexpected statements I heard from several Muslims in Gujarat was that Modi has also won over the maulanas and heads of madarasas. Many maulanas actually campaigned for his victory. How did this happen? As with several other issues, Zafar Sareshwala's observations provide a good overview.

This has been a long process. To begin with, Modi took firm measures for the protection of witnesses of 2002 riots. It is only because those witnesses could testify even against ministers, that Gujarat has seen so many convictions of riot accused. Secondly, Modi gave new life to the hitherto corruption ridden, defunct Waqf Boards. Under the Congress regime, they had been handed over to Muslim dons. Modi picked one of the most respected

Muslims – Retired Additional Director General Police, A. I. Syed to head the Waqf Board in Gujarat. He is working hard to clean up the institution; it is not an easy task, given the state of affairs it was in.

Did Muslims Vote for the Modi-led BJP out of Fear?

In the 2012 Gujarat Assembly elections, 31% of Gujarati Muslims voted for the Modi-led BJP despite media and NGOs launching a high voltage campaign against Modi for being a “divisive” force in Indian politics. The enormous increase in Muslim vote for the BJP was dismissed by Modi-haters, including reputed political scientists, by saying that Muslims had voted for Modi out of fear.

Those who hold this view need to hear Asifa Khan of Bharuch who joined the BJP a few weeks before the 2012 election after spending four years as the Congress spokesperson in Gujarat. Asifa is a highly respected public figure and her joining the BJP created a stir. She is respected, not just by fellow Muslims, but also enjoys a high level of prestige among the Hindus.

Asifa had become a local celebrity as a successful journalist much before she was hand-picked by Congress stalwart Ahmed Patel to join the Party as its spokesperson. She took on the job with as much enthusiasm and sincerity as she did her job as a journalist. But she quit the Congress after four years of hard work.

This is how Asifa describes her experience of being a Congress worker and why an increasing number of Muslims, including herself, are gravitating towards Modi's BJP.

“Being a journalist I got a chance to interact with many politicians and industrialists. Since I hail from Bharuch district, and Ahmed Patel sahib also hails from the same district, he knew me for years as a renowned journalist of the area. He knew I had very good reputation. I believe it is for that reason that he handpicked me in 2008 as spokesperson of Congress Party in Gujarat as well as Media Cell convenor of All India Mahila Congress. I do not recall that thus far he has handpicked anyone else from our district and given him/her such an important designation.”

“Without contesting any elections and without any political background – I was not even an ordinary member of the Congress Party – I was straight away given such a major responsibility. To my knowledge, I did all justice to that responsibility and did everything I was asked to do. My job was media management for the Party, especially

When People Have to Choose...

When People Have to Choose...It is possible to govern a State without giving the masses of the people full representation. But it is not possible to go on for long without a government which can and does in fact govern. If, therefore the people find that they must choose whether they will be represented in an assembly which is incompetent to govern, or whether they will be governed without being represented, there is no doubt at all as to how the issue will be decided. They will choose authority which promises to be paternal, in preference to freedom which threatens to be fratricidal. For large communities cannot do without being governed. No ideal of freedom and of democracy will be allowed to stand in the way of their being governed.

Walter Lippmann in his book
Essays In The Public Philosophy, 1955.

the publicity part. But I was not made to come face to face with the media. My job was behind the curtain. For example, if Rahul Gandhi was coming to Gujarat, I would design the program for him. We gave him the concept of Abhay Udaan and invited him to visit Gujarat and interact with the youth. We used to give him questions to work on and the tentative list of problems the youth would like him to speak on.”

“Sometimes I would be working till 1 a.m. in the night, discussing topics to be taken up by the Party and how we can make it work in the best possible way, what would Rahul be doing during his visit and how do we bring attention to the issues we want to highlight. I am the kind of person, when given responsibility I do it to the best potential I have.”

“In the four years I spent working for the Congress party, I came to see that the hard core issues and problems of people are not being addressed the way they should be doing. We were lacking leadership at the Gujarat state level which means that any issue that comes up doesn’t get solved at the state level, you need to send it to a higher authority or to Delhi. And once you go with those issues to Delhi, it is either too late to be addressed or the hands of the national leaders are full. Issues that are important at the grassroot level seem to be immaterial or small in front of the “national” issues and left aside or remain unattended. This creates a boomerang effect at the grass root level because people feel let down at their problems being ignored.”

