

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



Armed Forces to the Rescue Again!

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Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine – 63rd Year of Publication
No.568 October 2014

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Between Ourselves ...

With this, the October 2014 issue of *Freedom First*, we revert to our earlier modest format of this page. Your editor regrets, not the fact that we go back to the old format but that he 'dared' to give an impression that this journal should have even tried to imitate more established journals by projecting a structure normal to well-funded magazines in the mistaken belief that we could attract more attention. On the other hand I have the feeling that it has actually led to erroneous impressions.

On the 'ideological' front too, I thought that an editorial assignment of 29 years was long enough for its editor to know what the journal stood for. Obviously not as I have been given lessons in recent weeks on 'transparency', 'freedom of expression' etc...

So I was wrong on both counts and was jolted back to reality reminding me of two idioms: that I was becoming 'too big for my boots' and therefore needed to be 'cut down to size'!

Kashmir has been in the news again. Despite Article 370, the monsoon this year has been particularly nasty with Kashmir. "Indian Administered Kashmir" as the BBC describes this state which is legally an integral part of India, is the victim of poor governance over the years going back to 1947 which led to landslides, floods and deaths. And yet the much maligned India's Armed Forces, rushed to the rescue with the same vigour as they did when the Indian state of Uttarakhand was unable to cope with nature's fury last monsoon.

There is no need to politicise this issue and the reference to Article 370 is only a reminder to the National Conference government and the 'Separatists'. That they are responsible for the deaths and the miseries of Indian citizens. The nature and volume of the disasters are known to the Indian people thanks to the printed, electronic and social media. But *Freedom First* wishes to record two facts – the work of our India's Armed Forces, our Jawans, the pride of our Nation and a non-political assessment of the reasons for the disaster of a non-governmental agency – the Bombay Natural History Society better known by its acronym BNHS.

SVR

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PUBLISHERS: Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001 ●
Phone: +91 (22) 22843416 ● Email: freedom@vsnl.com / freedomfirst1952@gmail.com
PUBLISHED BY J. R. Patel for the ICCF and printed by him at Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400001.
Phone: 91 (2) 22660357 / 22665526 ● **TYPESET** by Narendra Kotak, A-605/606, Mahavir Platinum, Govandi, Mumbai 400043.
SINGLE COPY: Rs.20.00 ● **ANNUAL:** Rs.200 ● **TWO YEARS:** Rs.350 ● **THREE YEARS:** Rs.500 ● **Overseas** (11nd Class Air Mail) Annual: \$20 or £10
Cheques to be drawn in favour of *ICCF* and mailed to the publishers at the above address.

From Our Readers

Decriminalization of Indian Politics

The observation by the Supreme Court that a pending case against an MP, MLA or minister, at the stage of charges having been framed before a court of law, is sufficient reason to disqualify that person, at least from holding a ministership – if not continuing as the people's representative – is a serious matter. The wisdom expressed in that observation should henceforth deter politicians from rashly involving in unlawful actions in the heat of the moment while dealing with public matters.

The national and regional parties should inculcate and carry forward this wisdom by declaring it in their election manifestos and strictly practicing that declaration, that they will not accept any such persons as candidates. This stand will further deter the so called 'hot headed go-getters' from getting involved in criminal activities. Crafty politicians engaging in corrupt practices and nepotism for the sake of position and money will also think twice before embarking on such nefarious schemes. To that extent that the *obiter dicta* or passing remarks of the Supreme Court, is in effect, more than a judgment.

The Modi Government's move to amend the 'Representation of People Act' to give an enforceable legal form to such observation would be much welcome.

Major Mathew Oommen (Retd), Pune.
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*

A Retired Judge as Governor?

A controversy has been raised about a retired judge being appointed governor.

We have senior bureaucrats being appointed to boards of PSUs, CAG and CIC. Why should retired judges be put to pasture? I recall that Rajaji had drawn the attention of Nehru to the provision against appointment of Justice Chagla as minister. Is there a constitutional provision requiring special approval of the President for such re-employment?

In some countries there is a rule of compulsory retirement after a decided age. We could have such a provision that should include ministers and MPs as well!

Suresh Sharma, Navi Mumbai.
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*

The Capital of Andhra Pradesh

The construction and equipping the capital for Andhra Pradesh involves over Rs.5 lakh crore or thereabout according to different estimates. This is a huge sum. Apart from this, the convenience of the people is involved.

The most democratic way to decide where the capital should be situated, whether in one place or in different places for different offices, is to first publish the Sankara Rama's Report; second, the Narayana Panel Report and the government's reasons for rejecting or accepting some or all the recommendations in these reports; and third the government's proposal as to where the capital should be located and the reasons for their choice. Such a paper should be circulated among the legislators and given wide publicity in the newspapers. There should be a debate in the Legislature and a vote taken on the government's resolution.

It may be recalled that when Andhra separated from the Madras Province, the decision on where the capital should be located was taken by the legislators belonging to the proposed Andhra state. This time too, the decision must be taken by the Legislators. Anything else would be construed as the manipulation of those who have purchased hundreds and thousands of acres of land in and around the place contemplated by the Chief Minister.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) & RTI

Some time ago the Hon'ble Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh for Endowments told the press and it was published in the newspapers that he has issued orders that the TTD should comply with the Right to Information Act (RTI) and give information sought by citizens.

Believing the Minister's statements published in the newspapers I wrote to the Executive Officer, TTD in August. I am now informed that the TTD does not come under the RTI and therefore, no information sought by me will be given to me. The Government and the Minister should put the public wise as to who is telling the truth and whether the truth is being complied with or not.

Dr. T. H. Chowdary, Secunderabad.
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*

Tagore on 'Hindu Christians'

The editorial on Tagore's concept of 'Hindu Christian' is indeed fascinating. I have closely observed many of my Christian and Muslim friends and was fascinated by the fact that culturally they are not too different from the majority community, except for the particular practice or ritual prescribed by their religion. Sociologist M. N. Srinivas talks about the cultural influence of the residual society. However, Gurudev's formulation is succinct and highly expressive.

Dr. RAMESH BABU, Hyderabad.
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Reading your Editorial "On being a Christian Hindu (FF Sep 2014)" I introspected into my own journey of life as a person born just after Independence and partition in India. My father and grandfather, despite tempting opportunities in Pakistan, decided to remain in India at partition, and all of us in the family laud them for that. We grew up in secular India, and are proud to be Indians. My family now has members who are Muslim, Hindu (Telugu and Tamil), Christian and atheists.

Profession of religion or faith is as personal as the choice of clothes we wear, the language we speak, the food we eat, or the profession we pursue. It need not define us, and we should be free to pick and choose the best from every religion, the way we do with language, food, clothes etc. But the melting pot that makes us all equal, and allows us to live in freedom and in the style we want, should be our greatest identity – India.

Let us recall the immortal words of poet Iqbal in the song '*Saare jahan se achha*' which said, "*Hindi hain hum, hindi hain hum watan hain, Hindustan hamara.*" If people have objection to the word Hindu, let us call ourselves 'Hindi' i.e. citizens of Hindustan.

Dr. Ali Khwaja, Bangalore
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*

Baba Ramdev and Hafiz Sayeed

If Baba Ramdev says he can cure people of homosexuality, perhaps his close confidante can also claim to be able to convert Hafiz Sayeed to fall in love with India. For a nation that reposes faith in myths, such charlatans are par for the course.

*

The Congress Party on a Wounded Horse

The unenviable situation that the Congress Party finds itself in at present has been appropriately expressed by Winston Churchill in his book, "*My Early Life*" (The Battle of Omdurman). "In one respect, a cavalry charge is very like ordinary life. So long as you are all right, firmly in your saddle, your horse in hand, and well armed, lots of enemies will give you a wide berth. But as soon as you have lost a stirrup, have a rein cut, have dropped your weapon, are wounded, or your horse is wounded, then is the moment when from all quarters enemies rush upon you."

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*

Many Voices from the Past

The idea of publishing "Many Voices from the Past" is really excellent. May be the person who lent the voice is still alive and kicking in which case he has reason to rejoice, even otherwise his descendents will remember him on reading his contributions. Commenting is easier than contributing and only requires a discerning mind.

Among the many voices published that of C. Rajagopalachari regarding retention of English is still of value and better heeded too. For people like me in their seventies the column has special interest

Looking forward to more of the voices in the coming issues.

K. Vaithinathasamy, Retired Headmaster,
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*



A Chinese city opens 'phone lane' for texting pedestrians.
Salil Tripathi retweeted from **The Guardian** @guardian

The Jammu & Kashmir Floods: An Ecological Disaster Waiting to Happen

The disastrous damage caused to life and property could have been minimized if the large number of wetlands that once existed in the Valley, had been preserved.

Dr Asad Rahmani, Director, BNHS

The recent tragedy in Kashmir Valley is being increasingly looked at as a man-made disaster, aggravated by reckless “developmental” activities with no regard for nature conservation. BNHS-India studies in the valley over the years reveal that there has been a severe loss of wetland habitat for various commercial activities. Hence, BNHS feels that the recent floods can be clearly termed as an “Ecological Disaster” and highlights the urgency to enact Wetland (Conservation) Act, on the pattern of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Man-made Ecological Disaster

It is obvious from field studies that there has been a massive loss of wetlands in the Kashmir valley over the years. For instance, the famed Dal Lake in Srinagar has seen numerous reclamations all along its periphery in the marshy areas. This has drastically reduced the lake area to just about 1,200 hectares, which is almost half of its earlier spread. The vast expanse of Wular Lake and associated marshes – an Important Bird Area (IBA) - is another case in point. Once spread across 20,200 hectares, it now remains restricted to a mere 2,400 hectares. In the last 30 years, nearly 50% of the wetlands in the Kashmir Valley have been encroached upon or severely damaged.

Commenting on the recent floods, Dr Asad Rahmani, Director, BNHS, said, “This can be termed as an Ecological Disaster. The disastrous damage caused to life and property could have been minimized if the large number of wetlands that once existed in the Valley, had been preserved. Wetlands act as a sponge that retains excess water. Wular Lake is a classical example”. Even the British and former Maharajas of Kashmir used to consider Wular as a buffer for the floods, where excess water can be absorbed.

Wrong policies on the part of successive governments in the state have contributed to the wetland loss. For example, encroachment upon the shallow portions of the wetland by the forest department for plantation of Willow trees has significantly reduced the size of Wular Lake over the years.

Kashmir Valley has one narrow opening towards the west for the water from the catchment areas to get drained down the Jhelum River. From all other sides, it is encircled by high mountains.

Need for Wetland Conservation Act

During the reign of the Maharajas of Kashmir, a well functioning water drainage system that was synchronous with the natural topography of the region was in place. The same lay neglected in the recent decades. The myriad lakes and wetlands of the valley, which acted as sponge, were also well preserved in the past. Considering the importance of wetlands, not just in Jammu and Kashmir, but across India, Dr Rahmani recommends the passing of a Wetland (Conservation) Act on the lines of the Forest (Conservation) Act.

Protection of wetlands will not only help in flood control, but will also help in recharging the ground water levels across the country and thus ensure better food security by way of increased water availability. Although the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority exists at present, it has been proving ineffective in saving the wetlands. Dr Rahmani added that it is also important not to classify wetlands as wastelands, as wetlands play an important biological, cultural, economical, aesthetic and spiritual role.

A Press Release issued by Atul Sathe, Manager-Communications, Bombay Natural History Society.

Armed Forces to the Rescue – Again!

When Srinagar and large parts of Jammu and Kashmir went under water and despite being the target of terrorists, separatists and always

viewed with suspicion by the local population, the Indian Army scrambled to provide relief and rescue along with the NDRF (National Disaster Response Force comprising

the BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF)). They were the first to arrive on scene even as a paralysed government looked on helplessly as the flood waters lashed at everything that stood in its way.

As the state chief minister confessed, with the waters submerging the state secretariat the state government had literally disappeared. He couldn't even contact his colleagues and officers in the state government and senior officials as communications had snapped and they were busy saving themselves and their families.

At the time of writing (16 September 2014) they India's Armed forces are still there in a massive round-the-clock-rescue operation with 86 aircrafts and 30,000 troops. Even Naval commandos had been summoned to rescue the marooned population..The force had rescued almost 2,00,000 people so far and distributed 50 tonnes of relief material. To provide relief to the displaced, 68 camps were set up in Jammu.

The Army and the IAF worked furiously to restore mobile services. The heavy floods triggered by torrential rains have snapped valley's telecommunication links with

the rest of the country. Army personnel on the ground reached out to the people stuck at various places in Srinagar and other parts by boats and by road. Omar Abdullah, is reported as saying, "No state government has planes and helicopters. It has to be from the Centre. It is a national disaster."

According to press reports the so-called leaders of the separatist organisation the All Party Hurriyat Conference, had, during the height of the disaster vanished from the scene. The very same leaders who claimed that they are the sole representatives of all Kashmiris were missing in action instead of helping the marooned people. The local police force did little as most of the police establishments were under water, their equipment damaged and their morale very low.

It was in the midst of all this that the Army men did a great job often risking their own lives. No wonder the Indian Army has won the praise of ordinary Kashmiris for the first time since insurgency started. No wonder too that Al Jazeera America reportedly said that India had turned the Kashmir flood disaster into PR stunt.

Rajaji on Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Rajaji has exhorted young people to follow the good precepts laid down by Gopal Krishna Gokhale and to be brave, truthful and courageous like him. He was speaking at Madras on 9 May 1966 after unveiling a portrait of Gokhale at the Lakshmipuram Young Men's Association on the occasion of the birth centenary celebrations of the leader of liberal thought.

Rajaji said the late leader belonged to the school of thought which believed that freedom could be achieved by converting Britain with intelligent argument and that, while this process was on, people could be trained in the art of government. But the extreme nationalists who represented the other school of thought felt that people were always ready for freedom and that there was no need for educating them in the art of government. Bal Gangadhar Tilak belonged to the latter school.

"Now we see," he said, "it is not so easy to govern, whatever our education and temperament. Now we realise how difficult that art of government is, to govern ourselves through our elected representatives."

Rajaji said that Mahatma Gandhi chose Gokhale as his guru on his return from South Africa, because, he

thought that Tilak believed there was no limit to the means to be employed for achieving freedom. Mahatma Gandhi also believed he could convert Gokhale to his view about the efficacy of passive resistance as a means of achieving freedom. Gokhale had been asking Gandhiji not to speak of passive resistance because he felt it would push the people into political activity for which they were not ready, and that it would lead to violence.

Both were right, Rajaji added. Passive resistance had led the country to freedom and on some occasions during the freedom struggle it had also led to violence in some places.