In the Name of “Secularism”

The mask of ‘secularism’ is what allows numerous Kamal Nath’s to continue to reign supreme in the Congress Party despite their involvement in the 1984 massacre of Sikhs. This is how Congress Party can overlook thousands of communal and caste riots under its regimes. This is how Lalu Yadav and Mayawati as valued partners of UPA brazen out corruption cases against them. This is how a goonda infested party headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav, charged with massive scams, retains the badge of honour reserved for ‘secular’ allies of Congress party. This is how the Party can justify its alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala. This is how Sonia Gandhi and her relatives get away with using the State machinery to protect them from countless charges of corruption and crime. This is how Omar Abdullah keeps getting good character certificates from the Congress High Command despite having been personally implicated in humungous corruption, large-scale human rights abuses and killings under his regime, including alleged murder of a senior party colleague. The list of all sins, all crimes are justified/forgiven to the Congress Party and its allies

because of the mask of secularism are endless. A good illustration of this mindset is the sudden propping up of IPS Officer Sanjiv Bhatt as one of the prime stars of the anti-Modi Brigade in 2009.

On 23rd March 2008, in response to a petition filed by Ehsan Jafri’s widow, Zakia Jafri along with Teesta Setalvad, alleging criminal conspiracy by Narendra Modi’s government, a “deliberate and intentional failure” to protect life and property, and failure to fulfill their constitutional duty, the Supreme Court appointed a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by former Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) chief R. K. Raghavan, to “inquire and investigate” cases relating to the various incidents connected with 2002 riots. In 2009, the Court directed the SIT to investigate the actions of Modi and 62 other people named in Jafri’s petition. It is at this point that Bhatt was brought in as a prime witness against Modi.

There is no denying that due to incompetence or complicity, or both, the police failed in many instances to control the violence that shook Gujarat for three days starting February 28, 2002. There is also no denying that some of the administrators proved incompetent in handling the situation, and a good number of politicians were involved in instigating mob violence. Some even led murderous mobs. Nevertheless, there are many instances of the police and army having saved Muslims whose homes or settlements were surrounded by murderous mobs. The anti Modi brigades almost never mention these instances just as they never mention the number of Hindus killed in police firing while saving Muslims or the instances of retaliatory violence by Muslims.

One of the biggest disservices done by the self-appointed guardians of the Muslim community is that they exaggerated, overstated and distorted the events of 2002 beyond recognition solely with a view to serving the partisan interests of the Congress Party. Their aim has never been to ensure the punishment of those guilty of murders and mayhem during the 2002 riots. Their single-minded focus has been on targeting Narendra Modi. In the process, they have actually weakened their case by introducing endless lies to their narrative to project Modi as the man who personally ordered and directed mob violence against Muslims.

This campaign has been sustained through propping up dubious witnesses whose testimonies have been rejected by the Supreme Court appointed Special Investigative Team (SIT) as being false and motivated. And yet, it is sustained with the help of pliable media houses and intellectuals acting as the foot soldiers of the Congress Party.

Earlier in this narration, I had presented details of what Modi said and did following the Godhra massacre on February 27, 2002. All this clearly indicates, that despite being new to administration (he had taken charge as CM only 3½ months ago of a State whose machinery of governance was communally polarized due to frequent riots most of which occurred under Congress regimes), Modi took all necessary steps to quell the riots even though his administration and even his political colleagues either failed him, or played mischief at many places. This included getting army units airlifted and deployed on the ground within 20 hours of the outbreak of violence.

A chief minister who has orchestrated riots is not likely to have the army brought in with such speed. Similarly, a chief minister who wants a particular community to be massacred is not likely to make desperate pleas for additional police force from neighbouring states.

I reproduce below the exact text of the fax message sent by the Government of Gujarat to the Home Ministry, New Delhi on 27/02/2002, the day of Godhra train massacre requesting additional companies of paramilitary forces for law and order duties.

MOST IMMEDIATE FAX MESSAGE

TO: HOME, NEW DELHI (KIND Atten, Shri O. P. Arya, Jt.Secretary, M.H.A.)

INFO: POLICE, GANDHINAGAR

NO: SB.V/ISS/102002/173

DATE:- 27/02/2002

SUBSEQUENT TO THE INCIDENT OF ARSON TO A RAILWAY COACH OF SABARMATI EXPRESS NEAR GODHRA RAILWAY STATION TODAY MORNING, SPORADIC INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE FORM OF STABBING AND ARSON HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM AHMEDABAD, BARODA AND ANAND TOWNS BESIDES GODHRA TOWN (.) THE VISHWA HINDU PARISHAD HAS ALSO GIVEN A CALL FOR GUJARAT BANDH ON 28.2.2002 (.) THE EXISTING RESOURCES OF STATE RESERVE POLICE FORCE HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEPLOYED FULLY (.) IN ORDER TO COPE UP WITH THE EMERGING LAW AND ORDER SITUATION DURING THE GUJARAT BANDH CALL, TEN COYS OF CENTRAL PARA MILITARY FORCES MAY PLEASE BE PROVIDED IMMEDIATELY EVEN BY AIRLIFT FOR LAW AND ORDER DUTIES IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR COYS OF R.A.F. (.) ALREADY REQUESTED

UNDER FAX OF EVEN NUMBER AND DATE (.)

(J. R. RAJPUT),
Under Secretary to Government,
Home Department (Spl.)

Modi's "Action-Reaction" Statement on 2002 Riots

Rajiv Gandhi had justified the 1984 pogrom against the Sikhs in Delhi and other places in north India saying, "When a big tree falls, the earth is bound to shake." It was the most clear-cut example of Congress led killings, which resulted in one-way killings of Sikhs and brutalization of Sikh women. Not a single Hindu was killed in the 1984 mayhem. Till date, not a single Congress leader who was found leading riotous mobs during those murderous days, has been punished. Nor was Rajiv Gandhi or any other Congress leader hounded for allowing the massacre for full three days right under their noses. But then, the Congress does not have to worry about such trivialities since it claims to be "secular"!

Teesta Setalvad's NGO and others targeting Narendra Modi for his alleged complicity in the post-Godhra riots of 2002 have tried attributing a similar statement to Narendra Modi. The Supreme Court appointed SIT examined the charge in-depth. The charge is that when asked about the post Godhra violence, Modi quoted Newton's third law of motion which states that 'every action has an equal and opposite reaction' – "*Har kriya ki pratikriya hoti hai*" (Quoted in *Communalism Combat*, pg.107, "Genocide Gujarat 2002" (Mar-Apr 2002). Ms. Setalvad's case is that this proves Modi justified the anti-Muslim violence that followed the burning down of a rail bogie leading to 58 Hindus being charred to death.

However, the Special Investigative Team appointed by the Supreme Court exonerated Modi of this charge on the ground that that actual statement was – "*Kriya pratikriya ki chain chal rahi hai. Hum chhate hain ki na kriya ho aur na pratikriya*" (A chain of action-reaction is going on. We want that there should be neither "action" nor "reaction")

What is published in these pages of *Freedom First* are excerpts.

Read more at:

<http://kafila.org/2013/04/17/a-conversation-that-didnt-take-place-in-juhapura-madhu-purnima-kishwar-and-zahir-janmohamed/#more-17929>

<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1685&ptype=&pgno=1>

<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1693>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1694>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1695>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1698>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1699>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1703>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1704>

<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1707>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1687&ptype=&pgno=1>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1688&ptype=&pgno=1>
<http://www.manushi.in/articles.php?articleId=1689>

**MADHU PURNIMA KISHWAR, Founder MANUSHI, Professor,
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies,
Website: www.manushi.in.**

“I am disgusted with the ways of the Congress Party”

– C. Rajagopalachari

On the eve of the General Elections of 1962, the Indian National Congress (the real one that was killed in 1969) led by Jawaharlal Nehru stepped up its campaign of tarnishing the image of the Swatantra Party which, founded on August 1, 1960 by C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), was getting ready to contest its first general elections to the 3rd Lok Sabha and several state assemblies. Mr. Nehru’s campaign trail took him to Madras (now Chennai) and he let loose his diatribe against the Swatantra Party. Rajaji was quick to reply in the *Swarajya* of February 17, 1962:

“Mr. Nehru came to Madras on Tuesday with all the paraphernalia of the Prime Minister of India and attempted to answer my oft-repeated charges; he made counter-charges against me of speaking in anger and in the confusion of mind caused by unaccountable anger. I am grateful for the respect he continues to have for me. He wants me to say precisely what I want and paint the picture of India as I desire it to be.”“I feel that in the main the present Congress Party is filled all over India by greedy and power-hungry men. If I so feel, am I to suppress my feelings? Should I not express them so that the people may see that such a party does not deserve to rule India and control and regulate the affairs of men in a one-party dictatorship?