Rajaji pointed out that if Gokhale had been alive, now, he would have died heart-broken after seeing the enormity of the tax burden imposed on the people by those whom he had authorised to govern. Gokhale had opposed the levy of salt tax, "But the present Government is bolder than the British government. They have courage because we encourage them," he said.

Swatantra Newsletter No.58, May 1966

U. R. Ananthamurthy – the Controversial Bard

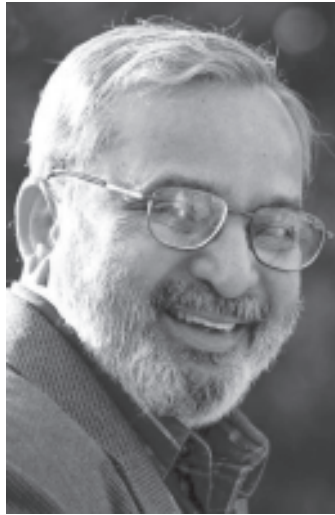
Nandana Reddy

Ananthamurthy, who passed away on 22nd August 2014, is considered one of the pioneers of the 'Navya (new) movement' in Kannada literature that began with his novel Samskara which was a scathing attack on decadent Hinduism and critic of Brahmanism, its superstitions and hypocrisies.

Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy or *Ananthu*, as I affectionately called him, was one of the Bards of Indian polity. Not unlike William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon, he commented on events, ridiculed fundamentalism and mocked authority. From his deeply embedded socialist convictions, he examined modern times through the lens of democracy. He questioned all things and analysed all motives in the belief that it would lead to a deepening of democracy. On January 26, 2014 he said; "...everything is politics. In a democracy, one has to constantly respond...it is not about what is right in the eternal sense. We'll have to do some things that are right at the moment. But that is politics and we'll have to do what is right."

Our paths first crossed in 1967. I was 15 and though my parents were not in politics they had many friends in the Socialist Party who shared their political beliefs, and also their love for art, music and literature. One day over lunch at our home, Shantaveri Gopal Gowda, a long time friend of Ananthamurthy's and the one who introduced him to Lohia Socialism and shared his passion for Kannada literature, told the story of Ananthamurthy's novel, *Samskara* to Dr. Lohia and Madhu Limaye. He said that Ananthu was a Lohia follower [though he had never met Lohia in person]. My parents Sneha and Pattabhi were struck by the story and decided to make it into a film.

Interestingly *Samskara*, the novel, was inspired by a film. When Ananthamurthy was in England he went to see "The Seventh Seal" by the celebrated Swedish Director Ingmar Bergman with his teacher Malcolm Bradbury. Though it didn't have subtitles he 'experienced' the film and could relate to the plague, the atmosphere of death and the indecision of the protagonist. There had been a plague in his hometown and he remembered how the upper castes were treated by the doctor while the Dalits were not.



1932 - 2014

Ananthu was intrigued by the fact that time was so linear in the West while in India they ran spirally like an archaeological site where the layers of time were sandwiched together. As Ananthu said, "In England or Europe in order to create the medieval ages, you have to go back to a library and collect all information. But the medieval times are already there in me. They are there in my mother. I can see and feel the 18th century in my mother and the 10th century in my grandmother. Different times in Europe are simultaneously present in India. As we walk the road, we are simultaneously walking the different times."

The book created a literary sensation in Karnataka and when the film was banned by the Censor Board it sparked a major political controversy. It was finally released in 1970 and won the National Award for Best Film and several International Awards including the Bronze Leopard at Locarno. A. K. Ramanujan, Professor of linguistics at the University of Chicago, saw the film and said; "If I had seen this film in Chicago, I would have danced in the streets with joy!"

Interestingly the controversy around the book was after its publication while the controversy generated by the film died out after its release. My father felt that this had something to do with the treatment of the story in the film. "One major departure of the film from the novel is the later half. In the novel the burning of Narayanappa's body takes place halfway through. In a way, the story ends half way through the novel" wrote my father in his paper 'Literature and Film'. He said, "The interest in the novel is sustained by Praneshacharya meeting Putta and undergoing experiences the exact opposite of his earlier experiences. The novel's interest is further sustained by the device of dramatic irony and black humour where the Brahmins prepare for an elaborate funeral for a non-existing body, which has already been spirited away by the Muslims." He felt that this would not work in the film. "Both the novel and the film start with the problem of

the dead body. If the dead body is disposed of half way through the film as in the novel, the film will lose interest.”

Ananthamurthy is considered one of the pioneers of the ‘Navya (new) movement’ in Kannada literature that began with his novel *Samskara* which was a scathing attack on decadent Hinduism and critic of Brahmanism, its superstitions and hypocrisies. My father is considered the father of modern Telugu Poetry as he rebelled against the sweet, rhythmic poetry of Tagore under whom he studied at Shantiniketan and wrote instead about the squalor and filth of Calcutta city.

They both fell in love with, and married, Christians – Ananthu made that a political statement; while my father never did. We, even as their children, were never conscious that our parents not belonging to the same religion was a daring and courageous step to take in those times. Marrying the person you loved was just the right thing to do!

Ananthu, born on 21 December, 1932, in the village of Melige, in Tirthahalli taluk in Shimoga District, grew up in an orthodox Madhava Brahmin family as the grandson of a priest. His schooling began in a traditional Sanskrit school before he went to the University of Mysore and to Birmingham, England, for a doctorate in English on a Commonwealth Scholarship where he was awarded a doctorate in 1966 for his dissertation on ‘Politics and Fiction in the 1930’s’.

The amalgam between politics and his literary expression began early and as he grew older developed into a literary activism very few writers have achieved in history. In a TV interview he stated that “We should not be politically correct - then we are NOT correct. If there are enough people who can swim against the tide, then democracy is safe. Hence political correctness which places all value on the majority is a wrong thing. Even one voice is enough, because ideas have a way of living... We should be able to say whatever is unpleasant...”

Ananthu was greatly influenced by Lohia’s writings and that was another thread that bound us. Just before the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi promulgated a state of Emergency, we saw a lot of Ananthu. My father and mother were shooting ‘Chanda Marutha’ [Wild Wind], an uncanny prediction of things to come. Then my mother passed away after eight months in jail. Ananthamurthy wrote her obituary in which he said; “It is hard to believe that Snehalata is dead at the age of forty-four. She will remain a vivid memory for...people from all walks of life; socialist leaders and intellectuals, theatre artists from India and abroad, writers and above all many young people still

searching for a meaning and purpose in life...”

This was perhaps a turning point in Ananthu’s life. The Emergency strengthened his convictions and he became the most vocal secular, socialist voice Karnataka has seen in recent years. Ananthamurthy was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Shakespeare during his childhood, which shaped his political and social conscience.

After the Emergency during the Chickmagalur elections where I campaigned against Mrs. Gandhi, Ananthu had been campaigning too and when I was beaten by the police and lay in a semiconscious state, he visited me. He was the person who accompanied me back home from the hospital to Bangalore at night shining a torch on my face so the crowds that had gathered could see me.

I said my goodbyes to Ananthu in the privacy of his home the evening he died. I did not want to share that moment with the large crowds that would be part of the State Honours. Ester was inconsolable and I was at a loss for words. What can you say to a partner of more than 50 years, one who cared and watched over him? Despite her own ailments she guarded and protected Ananthu zealously. She was his strength and foundation. Ananthu could not have done what he did without her. Though this was rarely recognized, Ester is the reason for the person Ananthamurthy was [is].

Many were surprised that his last rites were performed according to religious convention. Though Ananthu broke all traditions, his fascination for the spiritual was deeply imbedded and perhaps his inner strength came from this. My father was the same and this was not a contradiction, but an intellectual rejection of the negative aspects of organised religion while pursuing the search for a greater truth.

Farewell my dear friend and God speed.

NANDANA ISHBILIYA REDDY, daughter of the late Patabhi Rama Reddy, well known award winning film producer and director. A trade unionist, she is deeply involved with the informal, unorganised sector and also with political and civil liberties issues for 45 years. Her campaign against Indira Gandhi after the emergency constituted her debut in politics and is a founder member of the PUCL. She set up the Concerned for Working Children (CWC) who are strong advocates for the rights of children since the late 70s and have enabled children to organise themselves and use structures for their effective participation. As the Director Development responsible for Training, Consultancy and Capacity Building for national and international NGOs and organisations she has set up DHRUVA.Email: nandanareddy54@gmail.com

Jayanti of Andhra Kesari T. Prakasam Panthulu

T. H. Chowdary

Sanjeev Reddy cited Prakasam as a freedom fighter and a Congress leader who sacrificed much more than the entire Nehru Dynasty... Prakasam died in penury and left his progeny in penury and he did not build any dynasty or amass wealth.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh deserves to be congratulated for officially celebrating the 142th birthday of Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu garu. He is among those rare freedom fighters who sacrificed a lucrative career as Bar-at-Law in the undivided Madras Presidency and spent all his wealth for the freedom movement. He was earning much more than the much publicised Motilal Nehru; but there is a great contrast between the careers of the two persons.

Prakasam was a person who gave everything for the freedom struggle as well as for the creation of the Andhra State when it was separated from the Madras Presidency. His legendary courage was displayed when the Simon Commission visited Chennai (then Madras). With the Congress boycotting it, he led a demonstration with placards of *Simon go back*. The British deployed armed police and ordered the demonstrators not to proceed. Prakasam went forward baring his chest and dared the police to shoot him. The stunned soldiers simply made way for Prakasam. It was this daring, which no other Congress leader was prepared to undertake, that earned him the title **Andhra Kesari** (Lion). Elsewhere in India another brave leader earned from a grateful people the title 'Sardar' for leading the Bardoli Satyagraha in Gujarat (see next page).

Unlike present day Congressmen, whom Dr. Ambedkar described in 1948 itself as people without any principles and any vision of society excepting flattering Gandhi, Prakasam had self-esteem and a definite philosophy on society and its welfare. He rendered the Bhagwad Gita into Telugu with his commentary. The Telugu people adored him.

When, as a Congress leader, he was penniless, he used to demand from whomsoever he met to give him money to buy his train tickets! None withheld what he wanted and all the money was spent for the party, never accumulating a single rupee for himself. Once Gandhiji

wrote to him that some people complained to him that Prakasam was collecting money from the public but not rendering any accounts. Prakasam shot back saying that unlike what the nation was spending on Gandhi, he (Prakasam) spent every paisa that he received for the Congress movement for independence. It would be an insult to ask him to give an account of the money received; he had no money with him and that he lived on the offerings made by the people. Gandhi was left speechless.



August 23, 1872 - May 20, 1957

After the 1947 general elections of the Congress Legislature party in the Madras Presidency, Gandhiji and the Congress High Command did not want Prakasam to be the leader; but Prakasam defied them and won. He was the Premier of the undivided Madras Presidency. But conspirators from among the legislators from Andhra region and Tamils removed him as the Premier by a No-Confidence motion.

He was so disgusted with Congressmen jockeying for positions and not implementing Gandhiji's reforms in favour of farmers and weavers and other weaker sections of the people, that he left the Congress and along with Congress leaders like Acharya J. B Kripalani and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai formed the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. Even Prof. N. G. Ranga had to leave the Congress as the party was sliding into the hands of manipulators and self seekers.

In the 1952 general elections, the KMPP of Prakasam and the Krishikar Lok Party of N. G. Ranga contested the elections against the Congress. The Congress was reduced to a minority in the undivided Madras Province. Communists won a large number of seats in the Andhra area. The non-Congress parties elected Sri Prakasam as leader. Jawaharlal Nehru and his Congress could not countenance a non-Congress Ministry in so important a province as Madras. They nominated Rajaji to the Madras Legislative Council and manipulated to get him installed as the Premier of Madras. Prakasam then intensified the movement for the separation of Andhra from Madras

Province. He encouraged Potti Sriramulu to fast unto death and in the aftermath of his death, Nehru had to concede the demand for a separate state of Andhra which came into being in October 1953. As a tribute to the sacrifices of Prakasam, the parties in the newly formed Andhra state agreed that he should be the first Chief Minister and so he was, but after a few months, selfish and power-seeking Congressmen contrived to pull him down.

In 1980, Sanjeeva Reddy the President of India wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi drawing her attention to the talk of extensive corruption indulged in by Maharashtra's Congress Chief Minister Abdul Rahman Antulay who in the name of the Indira Prathibha Pratisthan was collecting money by allotting cement quotas. Sanjeeva Reddy advised Indira Gandhi that as she alone was powerful enough to tackle corruption, she should inquire into Antulaya's doings. Indira Gandhi replied that Sanjeeva Reddy was attributing corruption to her or at least her patronage of the corrupt. She then wrote to the President, listing the great sacrifices that her grandfather, father, and she had been making in the interests of the nation and therefore it was improper to allege any corruption to her. In a stinging riposte Sanjeev Reddy cited

Prakasam as a freedom fighter and a Congress leader who sacrificed much more than the entire Nehru Dynasty. He further said that Indira's grandfather, father, she and her aunt had all been holding high positions in government while Prakasam died in penury and left his progeny in penury and he did not build any dynasty and amass wealth.

It is rare that we have a leader who was so unselfish and who lived every moment of his life for the good of his people. He belonged to that rank of great selfless people like Acharya Kripalani, Jayaprakash Narayan, Prof. N. G. Ranga and P. Sundaraiah who even in the 1930s decided that they would not have children as they were involved in the freedom movement and should not be tempted to make money to benefit their children when freedom came. What a contrast to today's politicians in almost all parties (excepting maybe the BJP and the Communists) who are building dynasties and feudalising politics in India.

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On the Occasion of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 139th Birth Anniversary on October 31, 2014

The Sardar and Freebies



Over 4,000 villages were marooned in Gujarat in 1927 due to heavy rains. The crops were destroyed and more than 50% houses had collapsed. Under the direction of Sardar Patel, 200 volunteers had reached every village, sometimes risking their lives. The Government announced a gift of Rs 2,000 to the farmers and 'taccavi' loan of Rs 15,000 to every taluka. Sardar Patel opposed the free gift as "the peasant of Gujarat is self-respecting and does not live on charity." He asked for seeds which the farmers needed urgently. The Government agreed to Sardar Patel's request for a loan of Rs 1.3 crore and the farmers started working on their fields. Sowing operations provided jobs to the people and they were saved the humiliation of beggary.