“I use harsh language, because I am disgusted with the ways of the Congress Party and the atmosphere of corruption, fear and flattery that are choking the national spirit. But the Congress Party and its representatives in office do worse than use harsh language; they tell lies – the biggest lie among them being that the Swatantra Party is a rich man’s party, or that it is not led by me but by big businessmen; that it is a Rajas’ party, and so forth; ...”

From December 1959 to December 1973 I was the Executive Secretary of the Swatantra Party at its National Headquarters and I can personally affirm that through this period the Indian National Congress and later its faction, the Indira Congress, aka Congress (I), kept up its shrill character assassination of the Swatantra Party. So it’s an integral part of its strategy to abuse and vilify those opponents it considers a threat to its power.

The Congress (I)’s demonization of Narendra Modi follows a similar pattern.

There have been many assessments of Mr. Narendra Modi. By and large it is not politically correct to speak favourably about him or his governing abilities. If you do, you are immediately branded a communalist or a fascist. We decided that in keeping with our habit of swimming against the current, we would take the risk of being called that and to examine why he is being demonized

Soon after the Godhra riots of 2002 *Freedom First* too (FF 453 April-June 2002) was highly critical of him and demanded that he be punished if found guilty. Today, 11 years later, *Freedom First* continues to maintain that he must be punished if our courts of law find him guilty. Meanwhile we need to concede that he has demonstrated how firm governance can benefit the people.

It is in this context that when we came upon a series of articles by Ms. Madhu Kishwar we sought her permission to publish a condensed version. Madhu Kishwar is that rare combination of scholar and social activist, who has the courage of her conviction. This article is condensed from a number of detailed and well researched essays by her on Mr. Narendra Modi. These are available on the net – the links are listed on page 33. **Editor.**

BOOK REVIEW



PARENTING - THE ART AND SCIENCE OF NURTURING by Shekhar Seshadri and Nirupama Rao ● Byword Books Pvt Ltd. ● GF-15, Virat Bhavan, Mukherjee Nagar Commercial Complex, Delhi 110009 ● 2012 ● Pages 190 ● Rs.250.

Reviewed by Anahita Uberoi, a director, actor, teacher of drama and creative consultant. And a mother.

Once in a while, you pick up a book to read that tells you what you already know but feel good to hear it all over again. Like a story told to you by an older relative. You know the ending but you still get taken in by it, each time, and find the twists and turns of the plot as

The urgent need is to help children remain children. The necessity for parents to remain givers of love, security, discipline and happiness is paramount.

One of the most important guidelines that keep re-appearing in the book is the need for parents to change. Once your child moves from phase to phase, you too need to adapt to that change. Children continue to evolve, go through ups and downs, and have ever challenging questions and parents need to understand the needs and challenges of each age.

The book also acknowledges differing styles of parenting based on the environment immediately surrounding the family. However, it seamlessly allows each parent to understand the basics that need to be applied to whatever your “style” of parenting may be. It gently pushes you into understanding the need for an understanding of the shift in parenting that is essential to help our children become successful adults in the future.

The chapters that deal with issues such as loss and grief, adoption and sex education are dealt with efficiently and yet with a tone of care.

To sum it up, Seshadri and Rao have written a book scientifically yet with a lot of heart and warmth. This combination makes it a book worth reading for every parent. It is a book that helps parents to assist their children to have a childhood that they can look back to with a smile on their face and also assimilate well into their adult world.

compelling as when you heard it the first time.

This book is much like that. Each parent – especially if your children are already teenagers, seems to know through trial and error and media awareness – what is considered good parenting and what is not.

This book provides that comfort zone. However, what the writers have added is their years of expertise in the clinical field that backs human notions with scientific accuracy. So you are explained things almost medically which gives the theories a great deal of credibility.

It is a book that follows the development and issues of a growing child – from infancy to the teenage years.

The approach to the book is clearly the fact that the environment today is the most challenging one in which to be a parent – a highly competitive world embellished with gadgets and ready accessibility to just about any information in the hands of the young and impressionable.

A British Officer's Devotion to his Troops

We have often heard about British officers' attachment to their Indian troops. The particular case of Liberal Democrat leader Lord 'Paddy' Ashdown's father, Lieutenant Colonel JWRD Ashdown, illustrates this well. Then a Captain commanding 32 Mule Company with Force K6, he was ordered by a senior commander, during the retreat to Dunkirk to abandon his Indian soldiers and mules to their fate in the face of the advancing Germans. The British officers were to be evacuated. Abandoning the animals he could understand, they required special arrangements for evacuation which the British, desperately short of transport just could not make. However, he flatly refused to countenance any thought of leaving behind his beloved men. He repudiated the blatantly racist order, brought all his jawans back by securing berths for them on a ship bringing them back to Britain. Back in the UK he had to face a court-martial for his insubordination. Ashdown's defence was simple. "I simply thought that these were my men, I was responsible for them, and must bring them back. That was the beginning and the end of it." Later, sense dawned upon the authorities and the court-martial was thrown out. Ashdown's dedication to his men was not an isolated case, there being many such examples among British officers.

Contributed by Brig.Suresh C. Sharma (retd.)

Educating Adults

The Right to Education Act (13)

This is the thirteenth in a series examining the various aspects of the Right to Education Act (RTE).

Education of Tribal Children

Suresh C. Sharma

The challenge of delivery of education is to enable them to engage with the mainstream yet retain the positive ethos of their culture.

The Government has made special arrangements for education of children, particularly of girls from economically and socially backward classes. 3.6 lakh girls (29% SC, 26% ST, 26% OBC, 9% Muslim, 10% BPL) are studying in over 3500 Kasturba Balika Vidyayalayas [KGBV] in the educationally backward blocks of India in class VI to VIII. 50,000 children and 391 hostels attached to these schools in sparsely populated areas benefit from this programme. Besides free boarding and lodging, they get a stipend of Rs.200 per month. Yet, the test results of tribal children are not satisfactory.

It has been observed that 99% of the school dropouts in the Nilgiris are Adivasi children. Only 40% of the Adivasi students finish school and the learning skills of those who finish school are low. For example, only 60% children could pass in Tamil and not even 30% could pass in mathematics. The same state of education prevails in other parts of India, as revealed by a study conducted by the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore.

Need To Be In Sync with Tribal Culture

A tribal took his child to a Government school in the Nilgiris for admission. The father gave the child's name as Karalan. The headmaster frowned and said that his name is going to be Govindan and entered that name in the school records. The father explained this to the child in his language. The headmaster interrupted him and told him not to speak that jungle language in the school. The

father left the child in the hostel only to find him back in the house after a week. Most of the children have similar experience in other parts of the country. According to an UNICEF study in Koraput district in Orissa, 14% of children in the age group of 6 to 14 do not attend school compared to 8% in the rest of the State. More than 40% children drop out before 7th grade.

The attitude of the settled communities to consider themselves superior does not permit the tribal children to join the main stream. In spite of well meaning efforts, the tribal people continue to be marginalized. The mainstream personnel who do not understand the conditions, aspirations and needs of these communities have drawn up the education programmes for the tribal children. Education of tribal children requires an understanding of their social organization. The challenge of delivery of education is to enable them to engage with the mainstream yet retain the positive ethos of their culture. Failure to address the need for special education increases the inequalities and disadvantages faced by these children. The schools for the tribal children must be based on tribal languages and practices.

In some of the tribal population, women work on their small agricultural plots while the men folk spend their time in drinking country-made liquor resulting in high crime rate and domestic violence. Indiscriminate cutting of trees and encroachment of tribal land by urban society has led to increased poverty. Children who drop out from schools



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take to their ancestral way of living. There are success stories too. A brief review of one school each in private and one in the Government sector clearly shows the direction to take.

Vidyodaya Adivasi School started work in Gudalur in Nilgiri hills about twenty years ago. The young people taken as teachers are trained in teaching and every aspect of school and education process. Respect for the adivasi way of life is the core of schoolwork. Instead of trying to assimilate or dominate them, they are made a part of the change process. Community organizations manage all matters of the school including admissions and recruitment of teachers. As far as possible, teachers are recruited from among the five tribes of Gudalur area, who train on the job in the school. Knowledge of their language and customs helps the teachers to easily establish a rapport with the students and there are hardly any dropouts.