The Bardoli Satyagraha - A Struggle against Increase in Land Revenue

The colonial Government increased land revenue in 1925 without any reason. Sardar Patel advised all the 17,000 landholders not to pay any revenue. The District Collector visited Bardoli which was the seat of the Satyagraha. His arrival was conveyed to the people by beat of drums and he faced complete non-co-operation so much so that he could not get any transport to visit the villages. The town presented a deserted look. The Collector ordered confiscation of land. The farmers responded by locking themselves in their houses along with the women and cattle. Property could not be attached in the absence of the owners. Sardar Patel travelled about fifteen miles a day to cover the rural areas. The villagers stood firm and were prepared to face the Government's ire. Ultimately, the Government relented and Sardar Patel agreed to a 5.7% increase against the government's proposal of 22%. All confiscated land was returned. The movement was acclaimed all over the nation, people singing praise of "Bardoli ka Sardar". It compelled the attention of the entire Empire.

Suresh C. Sharma, Navi Mumbai.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise person 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.

Zawahiri's New War

Point

1a) Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda (AQ) Chief, announced through a video on August 27 that AQ had opened a new unit to carry out jihad in the Indian sub-continent, with the aim of liberating the suffering Muslims in Kashmir, Gujarat, Assam, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Asim Umar was appointed chief of the new unit. The threat is not new in that the AQ has already been operating in India through the L-e-T, Hizbul Mujahideen, J-e-M etc. Now it will be a more direct involvement perhaps without the assistance of the ISI but the foot soldiers will be the same Pakistan-based fidayeen and the Indian Mujahideen. Some security analysts tend to ignore the new threat as old wine in a new bottle but the new context must also be understood. Pakistan-based infiltration had become complicated after the capture of Kasab (Mumbai-26/11) and except for Kashmir, direct infiltration had to be reduced by the ISI. The new programme by AQ might remove these reservations as Pakistan will have AQ to point a finger at if and when there is violence in India!

Counter Point

1b) Zawahiri's ambitious project has another angle. The ISIS or IS has already declared the formation of a Caliphate in Iraq and Syria under Caliph Baghdadi. This is a direct affront to the hegemony of AQ which was supposed to be the ideological and executive leader of the jihadi movement worldwide. Global Jihad was the prerogative of the AQ. IS usurped this position and has gone to the extent of forming a Caliphate which is the ultimate aim of the jihadis. The AQ had to show to all its followers that it continues to lead the Global Jihad. Zawahiri's video could be the answer to this requirement. It also criticized the IS obliquely by saying that there was no hurry to form an Islamic state. The fall-out could be bad for India. So far, India had to worry about the influx of fidayeen through the Indo-Pak border. Now recruits of the Global Jihad could come from any country as they are doing in Iraq. Fidayeen from the US, UK, Nigeria (Boko Haram) and Somalia (Al Shabaab) would now be available for 'shahadat' in India. A new worry indeed!

Indo-Pak Discord

2a) The talks between India and Pakistan scheduled between Foreign Secretaries of the two countries on August 25, 2014 were called off by India because the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi invited Kashmiri separatist leaders for consultations on the eve of talks. India took objection to these meetings as interference in the internal affairs of the country by the Pakistan diplomat. Not heeding the Indian warning, the High Commissioner went ahead with the meeting and India decided to act strongly. India asked if Pakistan wanted talks with the separatists or with the Indian Government. Pakistan expressed regret over the Indian action but kept up its argument that Kashmir was a disputed area, not a part of India and Pakistan had every right to consult the separatist leaders. Thus, in spite of talks for over 20 years, the Kashmir issue is beyond discussion. Other issues remain open for discussion but the trust deficit forecloses that option. It is not known who is calling the shots in Pakistan. If Nawaz Sharif wants to negotiate, the Army and the extremists are unhappy. Are they behind the move to

2b) In India, those who want Indo-Pak friendship at all cost took umbrage at the NDA Government's precipitate decision. They argued that such talks with separatists were a common feature and India had no need to change the game plan. The new Government's tough stand was welcomed elsewhere in the country, feeling that talks were meaningless as Pakistan had refused to budge on any issue; anti-India fulminations of leaders like Hafeez Saeed and vacillation of the Pakistan Government put a question mark over Pakistan's desire for improved relations. The pretence of talks while simultaneously encouraging terrorism has been a Pakistani gambit for a long time. It indulged in frequent provocations on the LOC. India has now chosen to change the parameters of diplomatic dialogue. Pakistan will have to reconcile itself to the changed paradigm. India can still work for better trade and cultural relations with Pakistan and put Kashmir on the back-burner. For the present, Pakistan is faced with so much internal strife that Nawaz Sharif has little time for friendship with India. Two powerful opposition groups

Point

scuttle the talks or is Sharif himself trying to placate the people through an anti-India stance?

Counter Point

are bent on seeking Nawaz Sharif's resignation. The Army stands as the referee. Whom should India deal with?

Electoral Arithmetic

3a) Elections in four states are due in October-December 2014. BJP is riding on its success in the Lok Sabha poll and is driving a hard bargain with its allies in Maharashtra and Haryana. The BJP should note that the euphoria over its success can be short-lived and there is no guarantee that it can repeat its Lok Sabha success six months later. The honeymoon lasts just that long and disillusionment sets in, rightly or wrongly. A ruling party has to take the downswing into account and not get carried away. The bye-election results in August 2014 ought to be revealing enough where opponents like the JDU and RJD managed to work out an anti-BJP front and win. The most unlikely forces can come together for power. It is, therefore, necessary for the BJP to be careful.

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us I will stop telling the truth about them.

Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952

3b) In Haryana, Kuleep Bishnoi (Haryana Janhit Party) has already broken away from the NDA. It may not cause much damage but in Maharashtra, BJP's long lasting alliance with the Shiv Sena was under strain and a break up was being predicted gleefully by the Congress. It is true that the Shiv Sena rode on the BJP's shoulders to win handsomely in the Lok Sabha polls and wants to maintain its big brother role in the alliance. The BJP now wants to rub in its recently earned seniority by asking for a greater share of seats. The Shiv Sena can get the Chief Minister's 'gaddi' only if it gets a larger share of seats. The consequent tussle could have led to a break up. BJP's central leadership seems to have seen the light and prevented a misunderstanding. It is an ancient tendency in India to betray each other and allow the outsider to succeed. It is in our DNA and will take a lot of effort and sense to get rid of. This time it would not be an outsider who will gain but a very unpopular Congress-NCP alliance that the people are keen to throw out. Shiv Sena and BJP beware!

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.

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Transforming India – Building Values in the System of Governance

H. R. Bapu Satyanarayana

There is no dearth of efficient colleagues in his cabinet and his challenge is to identify them to fill the shoes of potential Sir MVs to translate his vision of India.

Prologue

When Narendra Modi took over as the Prime Minister of India on May 16, 2014, it signified a paradigm shift in the political history of India. It was the beginning of a new era that saw the end of dynastic rule. Though Modi fought the elections as a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, there is no doubt that the party virtually sweeping the polls is attributable, without an iota of doubt, to his iconic stature and effort. In that sense Modi has now become virtually the most powerful person on the Indian political scene. Therefore, he is uniquely placed to play a historic role to transform India to fulfil the trust of the voters reposed in his leadership. It is an awesome responsibility and the challenge for Modi is to live up to their expectations.

The Role Model

There are several examples that Modi can emulate from the history of India. In the realm of spirituality there are people who are guided by their Gurus whether it is Shankara or Kabir and in modern times Swami Vivekananda who was inspired by Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The object of quoting the above examples is to draw Modi's attention nearer home to the golden era of the state of Mysore when it flourished as a model state during the reign of the Maharaja Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1902-1940).

The Maharaja had, in Sir M. Visvesvaraya (familiarily known as Sir MV), an able Dewan. In fact at that time there was one H. V. Nanjundaiah who was the senior most officer with vast administrative experience and was in line for promotion as Dewan. Yet the Maharaja chose Sir MV who was the chief engineer. Having been acquainted with his work and writings, he recognized in Sir MV, a man of vision to rise above routine approach to

governance and was blessed with out of the box thinking. The Maharaja was more than vindicated in his judgment for under Sir MV the State of Mysore saw much splendoured development.

Mahatma Gandhi called the Maharaja Rajarishi. It was Sir MV who gave the clarion call 'industrialise or perish'. This must come as music to the ears of Modi who is embarking on his pet theme of development which is not different from what Sir MV envisaged. It is another matter that the present state of Mysore is a far cry from its halcyon days of grandeur and badly needs refurbishing, for governance has gone for a toss and infrastructure is in shambles. That is why Modi, during his pre-election speech delivered in Mysore, was echoing the sentiment of Mysoreans when he promised to convert Mysore into a France implying thereby that Mysore needed a complete overhaul covering all facets of development.

Sir MV was a man of personal conviction and his life and work reflected the highest tradition of enduring values of integrity, honesty, hard work, love for the work undertaken and above all a burning patriotism to serve the people of the state and the country at large for which he worked devotedly. He always expressed his ideas freely and without fear. Thus I hazard a parallel considering Modi as being in the position of the Maharaja Wodeyar. What is left is to find his Sir MVs from among his cabinet ministers. There is no dearth of efficient colleagues in his cabinet and his challenge is to identify them to fill the shoes of potential Sir MVs to translate his vision of India. In other words he may consider Sir MV as his administrative guru and going through Sir MV's writings specially his book 'Memoirs of My Working Life' would be most rewarding.



Sir MV

A Few Examples of Sir MV's Enduring Value System

The engineering fraternity all over

India and abroad observe September 15, the birthday of Sir MV, as 'Engineers' Day' to commemorate his memory. On this day seminars are held in various centres and discussions take place on a given theme to reflect its impact on India's development. Eminent persons are invited to address the gathering to dwell on topical issues of current relevance and also share their knowledge and quote incidents from the life of Sir MV which throw light on the values by which he lived. Engineers who have made significant contribution in the field of their specialization are honoured. I have kept detailed notes of very inspiring anecdotes concerning the life and times of Sir MV as highlighted by the speakers on such occasions, some of which are not found in published documents about him.

Mokameh Bridge Across the Ganga in Patna, Bihar

Many may not be aware that this bridge became a reality after Sir MV gave his report. When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then prime minister of India, requested Sir MV to give his advice on the construction of a bridge across the Ganga, Sir MV wrote to the PM saying that already seven previous reports were gathering dust in his secretariat and he did not want the eighth report to share the same fate. The PM sent C. Rajagopalachari as his personal emissary to assure Sir MV that the government of India would take action within six months of his report and that is how the bridge was built.

Fame Did Not Enamour Him

When, in 1955, Sir MV was conferred the 'Bharata Ratna', the highest civilian honour that India can bestow, he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru that conferring the title will not deter him in criticizing any ideas of the government that he did not agree with.

Consultant to Tata Business Enterprise

The shareholders of Tata, a premier business organization, in those times, were apprehensive that the company was not run properly and funds were being misused. They wanted somebody to look into its affairs. When the name of Sir MV was proposed, it was accepted by all the shareholders unanimously. Sir MV went through the accounts of Tata's for eleven months and concluded that there was no misuse of funds. Sir MV remained as adviser to Tata's for the rest of his life.

Stickler for Rules

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, invited Sir MV to Patna to prepare a blueprint for the development of Bihar. All arrangements were made for his stay at the Raj Bhavan in Patna. Rajendra Prasad instructed the staff of Raj Bhavan to attend to Sir MV's needs meticulously.

After a few days when Rajendra Prasad came to the Raj Bhavan to enquire about Sir MV, he was surprised to learn that Sir MV had shifted to a hotel. He anxiously enquired whether there was any lapse on the part of the Raj Bhavan staff in looking after him. What had transpired was that Sir MV had asked for the rules governing the stay of state guests. On discovering that as per the rules framed by the erstwhile British, the maximum period of stay for state guests was three days, he shifted to a hotel from where he worked on his report after staying at the Raj Bhavan for three days.

Gandhi's Tribute

Once Sir MV went to the prayer meeting of Mahatma Gandhi immaculately dressed as usual. Gandhi offered him a chair which he politely refused and sat on the floor. Then Gandhi remarked that he knew that Sir MV did not waste his time unnecessarily and enquired what prompted him to come to his prayer meeting. Sir MV was cryptic in his answer saying that he had written two letters to him and there was no reply. Gandhi promised to send a reply and immediately Sir MV left. This brings out in sharp focus the greatness of both men. Also it is a measure of their graciousness that in spite of their difference of opinion the relationship was marked by mutual respect for each other's views. It may be recalled that Sir MV's pet theme was 'industrialise or perish' and there was a series of correspondence exchanged between the Mahatma and Sir MV on this topic. Gandhi gave primacy to village and cottage industries with accent on manual labour instead of using big machineries which Sir MV favoured.

Merit was an Article of Faith for Sir MV

When Sir MV was appointed as Dewan of Mysore, the first thing he did was to seek the blessings of his mother and also extract a promise that she would scrupulously abjure temptations of recommending anybody for a job. Throughout his tenure Sir MV stuck to the principle of rewarding merit and nobody, however close he might be, dared to approach him for any recommendation for appointment.

Burning patriotism

What marks Sir MV as outstanding was his burning patriotism and indomitable willpower against insurmountable odds. He had his share of misfortune both in personal life and in the discharge of his duties. He had to face unfounded criticism, jealousy and back stabbing. In fact people ganged up to form a syndicate with the

Cont'd. on page 30

The Promise of Good Times

Ranga Kota

Intangibles might be of importance to the BJP and the RSS, but people would place a greater premium on the new government delivering the promised goodies. Prices and jobs are two important dimensions on which the government will win or lose its credibility

Accelerating economic growth, controlling inflation, creating a huge surge in employment, creating a world class infrastructure, making India a manufacturing and exporting power house with nearly 24x7 power to all Indians, a digital India, cleaning of the river Ganga, 100 smart cities, bullet trains, ensuring a house for every Indian, recovering black money and of course a corruption free India are all part the promised land in the next decade promised by the NDA government.

End of Nehru's Legacy

Delivering on tangible promises might be difficult and time consuming. But some intangibles are much easy to change. The new government did not require much time to kill the Nehruvian Legacy, exactly 50 years after his death in office. Socialism and Secularism; the two strong pillars of this legacy have, in a sense, been given a decent burial. Whether they would be exhumed in future could be anybody's guess. India's first prime minister, for this government, may be a just a footnote in Indian history. The New prime minister makes no reference to him in his first Independence Day speech this year. His attempt to virtually convert the Teachers' Day, the 5th September, into a Children's Day, nearly six weeks ahead of 14th November normally regarded as one, suggests the new PM is keen to erase the memory of Nehru from the younger generation.

Striving For a New Identity

The new government seems to believe that a strong sense of national identity is essential to restore the morale of the nation that took a beating during the Congress rule in the six decades since Independence. With Indian public divided along caste, language and religion, a pan-Indian identity is a cherished dream. The governing party and their ideological mentors seem to believe that the Hindu identity will integrate people across the nation. The recent remarks of the RSS chief in Mumbai are a pointer to the vision of the new governing party and possibly of its prime minister.