Parents, whose children had dropped out, had started believing that their kids were incapable of learning. A visit to the school and interaction with the students and staff changed their outlook. Discussions with the parents led to inclusion of history and culture of the adivasis of Gudalur in the curriculum. The elders could participate in teaching the land struggles and rituals of the people. Songs, dramas, stories, rituals and dances were presented. The school became an open forum for interaction between teachers, students and community members.

Initially, children are taught in their mother tongue and gradually introduced to Tamil, the regional language. The school teaches in five mother tongues. Assessments are comprehensive based on teachers' knowledge of students. It is different from the standardized form filling process designed by the Government department. The training of teachers, curriculum and conduct of education are not in conformity with the RTE Act. Any changes to comply with the rules and regulations of the Act could bring back the specter of dropouts.

Another case of a residential school for the tribal children run by the Scheduled Tribe and Schedule Caste Department at Daleiguda in Orissa. Forty boys and one hundred forty girls whose homes are far away reside in the school hostel. Krupasindhuv Pangi, the headmaster, is well aware of the needs of the community. After his family's small piece of land was taken away for construction of a factory when he was five years old, his father worked as a daily labourer. Pangi was the first

person in the family to attend school. He wanted to ensure that other children also receive education and an opportunity to advance themselves. Under his guidance, the scores of the students have almost doubled. Some of his students have taken up jobs as teachers and lecturers at the colleges. Teaching is carried out in the mother tongue to begin with since a large number of entrants do not know Oriya, the regional language. Maps of the country, alphabets and pictures of animals adorn the walls of the school building. The students are provided free food and accommodation. There are hardly any drop outs. The recruitment of teachers, syllabus, learning routines and assessment do not follow the conditions laid down in the RTE Act. The good results are a product of innovation in teaching and must be applied to other areas as well.

"Most innovations in education have been generated by alternative schools and by a small number of individuals and organizations. The innovations include new teaching-learning materials, pedagogies and some texts. These need to be enhanced. Innovations in Adivasi/ Tribal education will occur when the focus shifts away from standardization. Innovation will involve incorporating newer ways of learning, creating new knowledges, open systems of learning, recognition, accreditation, and certification. The reality of present-day innovative education programmes is such that most of the initiatives are taken up by civil society groups and are in operation on small scales. Scaffolding these, instead of subjecting them to bureaucratic norms will go a long way in enhancing innovative educational schemes for deprived groups." – Report by UNICEF

BRIG. SURESH C. SHARMA (Retd.) is adviser to the telecom

An Indian Problem

Yesterday I attended a lecture by a Japanese engineer about monitoring of concrete structures, using fiber-optic cables. He was master of his subject and we listened in rapt attention.

There was a major house collapse the day before. During question-answer, many asked: "In the past few days, we had three major house collapses, all due to removal of an important structural member during un-authorised alterations. How can you monitor such defects?"

The poor Japanese was completely baffled; because such things never occur in Japan.

Courtesy : Minochcher Damania.
Contributed by Kashmira Rao.

Solar Energy, Not War

Sunita Narain

Solar energy, even with substantial cost reductions, needs policy and financial support for growth. In all this, governments must provide the framework, and not just leave it to the market.

If you know that a sector has arrived when it makes for trade wars between countries, then solar energy clearly has. Last year, the US imposed anti-dumping duties on Chinese imports of solar panels; now the EU has proposed the same. The Chinese have in turn threatened that they will take action against European exports of poly-silicon, the material used for manufacturing solar panels. In February this year, the US filed a case against India at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for “favouring sourcing of panels from domestic manufacturers”. Earlier this month, Canada lost a similar case filed against it at WTO for its support to domestic manufacturers in procurement of solar panels. So, what you thought was all good and nice has suddenly become the biggest bugbear in international trade relations. It tells you that this sector is growing, it is lucrative and it makes for fierce trade politics and competitiveness.

But this is only part of the story. The big issue underlying these “wars” is the role of solar energy – a new source of power to lead the world to a low-carbon future and thus, away from the looming climate crisis. It has big objectives.

First, it has to become cheap so that it can achieve grid parity and compete with the dinosaur in the market: coal and oil. This can only happen when its deployment is greatly scaled up. Secondly, it has to reinvent green growth. This is why solar energy has been “sold” as an alternative industry, which will add to employment. It is the economy of the future. Thirdly, it has to secure needs of the most energy-poor. In other words, this relatively expensive and certainly most modern energy system should reach the poorest millions living in darkness. This would mean cutting the cost of supply, building networks to distribute and doing all that has not been done before.

Solar energy, therefore, has a tall order to deliver. The problem is countries have never considered the competing and often conflicting objectives. As a result, solar energy instead of becoming the messenger of the new cooperative world is getting embroiled in battles.

Consider this. The Chinese have managed to bring down prices and in the process led to the collapse of

manufacturing across the world. It is estimated that in 2011 PV modules cost 60 per cent less than what they did in 2008. The first objective of solar energy is close to being met. But cheaper supply from China has hit manufacturing elsewhere. This has led countries to look for options to subsidise their industries and, in turn, damaging others. The US, for instance, provides cheap loans tied to purchase of domestically produced solar systems. Indian solar manufacturing has suffered fatally.

The second objective of using this new industry for green growth is being destroyed. It is for this reason that governments are hitting back.

In all countries the developers – the companies that buy solar systems to install power stations – are objecting to what they call are unnecessary protectionist measures at the behest of inefficient domestic producers. They say cheaper solar power systems have resulted in large-scale deployment, which in turn has given jobs and growth. The result of this powerful push back is that within days of announcing the anti-dumping duties, the US and EU solar associations have issued the Shanghai Declaration asking for a “rule-based trading system” and no duties. Over 1,000 industries have written against the proposal. Hectic parleys are on between the US, EU and China to find a “satisfactory” answer. No doubt these dependent trading partners will find a solution that suits their mutual interests but where will this leave the original purpose of solar power?

This is where the world needs to stop and think. The fact is that countries need manufacturing capacities for domestic employment and to build the future industrial base. The fact also is that solar energy, even with substantial cost reductions, needs policy and financial support for growth. In all this, governments must provide the framework, and not just leave it to the market.

The global aim should be to support this source of power, even if it distorts the so-called market. That’s why it is essential that all trade cases be withdrawn. It should be accepted that countries will provide fiscal support for building manufacturing and that domestic procurement would be facilitated. This is part of the bigger

design.

The Indian government must continue with its policy to mandate domestic content in solar installations. But to make it work it should also provide cheap loans – similar to what the US government does through its EXIM Bank – conditional to the purchase of locally produced systems.

Most importantly, the support must be focused on meeting the third objective: reaching clean energy to the poorest. This would mean supporting decentralised power

grid that feeds power directly to households. This will not be easy. The cost of such systems is high, cost recovery low and the ability to pay even lower. Let's remember, the dinosaur can be slain only if there is new energy. New dawn needs new light.

- To post your comments on this editorial online, please visit <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/solar-energy-not-war>

Courtesy: CSE's *Fortnightly News Bulletin* (June 3, 2013); Sunita Narain's Editorial in *Down to Earth*.

Kharland Bunds Destroying Konkan Mangroves

Atul Sathe

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) studies in Ratnagiri reveal severe impact on coastal ecosystem

In times of climate change, rising sea levels and increasing coastal erosion, mangroves and the coastal ecosystems that protect the land from ingress of sea water and possible tsunamis, have gained paramount importance. The destruction of mangroves around Mumbai has been regularly highlighted in several studies and reports. Now a recent report, based on the ongoing studies of BNHS India along the Konkan coast, reveals the severe impact that Kharland bunds are having on mangroves.

Affected areas

A recent report¹, reveals the severe impact in several areas. Some of them are in the vicinity of mega industrial projects that have come up in the region.

- **Jaigad Creek:** (Lagvan-Kasari-Satkondi area) A one-kilometre long bund constructed three decades ago in this area has affected 108 hectares of mangroves. The mangrove mortality has increased since the past 4-5 weeks when officials have closed down all but one sluice gates cutting off tidal water to this luxuriant mangrove. The area is close to JSW Thermal Power plant and Chowgule Steamships port project. The bund has been constructed by Kharland Development Board, Irrigation Department of the Government of Maharashtra. NASA images reveal thick mangrove cover in the area in 1989, which has dwindled over the past two decades to a meagre 35 hectares.