Everyone in India is, in a sense, Hindu and Indians

and Hindus are culturally one. What calls for achieving such a pan India Hindu identity is difficult to fathom for ordinary mortals? The BJP and its ideological mentors may have a well laid out plan of action, the contours of which are not in sight at the moment. Creation of such an identity, they believe, will place the BJP ahead of political rivals who profess secularism and ensure the continuation of their rule of this country.

UP and Bihar – The Testing Grounds

If religion could have been the binding force, the BJP and their earlier avatar the Jana Sangh, the political faces of Hindu right, should have been ruling this country for quite some time. It did not so happen, because Hindus seem to align more along caste than religion. The caste-dominated Hindi heartland has to undergo a major transformation to subsume caste into religion. BJP has to do all the social engineering necessary to accomplish this in the two important Hindi-speaking states of UP and Bihar. Bihar, in a limited way, in the recent by-polls suggested that caste identities were still strong and held firm. The coming full fledged assembly elections will indicate whether the BJP has got enough ammunition to get the necessary alignment of Hindus to capture power in Bihar. More than Bihar, it is in UP where the party's strategic intent seems more evident. Convert local conflicts to religious one and align the people along communal lines. Winning big in Bihar and UP assembly elections, besides Maharashtra is essential for the BJP, if it wants to have insurance in the upper house of parliament. These three states together send over 60 MPs to the Rajya Sabha.

The trouble the new government faced recently in passing the revised insurance bill in the upper house is something it would like to avoid in the future. This will become more important if the legislations that touch the religious and cultural dimensions of minority or under privileged sections of the nation are to be passed in the Raja Sabha in the days to come.

Tangibles Matter More

Intangibles might be of importance to the BJP and

the RSS, but people would place a greater premium on the new government delivering the promised goodies. Prices and jobs are two important dimensions on which the government will win or lose its credibility. A sort of revolution in Indian manufacturing and construction is essential to generate huge surge in employment. More investment in labour intensive manufacturing will generate more employment but that is unlikely to happen in this country. Productivity and discipline are the twin issues with Indian labour; one is associated with the lack of skills and the other is with the sense of protection that labour laws bestow on them in the organized manufacturing sector.

Skill development requires a massive and sustained effort on the part of the government and the manufacturing industry. Besides, it requires huge investments in skill development institutions and equipment. The first budget in July 2014 by NDA is an indication, though the funds allocation under this head might remain massively inadequate in the near term. The manufacturing industry's involvement in skill development will be more need-based and not guided by national priority.

A dramatic change in labour laws at the centre is unlikely to get a nod in the Rajya Sabha and it has to wait till the NDA gets enough numbers in the upper house to push through laws that dilute job protection to labour in the organized manufacturing sector. That will be at least a couple of years away. Meanwhile, the government has to retain its credibility and good will it possesses now.

Huge investments in construction will help growth and employment. The private sector is incapable of bringing huge funds particularly in the light of the debt burden they are under as a result of their earlier adventure with projects in infrastructure, either in solo or in public private partnership. Besides, many private or PPP infra projects are financially bleeding and that leaves little appetite for an encore. Government finances do not lend any hope for massive investments in infra either.

Foreign Funds for Infra Push

This is where the new PM's pitch for foreign funds sounds ominous. The Chinese interest in funding infrastructure projects in India and Japanese aggressive bid also in infra projects open up the prospects for the flow of investment from abroad. The recent high powered visit of the PM to Japan was to actualize the massive Japanese investment in Indian infra.

Whatever may be the magnitude of foreign assistance, it is its utilization that becomes critical. The slow progress

of the Delhi Mumbai Freight / Industrial Corridor project with Japanese financial assistance, since it was conceived in 2007, points to the problems in getting foreign-assisted projects rolling at a faster pace. Land acquisitions and environmental clearances, coupled with public interest litigations and centre-state divide are the difficult hurdles that mega projects in India face. Project execution gets delayed and costs keep escalating making some of the projects unviable on completion. The delayed or held up mega projects are no source for stepping up employment.

Like in the past, we can see employment generation in the organized services sector but that needs better education and computer skills, benefiting the better-off middleclass. The jobs in the informal sector are lowly paid and do not offer either growth or stability. Economic growth will bring more jobs which are more likely to benefit the better-off segments of the society. The prospect of a massive surge in the employment that could benefit vast segments of the unemployed seems unlikely.

Protect Agriculture and Face High Food Inflation

In a very interesting article in a main line business paper, one perceptive author argues that Indian food inflation is entirely a function of interplay of domestic factors. It is not in line with food prices increase internationally, over the last decade. The constant hike in Minimum Support Price for important food crops, massive procurement by state agencies, restricting imports and exports of food items coupled with the failure to do away with APMC have all contributed to the rapid increase in domestic food prices. The author supports his argument by establishing the fact that the only commodity, whose price increase is in line with the international level, is edible oils where government has followed a stable policy of unrestricted imports. The author is only advocating a considered view that freeing agriculture from the clutches of State policy is the best way to control food inflation.

But, the present government is unlikely to make any major policy changes in agriculture. The recent decisions which protect an inefficient sugar industry in UP and Maharashtra only suggests that political considerations are more important than making the sugar industry competitive and efficient. The protective stand of the government in the recent WTO negotiation does not indicate any commitment on its part to rationalize the public procurement of food grains and re-orient food subsidy from grain to cash within a definite time frame. The elevated food prices that failed to respond to monetary tightening over the last few years might persist in the absence of much needed structural reforms in agriculture. Since food prices affect lower income groups much harder,

it would affect their perception of good times.

Inspirational Speeches, but Incremental Action

What we, therefore, keep seeing are the inspirational speeches from public platforms which will capture middle class attention. But, the action on ground is incremental and building on the initiatives of the previous government. FDI in insurance, defence and railways, focus on manufacturing, financial inclusion, sanitation drive and sale of PSU shares to bridge the budget deficits are ideas from the past. The quantum of railway passenger fare hike, the continuation of monthly diesel price hike and no change in the subsidy on LPG and kerosene only suggest that the new government lacks the will to get rid of subsidies in a hurry and free up funds for investment. The PM and his party that castigated the previous government for all the economic ills of the country should at least demonstrate that they have ideas radically different from the previous one. The fact that they have not showcased any in the first hundred days suggests that they are bereft of new ideas.

Good Times from Good Governance

This leads to us to believe that the new government puts its faith in good governance which alone will deliver

higher economic growth and all other goodies promised. Governance has to do with the quality of decision making and execution of decisions. It is in the states that the crux of governance lies. The centre has no magic wand to make states of different hues accord importance to its priority. Notwithstanding BJP's resolve to get most states under its rule, a few states ruled by the opposition can spoil the party. Housing, sanitation, electricity and mining require states governments' commitment for speedy land acquisitions and regulatory clearances where necessary. The sad case of PASCO, the ten billion South Korean venture for steel making in Odisha is a clear case of grand projects getting stuck in a local muddle.

The funds crunch and the federal nature of Indian governance will make deliverance on many tangible promises of this government difficult and time consuming. The realisation of goodies will vary with different sections of the society and in different states. Those who get the goodies will thank the new regime, those who do not will blame it on their karma!

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Raindrops on Roses

Firoze Hirjikaka

Whether justified or not, there is a sense of euphoria in stark contrast to the pessimism that prevailed earlier.

“Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens” sang Julie Andrews in the movie ‘Sound of Music’. According to a great many people – including some members of the *Freedom First* family – this idyllic ditty applies aptly to a resurgent India under the glorious leadership of the Narendra Modi government...oops, the NDA government, I stand corrected. Or maybe not! The current ruling dispensation may persist with the fig leaf of a coalition between like-minded partners, but for all practical purposes it is the BJP, nay Narendra Modi, who calls the shots.

So how have the promised *achhe din* panned out so far? Is the expected nirvana on its way to fulfilment? Are the rose-tinted glasses planted over the eyes of an adoring public by Modi’s soaring election oratory still intact, or have some of them been discarded? Is it still “Modi, Modi” or “Modi, Modi?”?

Predictably, the media, particularly the electronic media, have gone to town over the new government’s “first 100 days”. Television debates are sprouting like wild flowers. Modi’s supporters are exuding confidence and dispirited Congress spokesmen can do little more than reiterate the tired bogey of communalism. Recent converts like Swapan Das Gupta have evolved into such passionate Modi cheerleaders that they can effortlessly replace official BJP spokespersons. There are moments of unintentional humour too, like when that erstwhile BJP firebrand – now supremely smug – Minakshi Lekhi criticised the Congress for disrupting Parliament; blithely oblivious of the reality that during the past five years, it was her own party that evolved putting down the Congress into an art form.

Modi began his rule with an intrinsic advantage; an instant comparison with his feckless predecessor. Not to take away from the worthy intentions or force of personality of the new PM but let’s face it, compared to the ineffectual and invisible Manmohan Singh, even a somewhat above-average politician would emerge as a hero. Anyway, let us start with the positives. The mood of the country has transformed dramatically. Whether justified or not, there is a sense of euphoria in stark contrast to the pessimism that prevailed earlier. An enormous amount of expectations and hype has been built up around an almost mythical persona of Narendra Modi. A large

percentage of the population is looking to him to wave a magic wand and almost immediately expiate the sins of omission and commission of the previous regime.

It is a tribute to Modi’s shrewdness and political acumen that he has begun to deliver in areas that readily capture public imagination. Development and economic advancement are worthy goals, but they are a bit too lofty for a majority of the populace to easily comprehend. Besides, they have a long gestation period and do not yield immediate benefits. In light of the fast approaching assembly elections in several states, urgent political dividends are the need of the hour for the BJP. Accurately gauging public impatience and dissatisfaction with the status quo, Modi has initiated measures that would immediately resonate with the common man.

Tightening up the administration, he has cracked the whip on lethargic Ministers, Secretaries and their staff; and compelled them to report for duty on time and put in long hours. For a public long resigned to twiddle their thumbs while the ‘public servants’ sauntered in at all hours and took prolonged tea breaks, this seemed like manna from heaven. In one stroke, the new PM became an even bigger hero than he had been before. They almost forgave him the rise in prices of tomatoes and onions as a temporary aberration.

It did not stop there. At his Independence Day speech from the Red Fort, Modi dispensed with the customary dull recital of government plans and statistics and instead, delivered a folksy, extempore exhortation to the general public about toilets and justice for the girl child. It was an immediate hit and the press went gaga over it. Score one for image Modi. He then announced a scheme to provide bank accounts to the weakest segments of the population, along with a subsidized insurance cover of one lakh. Very laudable I’m sure, but the devil is in the implementation. As for the insurance, even the well-heeled struggle to get compensation from nationalized providers. So it is to be seen how the poor will cope.

The old order changeth, giving way to the new. Never was this adage more appropriate than in the first few days of the Modi presidency. Traditional party

hierarchy was given the go by; and consideration of the sensibilities of BJP stalwarts was dispensed with. The BJP icons like L. K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi were kicked upstairs and made virtually irrelevant. Past party president Rajnath Singh was barely tolerated and it was made clear that if you were not 100% Modi's man, you were unimportant. To rub it in, Singh was not even allowed to choose his own private secretary; and overt hints were dropped that the new Home Minister was little more than a rubber stamp. It took a public tantrum from the Home Minister and a need to avoid denting the party image for Modi to formally nominate Singh as his no. 2 and put him in charge while the PM was abroad. It was a cosmetic gesture, but it soothed Singh's ruffled feathers.

Then, riding roughshod over the sensibilities of party seniors, the new PM elevated his ardent disciple (and virtual outsider) Amit Shah as the BJP President, thus ensuring his total domination over both the government and the party. The myth that the BJP was an independent polity; and that the Rashtriya Sankshobh Sangh (RSS) was merely a benevolent mentor was finally dispensed with. The RSS is making its voice heard and whatever their private opinions, the BJP leaders are obliged to heed it. The message is crystal clear. There is a new sheriff in town; and you can either toe the line or depart.

As I write this, the PM is having the time of his life in Japan. Whether beating out the rhythm on a Taiko drum or beginning his speeches in carefully rehearsed Japanese, he appears to have completely charmed his hosts. And why not, when they are smiling all the way to the bank. Billions of dollars of trade agreements have been signed; and the savvy Japs have unloaded a pre-packaged bullet train for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad route at a jaw dropping price of Rs. 70,000 crores. Perhaps in his eagerness to please his new found best buddy, Shinzo Abe, Modi rather impetuously criticised China's expansionist designs. Impressive bravado, no doubt, but he should bear in mind that our giant neighbour has the potential to do us serious damage. Moreover, to expect Japan to offer any concrete assistance in the event of a Chinese incursion is Utopian.

And what about Pakistan? The problem with India's foreign policy towards Pakistan is that there is no policy. Let me hasten to add that this criticism is valid not only for the current regime, but for all previous administrations. We merely react to carefully timed pinpricks from our neighbour. The latest flip flop over Foreign Secretary talks is a prime example. If PM Narendra Modi intends to display a tough line against Pakistan, what was the need to invite Nawaz Sharif to his inauguration and put on a big show? The situation in Pakistan was only

slightly better than it is now. And the Pakistan envoy inviting the Hurriyat leaders for talks is hardly a novelty. Besides, if India regards the separatists as traitors, why are they allowed to roam free in Kashmir and spout their venom against our country? No, the latest move is pure politics aimed at the forthcoming assembly elections in Kashmir and consolidating the Hindu vote in Jammu and Ladakh. All that Modi has demonstrated is that his government is no different from the previous ones; and that winning elections is more important than trying to build genuine relations with an intransigent neighbour. Meanwhile the Generals in Pakistan must be smiling now that the latest gambit has succeeded so well and Nawaz Sharif has been shown up as being powerless.

The new government then turned its attention towards incumbent Governors, particularly those appointed by the previous regime. Maharashtra's Governor is the latest one to be given the boot. Amid the current flurry of Congress Governors being shunted out, one surprising fact is that the lifelong Congressman, President Pranab Mukherjee has not offered even token resistance to PM Modi's blatant purpose of pushing his own people into gubernatorial positions. It is no secret that Pranab was miffed when Sonia Gandhi chose Manmohan Singh over him for the post of Prime Minister; a position he felt he richly deserved in light of seniority and unquestioned loyalty to the High Command. Perhaps this is his form of payback. Or perhaps he wants to stay in Modi's good books in the hope that he will be nominated for a second term. After all, being President of India is the cushiest job in the entire country. Anything is possible in politics, particularly Indian politics. Only time will tell.

The diktat from the HRD ministry that PM Narendra Modi's live speech on Teachers' Day (Sept. 5) is to be made compulsory viewing for students all across the country is disturbing on so many levels. In the first place, no "leader" can ram anything down the throats of the public in a democratic country. Compulsion is the trademark of a totalitarian regime, not a functioning democracy like ours. Is HRD Minister Smriti Irani trying to emulate the tin pot dictator of North Korea where it is mandatory to view and applaud every appearance by the Great Leader? This move reeks of sycophancy which, ironically, is the very character flaw that the BJP routinely accused the Congress of when they were in opposition. Ms. Irani seriously needs to do get her act in order. One hopes that this obvious attempt to propagate a Modi cult has not been endorsed by the PM; and that he will even now step in and issue a clarification. Believe me; he will earn a lot of goodwill by

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Tenzin Tsundue Arrested At Sabarmati Ashram



Ahmedabad: Tibetan poet, writer and activist Tenzin Tsundue was arrested on September 17, 2014 by the Indian security forces from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India from where Mahatma Gandhi started his historic and revolutionary Salt March of 1930. The high-profile Tibetan

activist who has a track record of breaking VVIP-security of visiting Chinese dignitaries once again succeeded in protesting the visit of President of People's Republic of China Xi Jinping who is also the Chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission. The whereabouts of Tenzin Tsundue continues to remain unknown.

Winner of Outlook-Picador Award for Non-Fiction in 2001, Tenzin Tsundue joined Friends of Tibet in 1999 as its General Secretary. He caught international media attention in January 2002 when he climbed the scaffolding outside Oberoi Towers in Mumbai where Zhu Rongji, the then Chinese Premier was addressing a gathering of Indian industrialists. Tsundue displayed a banner saying "Free Tibet" and the outlawed Tibetan National Flag while shouting pro-Tibet slogans before being arrested by the police.

In April 2005 he repeated a similar stunning one-man protest when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao was visiting the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore. Standing on top of a 300-foot-high tower at the IISc, he unfurled a "Free Tibet" banner while shouting "Wen Jiabao, you cannot silence us". As a result of his actions, the Indian police ordered a travel ban and Tsundue was ordered not to leave the town of Dharamshala, when the Chinese President Hu Jintao visited India in November 2006, preventing him from carrying out another embarrassing protest.

Sethu Das, President of Friends of Tibet who hailed the protest as "one of the most important non-violent actions at Sabarmati Ashram ever since Mahatma Gandhi left the Ashram in 1930" alleged that "Being the

Conscience Keepers of Mahatma Gandhi, it was an unpardonable mistake by Sabarmati Ashram authorities, comprising senior Gandhians and intellectuals, to join the side of the executioners, by welcoming and hosting Xi Jinping, notoriously known as Asian Dictator." He also demanded an unconditional apology from the Sabarmati Ashram authorities to the nation "for surrendering our nation's self-respect and for allowing a war-lord on the Ashram's soil, a place Gandhiji often remarked as "the right place for activities to carry on the search for Truth and develop Fearlessness."

Friends of Tibet believes that the Mahatma always stood against war mongers and dictators who are waging wars against ordinary masses across the world. This is not the first time India's sacred places were kept open to military dictators. In March 2006, the Rajya Sabha witnessed a massive clash between members of the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over disrespect to Mahatma Gandhi whose Samadhi at Rajghat was kept open to sniffer dogs when US President George W. Bush, architect of the Iraq war was to visit the Samadhi. After eight years, the very same opposition eyeing an investment of \$100 billion over the next five years gives a red carpet welcome to the head of one of the most brutal military regimes in the world - Xi Jinping, President of the ironically named People's Republic of China. We consider Chinese colonialism an imperialism no less than Nazism.

By allowing Xi Jinping to step into Sabarmati Ashram or Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad, a place chosen by Mahatma Gandhi for his non-violent actions against the British regime, our leaders and Ashram management have betrayed this nation once again. Friends of Tibet believes that doing trade with China will only empower a brutal regime in Beijing and strengthen its grip over occupied and suppressed regions such as Tibet, East Turkestan, Mongolia etc. We believe that today humanity is more valuable than trade with a country that continues to challenge India's territorial integrity.

Press Release by Friends of Tibet.

For official statements, contact Friends of Tibet Spokesperson: Mobile: +91.9400354354

Fax: +91.11.47615142;

Email: eswar.anandan@friendsoftibet.org To know more about China's crimes against

humanity: www.friendsoftibet.org

Triumph In Tokyo:

Modi and Abe Upgrade India-Japan Relations

B. Ramesh Babu

The two have taken the bilateral relationship forward to forge an entente between the two Asian giants.

Modi's spectacularly successful diplomatic foray in Japan can be seen as a fitting culmination of hundred days of his Government in office. The style and substance of his four-day State visit to the Land of the Rising Sun, quite a contrast to Manmohan Singh, was on display. Putting the economy back on track and enhancing the nation's security have been the two top priorities of his policies at home and abroad. Modi's interaction with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe carries the twin goals forward in a big way. His relative inexperience in the realm of foreign relations did not come in the way of his diplomatic performance in Japan (or in Bhutan and Nepal earlier). In fact by being himself at his best, he exuded a high degree of self confidence in his leadership. Obviously his massive victory in the 2014 elections and the way he put his stamp on the Government in Delhi after assuming the office of the Prime Minister are the sinews of his strength. He knows that he is in command!

What is even more welcome, however, is the way he tried to play the soprano recorder (a kind of flute) at a music class in a school and the élan with which he played the drums reveals a man full of life and a leader at ease. Some critics at home felt that he was flamboyant. Japanese people loved him and an overwhelming majority of Indians enjoyed the show! They also applauded what all was achieved in four days. Style apart, by all accounts the trip to Tokyo was a phenomenal success. Modi had a great deal to show off and he did!

Huge Investments on the Way

Japan pledged to invest 2.1 lakh crores of rupees (\$35.5 billion) in India during the next five years in a wide range of projects in infrastructure, clean energy, and skill development. In all five agreements, including one in the defence sector, were signed during Modi's State visit. As expected, the civilian nuclear deal did not come through. The nuclear issue is highly sensitive in Japan. India's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been the stumbling block and also a legal obstacle so far. We can now see a nuanced way out in Abe's pointed reference to India's exemplary record on the non-proliferation front. The still delicate issue is left for the

future. Japan pledged to double its FDI and double the number of companies doing business in India in five years.

Saying that since his government assumed office many decisions were made to streamline and ease doing business in India, Modi declared (in his inimitable style) that "a red carpet, not a red tape" awaits Japanese investment in the country. He announced, on the spot, the creation of a Japan-India Investment Promotion Partnership in the PMO and invited Japan to nominate two members to join the group. The two Prime Ministers were very positive and forthcoming on the future of the bilateral relationship. In this context, it is important to highlight that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's advocacy of close relations with India dates back to 2006-2007 when he headed the Government for the first time. Brazil's popular former President Lula (2003-2010) was another world leader who believed in the importance of close relations with India in the changing global context and worked for it.

Modi and Abe have taken the bilateral relationship forward to forge *an entente* between the two Asian giants. The two sides also decided to upgrade their Strategic and Global Partnership into a *Special* Strategic and Global Partnership. Modi made it a point to add that it was not a mere "play of words", but a deliberate decision that "reflects the solemn responsibilities of our two governments and two countries."

US-Japan-India Trilateral in the Making

Furthermore, Modi and Abe took the bilateral equation way forward by deciding to explore with the United States the possibility of upgrading their Joint Secretary level trilateral dialogue to the level of Foreign Ministers. Significantly, the Joint Declaration issued in Tokyo stated that the three countries (i.e. Japan, India, and the US) together will also "explore the possibility of expanding their consultations with other countries in the region." This certainly represents a noteworthy departure from the stand of the UPA Government. In 2007, the then Prime Minister Abe proposed an official level quadrilateral dialogue involving the US, Japan, India, and Australia on the issue of security in the Asia-Pacific. The Chinese

Government reacted sharply and the Manmohan Singh Government opted out saying that it does not want to be part of any group perceived to be an anti-China coalition!

Apparently, Modi is less squeamish and more clear-headed on this score. Though he did not mention any country by name, Modi made it a point to warn people against the “forces of expansion” at work. He said that the world today was divided into two streams: *vistarvaad* (expansionism) and *vikasvaad* (developmentalism). The world situation today looked more like that of the 18th century, when nations “sometimes encroached on a country, sometimes enter into the seas, sometimes enter into a country to take it over” He deplored such tendencies. This was seen by some observers as an oblique reference to China. Modi wisely spoke only in general terms.

“Demand, Democracy, Demography”

Addressing a business gathering in Tokyo, Modi said that being a Gujarati, “commerce is in my blood.” Revealing his business philosophy, he said that “I don’t believe that businessmen want concessions. I think businessmen want a proper environment to grow.” Inviting Japanese businessmen to invest in India, he made a remarkable sales pitch by emphasizing the “low cost manufacturing advantage” of the country. India is a “god gifted location,” for reaching global markets, he added. With a penchant for slogan making, he elaborated on his three “Ds” of demand, democracy and demography. India’s *democracy* “guarantees safety, security, and justice.” Its *demography* with 65% of people below 35 years of age is a great asset. With 1.2 billion people India provides massive *demand* for goods and services. Modi made it point to add that import of electronics is the biggest market in India. Highlighting India’s skills in IT and software and Japan’s prowess in hardware, he declared that the two were incomplete without the other. Together they will “create a miracle,” he declared for good effect!

Being pragmatic by nature and practical in his approach, Modi knows and realizes that without investing in skills and training on an unprecedented scale the demographic dividend of a huge youthful population would turn into a burden and drag on the economy. Naturally therefore, “skill enhancement and training” were accorded high priority in the agreements signed in Japan. To drive home the point, Modi took time off from his hectic schedule to flag off the TCS’s training programme in Tokyo. It may be added that TCS and Mitsubishi have recently announced the creation of a new global scale player in the Japanese IT industry called Tata Consultancy Services Japan. TCS India has 51 per cent share in the new venture. Modi told the first batch of the 48 Japanese trainees “you

are going as employees of TCS, but I want you to come back to Japan as ambassadors of India.”

Let me add that India’s infrastructure giant GMR signed an MOU on infrastructure projects with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. Indian business leaders are taking the initiative to take advantage of the doors being opened by the two Prime Ministers.

Conclusion

Saying the right things and doing the right things at the right time is a good beginning. Doing so with supreme confidence and in style adds to the drama of the occasion. But, a good beginning is only half of the job. Completing the second half is far more crucial hereafter.

By all accounts, Modi’s diplomatic foray in Japan was a big success. Modi and Abe together took giant steps forward in this bilateral relationship and are ready to rope in other nations in a way that could make a world of difference to the global power structure in the years to come. A great deal is promised.

However, the promises need to be translated into performance on the ground. Only passage of time will demonstrate how well the country (its business and industry and the governments at all levels) will utilize the massive inflow of investment on the way. Failure to implement has always been India’s national malaise. Let us hope that the Modi Government will “perform” better than the earlier dispensations. 100 days are too early to come to a fair judgment.

On the plus side, we must acknowledge that Modi knows that unless he delivers, there may be no second term for him. He is no hurry and his plan is to function as the Prime Minister of all the people and the whole country and relegate narrow electoral politics to the last year of his first term. He said so in public on more than one occasion. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that performance will lag behind.

Since his return from Japan, India has signed an agreement with Australia on the import of uranium needed for nuclear energy. This was in the pipeline since the change of government in Australia. But, the deed was done under Modi’s watch.

The visiting German Foreign Minister expressed keen interest in knowing more about the upturn of business environment in the country under Modi’s leadership. He also declared that his country, India and Japan would work

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Narendra Modi in the BRICS Lane:

What the World Thinks of India

B. N. Mehrish

Narendra Modi has re-established India's global clout.

Haridwar, where the Ganga descends from the Himalayas and enters the plains on its long journey to the sea, is a holy city for the Hindus. India is a difficult country to characterize, and Indians not easy to define, especially today when they are in transition, emerging from the shadows of history into the glare of a globalizing world. India under the leadership of Narendra Modi is finding a new recognition in the world.

The India diaspora is, after China, the second largest in the world. India is likely to emerge as the second largest consumer market in the world, with a buying middle class of over half a billion. India, the world's largest democracy is a nuclear power, convinced of its right to be seated with the P-5 in the UN Security Council. The working of democracy in India provides the widest possible canvas to witness the Indian traits and reaction to power, status and hierarchy. In India, the working of democracy has effortlessly adapted to the undemocratic social structures of the past.

China is likely to get its way on having the BRICS Bank headquartered in Shanghai while India wanted it based in New Delhi. Russian presidential adviser Yuri Ushakov supported China's proposal that the BRICS Development Bank should be based in Shanghai, mainland China's financial capital. Earlier, the Russian finance minister stated India was vying with China to host the new infrastructure lender.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought BRICS participation in ending Iraq crisis and pointed out that the situation in West Asia posed a grave threat to regional and global peace. Modi also called for more concerted efforts in addressing the issue of terrorism.

The world watched Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chinese President Xi Jinping's meeting in Brazil. China has been claiming that India is in possession of some 150 sq. km. of Chinese land. Prime Minister Modi pressed for early resolution of the border dispute. PLA troops crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Demchok sector of Ladakh. A Chinese chopper also violated Indian airspace as stated by Defence Minister

Arun Jaitley in the Rajya Sabha. India and China had inked a new border pact in 2013 to ensure peace and stability along the LAC. Will Prime Minister Narendra Modi be able to settle the unresolved border dispute?

Xi invited Modi to the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting being hosted by China in November 2014. India has never attended an APEC summit, though it has long sought to become a member. There were also indications from the Chinese side that it would support a full membership for India in the regional grouping of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

In September the Prime Minister is likely to get a rock star welcome in the United States. Modi, who was denied a US visa in 2005, has accepted the invitation of the US President Barack Obama. A majority [55%] of Americans see India favourably. Japanese, Vietnamese and Indonesians have a most favourable view of India in East Asia. 70% Bangladeshis rate India favourably. Chinese and Pakistanis dislike India the most, with only 30% and 13% respectively rating India favourably.

Narendra Modi has emerged as the most popular national and international figure. World leaders are keeping a close watch on India. Modi has pledged to take a tougher line on issues with its South Asian neighbours. Among the many challenges that his government will face, foreign policy will be definitely one. The world is going through a testing time. The US is due to pull its troops out of Afghanistan. Russia's economic clout is receding, West Asia is in turmoil and the world economy is still in the doldrums. For long, there has been a perception that India's foreign policy is "risk-averse." Narendra Modi has re-established India's global clout. India's neighbourhood holds the key to its emergence as a regional and global power. But India's immediate neighbours are politically unstable and economically deprived. This will be the biggest challenge to Modi's foreign policy agenda.