- **Bankot Creek:** (Shipole-Veswi area) A bund has been built connecting the two villages, which cuts off a 48 hectare mangrove patch into 12.7 hectares facing the creek and 35.3 hectares facing the land, which is affected by the bund. The water flowing into this landward area through two gates in the bund at present is likely to be diverted to existing and upcoming aquaculture units in the area by way of the ongoing additional construction, thus depriving the landward mangrove patch of the crucial saline water.
- **Sakhartar Creek:** (Shirgaon area) A 2.5 km long bund is affecting 75 hectares of mangroves, which have been encircled by the bund. Heavy mortality of mangroves (species *Sonneratia alba*) has been witnessed after the construction of the bund. After the bund was broken recently in some places (either by locals or forest department), the mangroves have come back, but with significant changes in the mangrove species composition.

Rare species

A rare mangrove species, *Xylocarpus granatum*, has been recorded from some localities close to the affected area in Jaigad. Research reports confirm declining populations of this species all over the coast of India, thus highlighting the need for conservation wherever it exists.

ATUL SATHE, Manager Communications, BNHS, India.

¹ "Kharland development bunds affecting mangrove cover: case studies from Ratnagiri" by Dr. Deepak Apte, Chief Operating Officer, BNHS India.

Only A Handful

“As far as our foreign policy is concerned” the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, is reported to have said in the course of a speech at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee held last month in Bombay, “apart from a handful of persons who might disagree on some small matter here and there, there is no opposition, as such, to it. In cities like Bombay, there might be some who bring out pamphlets and journals criticising our stand on some issue or the other. But, broadly speaking, there is only agreement with our foreign policy. I am aware that there are some people who feel we are in the Communist camp and should be more friendly to the Americans. But then there are others who feel we lean far too much on the Americans and should cultivate the Soviet Union more. These are but the opinions of a handful of individuals. The country, as a whole, however, endorses the foreign policy.”

The Prime Minister did not mention any names and it is not known whom he had in mind. Since, however, the Democratic Research Service and Freedom First have from time to time criticised the Indian Government’s attitude to some issue or the other of foreign policy, we may count ourselves as being among “the handful” mentioned by the Prime Minister. Perhaps this provides an appropriate opportunity to restate the issues on which we are critical and which divide us from the uncritical supporters of India’s current foreign policy.

Let us state right at the outset that we have no quarrel with the policy of non-alignment. We are as keen as any that our country’s foreign policy should be independent, leaving us free to judge each issue on its own merit. We realise that, faced as we are with immense problems relating to the economic and social development of our we concentrate our attention on the solution of those problems. Many countries have in the past followed that policy in the early years of their nationhood and have profited by avoiding entanglements in quarrels and fights which did not immediately concern them. Times have no doubt changed and no country can now afford the luxury of complete isolation. Yet it is not necessary that India should tie herself down to any particular group of nations.

If, therefore, we are not always happy with the stand

taken by our Government it is because while we agree with the general principles of the policy, we are unhappy about the way it is applied.

We do not believe that the policy of non-alignment involves any refusal to decide between right and wrong or compels India to close her eyes to the moral issues involved in international problems.

There is a moral issue involved in the struggle over the preservation and extension of human rights. Wherever and whenever human rights are denied or destroyed or human dignity is trampled upon, it is, the duty of every nation and every group of men to raise their voice of protest. Such a protest may or may not be effective, but diplomatic considerations cannot be allowed to stifle it. Indeed it was none other than the Prime Minister Nehru who when addressing the Congress of the United States during his last visit to Washington, made the historic declaration that where issues of freedom and justice were involved, “we cannot and shall not be neutral.” In the light of the experience of the past six years, can it be said that the Prime Minister’s pledge has been honoured?

Our foreign policy is vociferous in condemning colonialism and other evils which exist in Western countries. But when it comes to arraigning Soviet Russia and other communist regimes for their denial of civil liberties, for the terroristic regimes set up by them, for their massacre of peasants, for their liquidation of ethnic groups, for their regimentation and brain-washing, for their judicial murders on trumped up charges of prominent public men, for their slave labour camps and other heinous offences, our foreign policy lapses into a strange silence. And not only is it the Prime Minister and other representatives of the Government who are affected by that silence, but others, including the press, are also expected to close their eyes to those malignant characteristics of communist regimes in consideration of our policy of neutrality and non-alignment.

What you have just read are excerpts from the editorial in *Freedom First* in its issue No.50 of July 1956. You will find the full text of this article and more in our archives – www.freedomfirst.in

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