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GOKHALE'S INDIA



**Symposium in
Mumbai on
Saturday,
November 15,
2014**

February 2014-15 is the Death Centenary Year of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The year was flagged off in Pune on February 19 at a public meeting organised by the Deccan Education Society, the Servants of India Society and the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics.

Very briefly for those may not have heard of Gopal Krishna Gokhale: He was a teacher and educationist, statesman and economist, social reformer and a true Servant of India.

Gokhale lived a short but highly proactive and productive life. He died in February 1915 when he was just 49. Nevertheless he left a legacy that has survived to this day. Gandhiji called Gokhale his guru in politics.

The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), Project for Economic Education, and the Indian Secular Society will be holding a day-long symposium on Saturday November 15 in Mumbai.

Please consider this as an advance invitation to you to be our guest and block that date and day to join us in not only paying tribute to this Guru of Gandhiji but also participate in discussions on the current economic, political and social situation arising from the amazing results of the General Elections of May 2014.

You can send your acceptances by post, sms or email giving your contact details to:

S. V. Raju. Honorary Secretary, ICCF, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001. You can SMS us on 9820016392 or email us at jurasv@gmail.com

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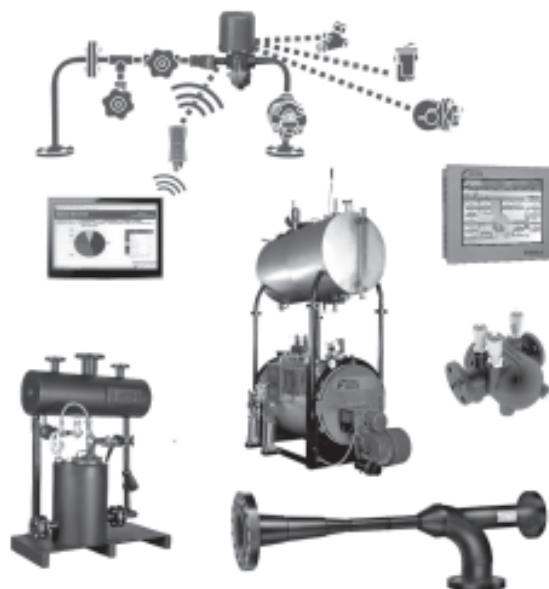
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Agriculture and Rural Indebtedness - III

R. M. Mohan Rao

*Freedom from British Rule did little to improve the lot of the Farmer.
This is so even today 67 years after Independence. Why?*



In this the 3rd part of the series on 'Agriculture and Rural Indebtedness' Prof Mohan Rao discusses the Agriculture Policy Framework

continue to be lower than its contribution to G.D.P. (See Annexure III)i. This clearly shows the unjust and inequitable treatment agriculture received in the planned development of a predominantly agricultural economy.

In an article to *The Hindu* (September 10, 2004) on Farmers' Distress, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan traced the agrarian crisis among other reasons, for the collapse of the rural economy as revealed by the verdict of the general elections of 2004.

The agricultural policy framework calls for reversal of the retrograde, lopsided, unjust and inequitable treatment Indian agriculture and the farming community in particular and the rural masses at large suffered for five long decades under democratic rule in Independent India. This is crucial to harness growth impulses to rejuvenate agricultural growth to reduce rural poverty to improve rural livelihoods and also to address the critical and basic issues.

The problems confronting today's Indian agriculture are many and each needs an independent analysis to arrive at appropriate policy initiatives. However, a few issues considered critical at this juncture are picked up for discussion.

The issues considered are:

- (i) The Role of the State
- (ii) Indebtedness of Farmers
- (iii) Institutional Credit flow to Agriculture
- (iv) Risk and Uncertainty in Farming
- (v) Viability of farming
- (vi) Cost of production and profitability
- (vii) Technology
- (viii) Extension

Critical Issues

In developing countries developments in the agricultural sector have a multiple effect on the whole economy. In these countries the rural sector accounts for a substantially higher share of absolute poverty than the urban sector, rural residents are more likely to be poor by almost any standard. This is true of India as well. Despite the substantial sectoral shifts that have occurred during the last five decades, poverty in India is still overwhelmingly rural. A mid 90's study on sectoral composition of India's growth during 1951-91 observed that both urban and rural poor gained from rural growth. It further observed that for many years to come from the point of view of India's poor it is the dog (the rural economy) that wags the tail (urban sector) not the other way round. Thus fostering conditions for growth in the rural economy which centre around agriculture and allied activities must be considered central to an effective strategy for arresting farmers distress as well as reduction of poverty

Sadly, this has been the most neglected sector of the economy both during the socialist era and after liberalization. There is a feeling of neglect of agriculture all around and the farmers are getting a raw deal. Agriculture contributes approximately 21% of G.D.P., provides direct employment to 56.7% of the workforce and 69% of the population are dependent on it for their livelihood. However, the Plan outlays of the Central, State and Union Territories for Agriculture and allied activities

- (ix) Marketing t
- (x) Social infrastructure
- (xi) Farmers' Participation in Development Programmes

(i) The Role of the State

With growing distress among farmers and deceleration in growth, the Indian agricultural scene is unenviable. Though a free trade regime is on the anvil, agriculture continues to be outside the reform process, thus there is need for clarity on the role of the State in relation to agriculture. . E I

(ii) Indebtedness of farmers

Agriculture being a biological process involves time lags between sowing and harvesting of crops. Most farmers need credit not only for production, but also for consumption as well as to meet other social needs. Thus, borrowing and indebtedness are inherent in the farming process though the relative magnitudes vary across regions and farm sizes also vary depending upon the cruelty or benevolence of nature, as well on the nature of farming, subsistence or commercial. Indebtedness by itself is no sin. Darling's study "The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt" showed that the volume and burden of debt were positively related to prosperity. However, the villain per se is not indebtedness as such but the terms and conditions governing the loan transactions.

In the post-Independence era after the monumental All India Rural Credit Survey Committee Report (1954) there are no comprehensive recent studies to reflect on the nature and magnitude of rural indebtedness. A recent study on indebtedness in the cotton belt of Punjab, observed that the burden of debt in the cotton belt was growing due to successive crop failures. According to this study the burden of debt on an average farm estimated to be Rs.96, 632 of which 60.5% was owed to non-institutional sources, the commission agent was the main source accounting for 56.9 per cent of the total debt, on per unit area basis the debt outstanding was Rs.6, 772 per acre of cultivated area. The share of commission agents was higher as they provide credit for consumption and other non-productive requirements of farmers besides meeting their production requirements when institutional loans fell short. The amount of debt outstanding was Rs.25, 560 on marginal farms (less than 2.5 acres size), Rs.64, 111 on small farms (of size 2.51 to 5.00 acres) while it is much higher in a higher size group.

Increasing share of paid-out costs in farming, growing expenditure on health, education of children with the declining role of state in these areas, successive

droughts in many areas in the country coupled with stagnating yields, account for the growing indebtedness of the farming community across states. The growing burden of indebtedness, particularly to the non-institutional sources emerged as a major factor for the suicides among farmers in many states.

In the existing scenario, there is need for a comprehensive debt and investment survey on the lines of the All India Rural Credit Survey of 1950's for a proper assessment of the burden of indebtedness among farmers and to initiate corrective steps of a long-term nature. As a short term measure there is need to invoke debt relief measures on the lines of the Agriculture and Rural Debt Relief Scheme of 1990 and evolving a well thought out policy to scale down or wipe out the debt on the lines initiated by the provincial governments in the pre-independence era to keep the farmers alive with his productive potentials.

This discussion paper was prepared by Prof. R. M. Mohan Rao, retired Professor NABARD Chair, Andhra University, Waltair, Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of serialising this paper is to invite readers to share their views on the issues raised, to recommend policies that would ensure a fair deal for India's farmers.

To be continued

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Who are the Yazidis ?

Most of the 70,000 Yazidis reside in North Iraq and are concentrated around the city of Sinjar. Their religion contains elements of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They also worship the "Peacock Angel", a practice dubbed as worship of the Devil by the Muslims. Their language is a dialect of Kurdish and they consider themselves to be Kurds. The Iraq Government considers them to be Arabs and claim control over their area. They gave shelter to the Armenians and Christians when they were persecuted by the Turk Army a hundred years ago and the Turks turned their fury on the Yazidis.

As heretics, they were considered fair prey for the Sunnis and Turkey rulers often tried to forcibly convert them to Islam. Iraq deported about 20,000 Yazidis from Sinjar in 1975. Islamic State forces took over the Sinjar town in August 2014 and issued an ultimatum to the Yazidis to convert to Islam or face the sword. A large number of them were killed and women kidnapped to be sold as slaves.

Suresh C. Sharma. Email:brigscs@gmail.com

God's Own NGOs!

P. Koshy

If Thursday is a public holiday and the following 'Saturday' a "second Saturday", higher are the chances that Friday would witness a major hartal, bandh or work strike in Kerala.

Entrepreneurs of *hartal*, *morchas* and strikes are on the road to unemployment after the setbacks that the Left Front movement of Kerala faced in the last few months. Unlike in other parts of the world, when different groups and movements organize protests, *morchas*, *hartals* for a particular cause, often Kerala can be an exception. The common man never understands the objectives and goals of protestors and hartal organizers. And it has emerged as a rampant 'socio-political entrepreneurial activity'. If you try hard to understand why there is a *hartal* or a *bandh* on a particular day in Kerala, in all probability you won't find a convincing answer.

Bureaucrats of Kerala i.e., gazetted and non-gazetted officers, benefit from the strike-friendly socio-political climate of Kerala. If Thursday is a public holiday and the following 'Saturday' a "second Saturday", higher are the chances that Friday would witness a major *hartal*, *bandh* or work strike in Kerala. The *bandh* in all probability would be against FDI and economic policies. And it may also be for the implementation of pay commission reports! Incidents and happening at Gaza or the US bombings in some very distant countries would also be remembered through such strikes and *hartals*. Any readymade theme would spring up and there would be a series of debates on all Malayalam TV channels.

But surely, unions of NGOs have to support the strike announcements to succeed. NGOs of Kerala are non-gazetted officers [NGOs] unlike non-governmental organizations in other parts of the country. And GOs are gazetted officers. These unions of NGOs are very powerful and they decide whether policies and programmes of the government are to be implemented or not. Some amount as money gift to speed up your work is very normal. More importantly it has to be given in such a way as to pretend that the recipient is a great officer, sincere and hardworking fellow. Prevalence of this practice would be difficult to counter. Work culture is yet another issue that cannot be addressed.

Thiruvananthapuram city is a hub of GOs and NGOs – Kerala Babus. Dearness Allowance (DA), Special Allowance (SA) and all kinds of announced and unannounced privileges, together with rent seeking mode in which Kerala government offices, has made Kerala a unique model of socialistic experiment that will remain the

same for some more time. The higher purchasing power of Thiruvananthapuram residents seem to have emanated from the widespread presence of GOs and NGOs settled in Kerala's capital. Whereas in other parts of Kerala it could be NRI money! This is called Kerala Model!

Ernakulam bound trains from Thiruvananthapuram are generally over-crowded in the afternoons, 2 pm onwards. Queue breaking NGOs at the rail ticket counters with their shoulder bags trying to buy a season ticket / normal ticket to catch early trains from Thiruvananthapuram railway station, on their way back home, is a daily scene. If the Modi government can successfully bring down the attendance rate at Golf Clubs in the Indian capital keeping them grounded in offices, then why can't it happen in God's own country?

An official of the State Pay Commission recently stated that the proposed alcohol ban would create difficulty for the state government to implement its '*revised pay scale*'. Every festive season would witness different kinds of pressure tactics by powerful unions of NGOs and lobbies of GOs for announcement of Dearness Allowances, festival season allowances and bonuses! As usual this would be followed by new taxes and revenue generation drives to meet the resource requirements for allowance payments.

The last general election witnessed the BJP vote share going up. Thiruvananthapuram has almost gone to the BJP, where Mr. O. Rajagopal could gain a substantial lead at one point during TV reporting, the commentators counted 'ONE' Lok Sabha seat for the BJP from Kerala. There is an increasing feeling of uneasiness among the Kerala's entrepreneurial community, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the common people and women about the business climate, work culture, functioning of government, corruption in local government offices and more so about '*strike & hartal culture*'.

India's Prime Minister sent across a strong signal to the bureaucrats in Delhi with his insistence on office timings, punctuality and efficiency, virtues that the Indian bureaucrats never bothered with till 2014 May. So far it was the common man calling the Babus "SIR". Peons upwards in the hierarchy in the government offices are "Sirs", and entrepreneurs, common men and all others have

to fall at their feet and please them to get things done, apart from the compulsory monetary allurements that they usually pocket. The new government seems to have some success in improving the attendance rate and efficiency of Babus. The day when Babus will have to call visitors to their office as “SIRs” will come soon. However, the consequence of frequent revision of pay scales on a stable public finance system and inflation needs to be evaluated.

Though, the government Babus in the state are

under the state government, there is need for national level thinking and approach on improving work culture, and climate of strikes and *hartals*. Improving the work culture of the Indian bureaucracy is not something that is limited to the Babus of Delhi alone. It is also applicable to Kerala’s *God’s Own NGOs and GOs*.

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Transforming India *(continued from page 15)*

object of running him down and he faced it all with great dignity and courage. Like a General, he led his men by personal example and brought lustre to the profession of engineering.

Epilogue

During Sir MV’s tenure, both as Chief Engineer and later as Dewan, Mysore state made long strides in all aspects of development including administration, industrialization, education, and infrastructure and carved a niche by its envious reputation as a model state. When the Mysore University was started in 1916, His Highness

the Maharaja of Mysore as Chancellor, in his speech said, “I feel that I should acknowledge, on this public occasion, a debt of gratitude from myself and my people to Sir M. Visvesvaraya, the Dewan of my State. It is chiefly his patriotism, his enthusiasm and his unflinching advocacy which converted what was once a little more than a dream of future into a living creation, and his name will always be remembered above all others as a man to whom our University owes its being.”

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Raindrops on Roses *(continued from page 20)*

this one act. Subsequently, under intense pressure from the media and various political parties, Irani issued a weak clarification that attendance was not compulsory, but that did not convince anybody. In fact, her weak denial was directly contradicted by her own Education Secretary directing all schools to make the required arrangements for the telecast. The message was clear: any school that does not comply will be marked.

On the economic front, the GDP growth showed an impressive spurt in the second quarter of 2014. However, since the BJP was in power for only a third of this period, it cannot be an accurate gauge of its performance. The anachronistic institution of the Planning Commission was

abolished; and this was welcomed by almost everybody.

So there you have it. The first 100 days have been like the proverbial curate’s egg; good in parts. So far, the positives are outweighing the negatives; and I hope this trend will continue. I admit that my apprehensions about the dominating style of the PM have not yet been assuaged. I cannot help feeling that Modi is biding his time until the majority of states come under BJP rule, when his power will be absolute. If I am proved wrong, nothing will please me more.

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Triumph in Tokyo *(continued from page 23)*

together to secure the UN Security Council membership for all the three countries.

It is quite interesting that the Chinese leadership is publicly talking about matching and surpassing the promised Japanese investment in advance of President Xi’s visit later this month (September 2014). The Indian side is also expecting as much from the visit. It will be good for us, if the two Asian giants enter into a competitive mode on investing in India.

Finally, *ache din* seem to be around the corner on the foreign relations front for the country.

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Anglo Indians : ‘Rose Petals Strewn on the Ganga’

Nitin G. Raut

Even a Railway Station under an Anglo Indian Station Master could be distinguished for its cleanliness and well arranged potted plants and gardens

On 1st August, the Anglo Indians celebrate ‘World Anglo Indian Day’ and so it was this year also. But the event was hardly noticed by the media and was not reported even as a snippet or a footnote.

Who are the Anglo Indians will be the obvious question asked. Under Article 366(2) of the Constitution of India, the word “Anglo Indian” is defined as “...person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein...”.

In India, where the identity or recognition of a community is defined more by political muscle power and clout, a miniscule community of Anglo Indians is submerged or lost in the avalanche of politics of numbers. The Anglo Indians are barely visible on the political or social map of India. But for a tiny community of perhaps 100,000 they did make a mark in the first two or three decades after Independence.

In the 1964 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, 20% of Group Captains and 30% of the Wing Commanders of the Indian Air Force decorated were Anglo Indians and names like Flight Lt. Alfred Tryon Cooke, Squadron Leader Denzil Keelor and his brother Trevor Keelor, Wing Commander Goodman, Group Captains Allan Allen, Lloyd and Lafontaine who later rose to be the Chief of the Indian Air Force adorn the list of honours. In the 1965 war Lt. Gen. O. P. Dunn, who as the Corps Commander of the Indian army in the Rann of Kutch, stalled the Pakistan Army in the famous battle tank war and was recipient of the gallantry award. Brigadier Desmond Hyde is another gallantry award winner of the 1965 War. Air Vice Marshal Cecil Parker, who is a contributor to *Freedom First*, is a decorated officer of those wars.

The Indian Navy also had a fair share of high ranking Anglo Indian Officers like Rear Admiral St. John Cameron and O. S. Dawson who later became the Chief of the Indian Navy and was posted as High Commissioner to New Zealand after retirement.

This writer, son of a third generation Railway Engineer, closely watched the Anglo Indians in the Railway Colonies. Their sense of commitment to the service was

laudable. The Anglo Indians kept the good old coal fired steam engines spick and span as though it was their personal property and it was a treat to see these engines clean and sparkling. Even a Railway Station under an Anglo Indian Station Master could be distinguished for its cleanliness and well arranged potted plants and gardens.

The Anglo Indians also excelled in sports. In the heyday of Indian hockey, Anglo- Indians constituted a good number in the team. Leslie Claudius was perhaps the last Anglo Indian in the 1964 gold medal winning Olympic hockey team. Interestingly the foundation of Australian hockey was laid by the Pearce family from the Jabalpur Railway Colony who migrated to Australia well before Independence and all the seven brothers represented Australia at the national and international events. Roger Binny is another name in Indian Cricket.

Ruskin Bond, the iconic resident of Mussoorie, the idyllic hill station in Uttarakhand, is a world famous author, an icon among Indian writers and children’s authors and a top notch novelist. This earned him the Padma Bhushan.

In the sixties, the dull and drab Government controlled All India Radio hardly evoked interest, but the baritone voice of Anglo Indian news reader Melville D’Mello entertained the listeners. He was later absorbed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Community, unfortunately, has not exploited their assets and also refused to adjust themselves to the reality of Independent India. In spite of having a constitutional guarantee (Article 337) for educational institutions for the first 10 years the Anglo Indians failed to take advantage and their schools today are few and far between. However, under Article 332 the community enjoys the privilege of two nominated members in the Lok Sabha and one member in some state Assemblies (Article 333).

Melville D’Mello described the Anglo Indian community as ‘rose petals strewn on the broad breast of the Holy Ganges’ - a description so very appropriate both in the literal and figurative sense.

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Avian Risk Management

Cecil Parker

As a term, risk management is associated with investment banking and is concerned with the safety of financial capital. As an activity in aviation however, it has been in practice ever since man took to the air and seeks to preserve human capital. Innovation and technology led to the invention of the parachute and, thanks to one, I saved my own life in 1952.

In furtherance of risk management, procedures, rules and regulations evolved, some critical ones being codified into Vital Actions. This term is familiar to aviators all over the world and comprises mandatory checks at different phases and conditions of flight. Most aviation activity takes place at altitudes at which birds do not fly but in any operation close to the ground (take-off, landing, low level exercises), manned flight enters the avian domain where the aircraft and birds pose a danger to each other. This risk has to be managed by the aviator and not left to the birds – after all, they were there first!

In 1970, while in command of a Hunter squadron, I was tasked to carry out live firing field trials of the 68 mm Sneb Rocket Pod. I was further advised to carry out this initial trial from the twin seat trainer so that another pair of eyes could help with visual observation / lookout while I concentrated on the firing. One of my very experienced pilots had just returned from a long leave and, as per regulations, was required to be given a dual check. Trainer flying hours were always at a premium so I decided to combine both commitments. The trial firing was to be conducted at the nearby Tilpat Range and involved a single live firing in 'salvo' of both pods which I estimated would take me no more than 15 minutes leaving us with 30 minutes for the dual check. I put the co-pilot into the left (captains) seat while I flew from the right (instructors) seat and briefed him for both exercises.

The weather was fine and, after a practice dummy dive, I fired the pods and was pulling out of the dive when three occurrences took place almost simultaneously: a fleeting glimpse of a very large bird; a loud sound of the front windshield cracking and a muffled squawk on the radio saying 'Birds Birds'. I saw my co-pilot with his helmet visor up, i.e. open, and both hands covering his eyes. Due to the sudden inrush of air there was no inter-communication possible between us nor any radio contact with the ground. In response to my visual signals the co-pilot gave me a 'thumbs up' but continued to keep his eyes covered. I returned to base, carried out a very quick emergency unserviceable R / T procedure, landed after the green visual signal but only at the end of the landing run could I open the canopy and request for medical help which was waiting by the time I switched off at the tarmac. Fortunately the co-pilot's facial injuries were superficial, a spare windscreen was available and both the pilot and the aircraft flew a few days later.

In retrospect I was also culpable to the extent that, as captain of the aircraft, I should have noticed the co-pilot raising, i.e. opening, his helmet visor evidently to observe more clearly. Every time an aviator transits or operates within the avian domain, constant lookout is the essence of risk management. Some risk will always be there but if the pilot is careful (and lucky), he will be a winner; if not, he will certainly be wiser!

Postscript: In partial compensation for the bird hit, my Pilots Log Book records that the rockets were a direct hit!

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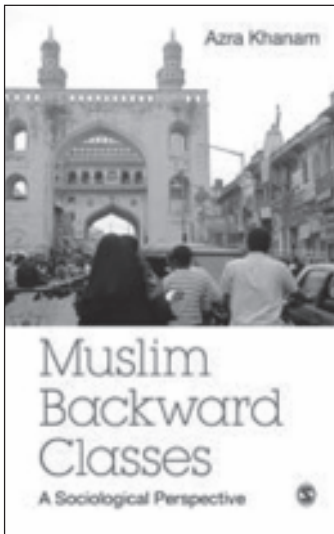
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BOOK REVIEWS



MUSLIM BACKWARD CLASSES – A Sociological Perspective by Azra Khanam
● Sage Publications, New Delhi ● marketing@sagepub.in ● 2013 ● pp.298 ● Rs.795.

Reviewed by Dr. Ali Khwaja, Chairman, Banjara Academy, Bangalore.
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Azra Khanam has done extensive study and survey of a category often neglected by society i.e. the backward classes among Muslims in India. In fact many people may not even be aware that such a group exists, whereas the author has quoted

extensively from surveys and reports to show that they are a very large segment which has been languishing in poverty and illiteracy due to a number of reasons.

The author rightly points out that there is paucity of literature and empirical data on Muslims in general and Muslim backward classes in particular. Perhaps one of the reasons is due to the fact that hierarchy among the so-called Muslim castes is not as rigid as it is in other Indian cultures. The reason is that it is an unsanctioned hierarchy and runs counter to the Islamic religious ethos, it is frequently perceived as a form of deviant behaviour. The concept of backward classes among Muslims in India arises not due to caste but by occupation. Muslims involved in hereditary “lower” occupations including cowherds, cobblers, barbers, who continued in their professions and crowded themselves into their ghettos are the ones who have been at the receiving end, and only with the coming of the “Other Backward Classes OBC” category they have been identified for preferential treatment or government facilities.

Despite the OBC Act having come into force many years ago, the author feels that Government schemes are of little use to the backward Muslims, and the percentage of those who have availed benefits are minimal. She also points out that conservative Muslims, despite their abject poverty, refuse to take loans based on interest (riba) as it is considered un-Islamic. This has resulted in a sad state where although 80% of Muslim OBCs are into petty business, yet they continue to have very low level of income. Employment in government and organized sector

for Muslims as a whole is significantly lower than their population, and for the backward classes it is even more so as many continue to stay in their comfort zone of hereditary occupations.

Perhaps the beginning of this backwardness can be traced to the time when one-third of total urban Muslims migrated to Pakistan after partition. They were mainly educated intelligentsia, services personnel, doctors, lawyers, etc. This weakened the economic position of Muslims, leaving behind the poor and helpless population who could not migrate even if they wanted to. Muslims also suffered due to the amendments in the Land Tenancy Acts, though perhaps that did not affect the poorer sections.

More than six decades after partition, it is very sad to see that poverty levels have not seen any significant change. Often Muslims feel the “minority-ism” syndrome, lamenting that the majority does not allow them to prosper. This myth is countered by the author who has quoted that Muslims are far behind other groups even when they happen to be the majority population in a given geographic area of an educational institution established for and managed by Muslims themselves.

The book says that the average per-capita income of Muslims as a community is 5% less than the national average, so if we were to take away the creamy layer, the disparity would be even higher. While allowing these statistics to be true, the question that arises is, when the economy of the country is improving, opportunities are plentiful, and there is no obvious suppression of any particular religious community, why is it that Muslim OBCs even now do not seem to be moving forward? Often there is a tendency to put the blame on the government, right-wing political parties, and the majority community as a whole. This persecution complex can cripple even the new generation who are ambitious, hardworking, and have the basic talent to progress.

It was nice that the book quoted one of the most straight-forward and learned among the Muslim religious intelligentsia, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan of Delhi, who

blames Muslims for their backwardness, which they misguidedly blame on others. If more such religious Gurus come forward to guide and motivate the community, it will not be very long before Muslims catch up with the mainstream.

Another area of significant concern is the seclusion of the female from work participation in the community. Surveys in North India disclosed that 71% of the women do not participate in economic activity. The future looks bleak when we look at the young generation, and uncover the fact that even now 80% girls are receiving religious (madrasa) education and only 20% go to regular schools. Most Madrasas do not teach the girls even basics of local or English language, mathematics, science, etc. This means that we are bringing up one more generation of girls who will not have a level playing field if they wish to work, earn and contribute to family and society. On the other hand the surveys showed that among boys at least 50% are getting secular education.

Added to that are the disturbing findings that majority of the Muslim OBC girls are married at an early age, the preferred age being 14-18 years. Even for boys in this segment of society, the preferred marriage age is 16-20 years among 81% of the people surveyed. Sadly 95% of the sample population surveyed had a positive opinion about dowry even though Islam expressly prohibits dowry, and in fact enjoins the groom to pay a meher amount that will ensure financial security to the bride in any unforeseen circumstance. The same surveys have shown that the vast majority of grooms do not pay the meher amount at the time of marriage.

To venture into an area of immense discussion and controversy, we can take some survey statistics from the book on what the condition of Muslims is in the state of Gujarat. Overall literacy rate of Gujarat is 52.2%, whereas

among Muslim males it is less than 25% and among females it is less than 10%. While it is debatable whether they have been suppressed or denied benefits, the fact remains that even in other states where the so-called pro-Muslim governments have been in power, the statistics are not much better.

There are some very interesting case studies of families, showing the progress (or lack of it) down the generations, allowing the reader to form his own opinion through these real-life revelations that we would not normally be privy to, particularly in the rural and conservative areas. Recorded in an unbiased manner, the case studies give a deeper insight into the human angle beyond the significance of religion or caste.

Unfortunately there are a number of repetitions of statistics and survey findings, which lead to contradictions and confusion in the mind of the reader. For example at one place the book says that OBCs constitute 40.7 % of Muslim population and elsewhere it says that they are 80% of total Muslim population. In a third place we read that Muslim OBCs constitute more than 30% of the total population of the country. Also there are many grammatical errors that put off a sensitive reader, and they could easily have been checked and corrected. Smooth reading gets hampered due to such errors.

The heartening factor in reading the book is the finding that some change in socio-economic conditions of Muslim OBCs shows promise with 77% having progressed, 20% remaining the same and only 3% deteriorating in the past few years. Perhaps if a concerted effort is made to guide this deprived section of society, they may indeed rise to their potential and become part of the mainstream, which in turn will reduce their frustration, isolation and even the tendency among youth to take to violence.

HINDU Spirituality and VIRTUE Politics



HINDU SPIRITUALITY AND VIRTUE POLITICS, Vasanthi Srinivasan ● Sage Publications, New Delhi ● marketing@sagepub.in ● 2014 ● xx + 154 pages ● Rs. 371.

Reviewed by Prema Nandakumar, author and freelance writer. premnand@gmail.com

Spirituality could be easily described as the habit of moving in tune with the cosmic rhythm. This includes man, nature and God. There are no markings of division in this unifying experience, no

'I' and 'You'. But religion belongs to a lower plane of being. All in search of God, but each has his own sculpted vision of the Lord. It so happens that the hold-all of different visions gathered down the millennia in India has been given the tag, 'Hindu'. Almost like our making a folder for our inputs in a computer and giving it a name. There are some broad similarities like a belief in Heaven and Hell, and faith in a Supreme Power. The wise Indians gave no name to this folder but called it the Ancient Way, built

by the experiences of the past. This is why we have the line staring at us now and then in our epics and puranas: *Esha dharma sanatanah*.

Spirituality is a concept that has necessarily to be tagged on to something within our experience to understand it. Vasanti Srinivasan has chosen four great personalities of the twentieth century to get an idea of what they understood by a spiritual life; an academic, a social activator, a politician and an art historian. Familiar figures all, who contained multitudes. Vasanti's Radhakrishnan had mastered traditional Advaita Vedanta which speaks for a seamless presence of the Brahman. One, yes; but what about the Many? She rightly traces Radhakrishnan's ideas of evolution to Sri Aurobindo. The spiritual evolution from the material-mental present was possible with the help of facilitators. "He frequently referred to Buddha, Shankara and Gandhi as exemplifying such an activist sainthood and was impressed by Vinobha Bhave's work. He envisioned a 'humanist and realist mysticism'". In effect, this grazes gently on the concept of avatarhood in raising humanity to the spiritual spaces. The narrow and sectarian approach is avoided by this theory which allows even a fish to be an incarnation and saviour of mankind. For Radhakrishnan, "India is a tradition, a spirit, a light."

India's tradition of spirituality was never selective. In almost all its institutions the concept of 'sharing' has been underlined. *Ekam swadu na bhunjeeta* says the scripture and commands: *annam bahu kurveeta*. Sharing is the physical representation of spirituality, and that became life's mission for Vinobha Bhave. Vasanti's detailed critique of the Bhoodan Movement recollects Vinobha's Swaraj Shastra and we do feel for a moment that spiritual politics is not impossible. Ah, if only man could change a wee little bit and get ready to offer 'active service for social justice and universal welfare'!

Though all pathways are capable of leading man to the plane of spiritual unity, religion appears to be the easiest one for the common man. Rajaji went back to the heritage of India's Sanatana Dharma which is treasured in its twin epics, the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**. This

is where we see life in the raw, we see ourselves, we see life as it is where the moral dilemmas are resolved for future times and the experience without and within elevates one to the spiritual heights. In this path, *bhakti* plays a crucial part. Otherwise we would get bogged down by the endless controversies in the epics such as the killing of Vali by Rama and the destruction of Duryodhana by Bhima.

Ananda Coomaraswamy brings up the rear in Vasant's vigorous dissertation. If academia, social service and politics gave lines of reference to the earlier personalities, for Coomaraswamy art led to sublime speculations. Linguist, mineralogist, voracious reader of philosophy and writer on metaphysics, Coomaraswamy went deep into intellectual depths and had little use for an emotional approach. He was of the view that one should burrow into oneself with clinical concentration and learn to connect. "Without a principle in which all else is related, an end to which all else can be ordered, our life is chaotic". With him too, we are but a step away from evolution. Vasanti writes:

"Coomaraswamy clarified that by intellect he did not mean only the faculty of logical thinking or mere mind but 'spirit'. He referred to the highest part of the intellect by which we understand that which transcends sense perception such as concepts and principles. What is hinted here is the progression of the intellect from being just an instrument for worldly knowledge to its ability to turn inwards and upwards to the source of all being."

The peppery Bernard Shaw had remarked that politics is the last refuge for the scoundrel. At a time when there are bitter comments that politics is the first refuge of Indian scoundrels, it is good to be reminded that our nation had produced persons like Vinobha and Rajaji who played virtue politics in the background of India's spiritual heritage. As long as we remember Gandhari's *yatho dharmahsthathe jayah*, all will be well and it is this positive note of linking dharma with spirituality that could evolve "a moderate political discourse" and retrieve us from fatalism which makes Hindu Spirituality and Virtue Politics a significant publication.

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Educating Adults

Is Population Control on Modi's Agenda?

N. S. Venkataraman

With the national population increasing by more than 2.5 crores every year, reducing poverty levels in India would be extremely difficult, even with a GDP growth of 7% per annum.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been speaking on several subjects of great national importance, many of them reflecting the ground realities in India. However, one subject that he appears to be avoiding is the issue of the impending population explosion due to the uncontrolled increase in births.

It is reported that around 70,000 children are born in India every day as against around 43,000 in China and around 3.70 lakh in the world. This means that India is contributing to around 18% to the world growth of population every day. With China competently controlling their population growth, it should be a matter of great concern that India is likely to emerge as the most populated country in the world before long.

While some states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have checked the growth of population to some extent, other states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan are recording alarming growth in population, perhaps due to lack of awareness amongst the people about the perils of population explosion and inadequate efforts by the government to implement population control measures.

The population issue was stressed as one of the grave problems facing the country a few decades back. However, after the crude experiments of Sanjay Gandhi to control population growth in the 1960s and in its wake the adverse public reaction in the post emergency era, political parties have stopped talking about this grave issue for all practical purposes. There appears to be a view amongst political parties that any move to control population growth would affect their vote banks and electoral prospects. As a result, today there is no visible and worthwhile campaign to persuade people to control the size of

their family. Instead what we see is the campaign to control AIDS and promote sex education, which cannot be a substitute for conducting a massive campaign against population growth.

In spite of whatever increase in food production and growth of the economy that has taken place in India in the last few decades, around 30% of the population, (more than 300 million people) are still reported to be living below the poverty line, not knowing where the next meal will come from. With the national population increasing by more than 2.5 crores every year, reducing poverty levels in India would be extremely difficult, even with the GDP growth of 7% per annum.

It is surprising that Mr. Narendra Modi has not thought it necessary to ask the people to restrict their family size. It is unlikely that Modi does not realise the importance of population control. In such a case, one has to suspect that he thinks that it would be politically inconvenient for him to talk about population control measures today.

One hopes that the Prime Minister would, without further loss of time, realise the importance of this grave population issue and stress the need for it at the state and national level. Some sort of incentive schemes can be considered for those, particularly belonging to the lower income group, who do not give birth to more than two children. Even some punitive measures to prevent too many children in individual families in future can be examined, after building appropriate public opinion in favour of this measure.

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Homeless : A Telling Tale

Ajit Karnik

“Mumbai: Campa Cola Compound residents face homeless future”(IBN Live)

Tanvi looked at the frenetic activity around her building with apprehension. It was not clear to her what was happening or why. Someone wanted to break their home down because it was on the tenth floor. Her friend Asha lived on the second floor and there was no problem with her home. Tanvi had heard that all homes above the fifth floor were illegal. That left her quite puzzled. But many people were trying to help them. They were all there: uncles, aunties and grandfathers and grandmothers. So was the lovely lady in a white sari who promised to protect their building. The lady even sat with her father and others to perform a *pooja* that would ward off evil. There was large crowd outside the gates to her building. The police were there as were officers with lists in their hands. And there were on-lookers and children from nearby slums. What a noise there was! The TV cameras were interviewing the grown-ups. They also interviewed Urvashi-didi who spoke so confidently. She said such lovely things about their building, how they had been born there and how they had grown up there. Some had even got married there. Yes, Tanvi vividly remembered Sanjay-bhaiya's wedding. What fun it had been to play with friends all day long! But why was all this going to end? Why were they going to cut off their water and electricity? They say they are going to break down the building tomorrow! Oh no! Questions swirled around in her head: where shall we go? What about my friends? And my school?

It was morning, but still dark because of the clouds. There was a light drizzle. Jhanvi was staring blankly as the trucks with big arms tore down their homes. Her mother sat next to her, holding her tight. There were loud sounds of truck engines, of walls and metal and wood being smashed down. Everywhere that Jhanvi looked the steel arms of trucks were hammering down on their homes. She looked up but could not see the driver of the truck. But the arm was relentlessly raining down blows. Why were they breaking down their homes? Yesterday, the good uncle had said everything was okay. After Baba gave him money, he had promised they could continue to live there and they could continue to have their water and electricity connections. She was happy to live in her home, close to

all her friends. Jhanvi loved her father. What would he not do for their happiness! But where was Baba now? Where was the uncle today? Why were there no TV cameras when their homes were being destroyed? She had seen the TV cameras yesterday – she was standing right next to the TV man as he interviewed a girl through the gate of the building. And the lovely lady in white, where was she? Why was she not helping them? It was just them and the monster trucks and no one else. There was despair and weeping all around. Her mother was crying loudly as were all the other aunties around her. Their sound of wailing could be heard intermittently through the deafening din of the trucks. Where was her father, she kept asking her mother. “Why does Baba not stop the trucks? Why does he not call the TV cameras? Has he gone to call the lady in white sari?” she asked. Your baba has gone to find a new home, her mother said. Jhanvi did not understand. What was wrong with their present home? They were happy here, why did they need to move? Jhanvi's eyes were now limpid pools, brimming with tears. Then she began to cry, her tears mixing with the drizzling rain. There was no one to help them. No TV cameras, no lady in white sari, they were completely alone. The tears flowed unabated down Jhanvi's cheeks. Her baba suddenly appeared in an open tempo, a small truck. He loaded all their belongings on to the tempo. Other uncles did the same with their belongings. Jhanvi and her family and the others sat at the back of the open tempo which soon it began to move. As it approached the crowd, the tempo had to slow down. The air was filled with noise, there were TV cameras everywhere. Jhanvi also saw the lovely lady in the white sari talking to the police. Her heart felt an intense tug of deep disappointment. The lady was very busy doing important things, but surely she could have come to our home for few minutes, thought Jhanvi; she could have stopped the trucks from breaking our homes. And, Jhanvi wondered, why did the TV cameras not show her home being destroyed? As the tempo passed the crowd, it picked up speed and soon the crowd was no longer visible.

Cont'd. on page 38

UPSC Civil Services Examination and the Language Controversy - The Mistake of Ignoring English

Shruti Shetty

Although, it is considered that Hindi is the national language of India English is also known as the country's official language. It is because all citizens in different parts of India may not be knowing Hindi. And all the regions have their own dialect. It is said that after every 5 km the language of the people differs.

There are more than 1600 languages that are spoken in India. But in the Eighth schedule of Constitution, only 22 languages have been recognized.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Service Examination is for selecting the best officers for India's Administration. As we know, English is the official language but the examiners also allow us to give exams in our national language. Due to the preference of English at the international level, the students attending exams in English get double the progress from those who are attending in Hindi. This has led to arguments on this issue for many years and it is now in force.

Both the houses of the Parliament, want that the Civil Service examination should be conducted in all languages that are included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. On Monday, 4 August 2014, it was announced by the government that the marks of English will not be included in the gradation of the candidates. But the top former bureaucrats are against this decision of government because they think these papers are much required to assess a potential civil servant.

According to me, it is not fair that English marks are not being included for the gradation. In India, sensitiveness is more and is at the highest level. We cannot compare any language with the other. All languages have their own existence. As Hindi is considered as National language, that is why, all citizens should know it along with their regional language as well as the official language of the country.

Besides this, it is also unfair that as citizens of India people are giving more priority for English. If the Civil Service examination are conducted in English as well as Hindi, then there should be no discrimination between these two languages. It should be made mandatory that if the candidate has the capability to be a civil servant, then the language in which the candidate applies for exams should matter. The first thing that should matter is the capability i.e. if the person has the ability then he should not be pushed backward because of he /she is applying for it in Hindi.

If this happens, then it should be made compulsory that the exams should be conducted either in Hindi or in English So that candidates will not complain of partiality.

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Homeless: A Telling Tale *(Continued from page 37)*

As Jhanvi's tempo passed the building, Tanvi was waking up. The fan was still working. And there was water in the bathroom. Her uncles and aunties and *didis* and *bhaiyas* had stopped the bad people from cutting off their water and their electricity. Tanvi glanced at the TV. They were showing her building. Ramesh uncle was being interviewed. She quickly dressed and went down. All her friends and neighbours were already there. The lovely lady in white sari was there too. Tanvi looked at

her adoringly; she wanted to be like her when she grew up. The TV cameras were busy filming everything. The usual crowd was there too, people from neighbouring buildings and passers-by. But the children from the nearby slums were nowhere to be seen.

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MANY VOICES - *From The Past*

Told that his ideas added up to communism minus violence he (Vinoba Bhave) gave a cryptic smile: "Perhaps. But then you may say that two people were identical except for the fact that one breathed and the other was a corpse".

Hallam Tennyson, *Encounter*, December 1954

*

One can have diplomatic relations with Cannibals – if one guards against being eaten.

***New Leader*, December 6, 1954**

*

Someone summarised the characteristics of the British people when these were cited as the four pillars: the ballot box, the cricket bat, limited companies and the authorised version of the Holy Bible.

**Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,
The Times of India, January 8, 1955**

*

Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant has strongly suggested to the Prime Minister that before Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, is taken into the Cabinet, the Public Accounts Committee must be given the opportunity to consider the Government of India's stand vis-a-vis the jeep scandal and other affairs of the High Commissioner of India (in the UK) on which it had passed grave strictures.

***The Current*, February 23, 1955**

*

The Constitution was a wonderful temple we built for the gods but before they could be installed the devils have taken possession. The only thing we can do, therefore, is to destroy the temple by burning it down.

**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar,
The Times of India, March 20, 1955**

*

Not long ago, Jayaprakash Narayan drew pointed attention to the fact in an interview in Lucknow that "the seven authors of Pandit Nehru's Second Five Year Plan are all men from behind the Iron Curtain."

***Freedom First*, May 1955**

*

"Avanti! Avanti!" cried Mussolini to his Blackshirts. "Avadi! Avadi!" says Nehru to his white caps. It is all much of the muchness.

***Onlooker, The Times of India*, May 9, 1955**

*

Because men are still incapable of being angels there is no good reason why they should be ants.

E. A. Mowrer, *Free Spirit*, May 1995

*

God needed only six days to create the world, but He had the advantage of working alone.

***Journal de Geneve on the "Summit" Conference,
Freedom First*, August 1955**

*

India went red ages ago. Look at the pavements, the walls of buildings, the stairways of offices.

**A. F. S. Talyarkhan,
TheTimes of India, December 21, 1955.**

*

...Tolerance is a great virtue...nevertheless moral courage is a virtue at least equal to the virtue of tolerance.

**Charles Morgan as quoted in the *Indian P.E.N.*
February 1956**

*

I wish there was a tax on loose language.

**M. A. Sreenivasan in a speech,
Freedom First, April 1956**

*

What India needs is responsible opposition if the Prime Minister is wrong, and responsible discussion, criticism and acceptance of his ideas if he is right. What happens is irresponsible, rowdy opposition, and irresponsible, slavish acceptance, and very little in between.

***Mysindia*, January 22, 1956.**

*

What is needed is not nationalisation of insurance, but insurance against nationalisation.

**M. A. Sreenivasan in a speech,
Freedom First, April 1956.**

*

If a cobra (communism) is sighted in a village surely the manly and sensible thing is to kill it, not to amputate the limbs of all the inhabitants to prevent death by snake-bite.

**M. A. Sreenivasan in a speech,
Freedom First, April 1956.**

*

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