

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

A POT-HOLED DEMOCRACY

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

N O T E S

Why Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh Resigned

EVERYBODY has expressed regret over the resignation of Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, which has deprived the country, of an able and conscientious Finance Minister. The resignation is all the more regrettable, because it takes place on an issue of sectional interest. A person of such high eminence as Mr. Deshmukh, was not expected to represent in Parliament or Government only the interests of his particular constituency or linguistic group.

Mr. Deshmukh's statement in Parliament explaining the reasons of his resignation raises some issues of grave import. Mr. Deshmukh has made the charge that the Cabinet does not function on the basis of collective discussions or decisions, but that decisions are made in a "cavalier and unconstitutional manner" by one individual or by a couple of them. The charge was denied, but the denial was feeble and unconvincing.

Mr. Deshmukh contended that the decision that was taken in regard to Bombay was "typical of the cavalier and unconstitutional manner in which decisions have been taken and announced on behalf of the Cabinet by certain unauthorised members of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister." He further charged that the Prime Minister and a couple of other members of the Cabinet "have arrogated to themselves powers not delegated to them by the Cabinet as a whole.'

But it is not only on the issue of Bombay or the reorganisation of States that the Cabinet has functioned in this manner. There are complaints that this is the normal method of its functioning. Mr. Deshmukh has also admitted the fact by saying that the way in which decisions on Bombay were taken was "typical of the cavalier and unconstitutional manner. "The question then arises: Why did he put up with it so long? Why was he silent so long? He cannot plead the excuse that is open to others in totalitarian countries.

Joint responsibility is one of the cardinal principles of parliamentary democracy. Joint responsibility does not mean the readiness and acceptance to stand by the decisions made by one individual. Joint responsibility demands joint discussion as well as joint decision. It is clear from the disclosure made by Mr. Deshmukh that neither obtains in the functioning of the Indian Cabinet. This is a grave defect which may, unless immediate steps

are taken to remove it cause irreparable damage to the growth of democracy.

Christian Missionaries

The Christian Missionary Activities Committee appointed by the Madhya Pradesh Government presided over by Mr. Justice Niyogi has turned out a report which is manifestly unjust and unfair to Christian missionaries working in the country, both foreign and indigenous. As stated by the Indian Civil Liberties Bulletin, some of the premises it worked on were "wild" and some of the conclusions it has reached are reckless."

One of the recommendations made by the Committee is for the amendment of the Constitution to restrict the right of propagation of religion only to citizens of India. The Committee forgets that many of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution are Human Rights available to all persons and not merely to citizens. There will be no dispute that proselytisers of any religion should not be allowed to take advantage of the poverty or distress of the people and that 'conversions brought about through force or fraud should not only not be recognised but should also be penalised.

Dr. John Matthai, the Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University and the former Finance Minister of the Government of India, struck the right note when he said: "No class of foreigners working in India during the past hundred years have by and large served the country with greater zeal and interest than missionaries – and whatever their failings, these outweighed by what they have done in the cause of building up a self-respecting and self reliant India." The Governor of Bombay, Dr. Hare Krushna Mahtab, is also of the same opinion. "The Missionaries", he said, "had made considerable contribution towards the progress of the country and it was wrong to conclude, that they were exploiting the unsophisticated and uneducated classes in backward areas"

We endorse the wise and forthright statements of the two distinguished statesmen.

What you have just read are excerpts from the comments in *Freedom First* in its issue No.52 of September 1956. You will find the full text of these comments and more in our archives – www.freedomfirst.in

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Between Ourselves...

I have been staring at the laptop screen for the last few minutes not knowing where to begin. For sorrow it is that numbed me when I read in the newspapers that a good man has been assassinated obviously by some Hindu fanatics, in broad daylight in Pune while he was taking his morning walk. I have never met him or communicated with him though I have been associated with his associates. But every rational Indian knew about Dr. Narendra Dabholkar the crusader against superstitious religious practices and founder of the *Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti* (Maharashtra Blind Faith Eradication Committee). More about the man and his work in our October number.

As for the contents of this issue, it is the usual litany of UPA-II's mal-governance abetted by weak governance with the sole purpose of surviving in office till 2014. This has emboldened the so-called Socialist Party of UP, whose support is crucial for the UPA-II survival, to get away with murder and loot and extending their lawless activities against members of the civil service and the police who dare to do their duty. This is also recognised by various politicians as the right time to agitate for statehood *a la* Telangana. Already a second State Reorganisation Commission is on the cards.

The Rupee is diving and by the time you read this it could well be Rs.80 to the dollar. Economic policy is in reverse gear and well before 2014 LPG raj will be jettisoned and *LPQ Raj* will be back. Nehruvian socialism will once again be the Cong(I)'s war cry.

Editor

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Zafar Futehally, RIP

Zafar Futehally naturalist and conservationist passed away on 11 August. He was 93.

We cannot do better than to quote from their tribute paid to him by Shanthi & Ashish Chandola the well known wild life photographers and makers of several wildlife documentaries. They wrote: “He became a member of the Executive Committee of the Bombay Natural History Society in 1962 and was soon thereafter elected Vice President – a position he occupied for over a decade – in fact until 1973 when he moved to Bangalore. Tall in stature but slight in build, Zafar was a person who always strove to reach consensus and eliminate conflicts. An excellent field person, he also commanded the skills of working on committees and boards where his skills of not being dogmatic, came to the fore. In his interaction with the Prime Minister’s Secretariat, Salman Haider, who was then with the PMO recalls that what impressed Mrs. Gandhi and others the most, was his “integrity and commitment.” That indeed describes in a nutshell the character of Zafar Futehally. This stood not only the Society in good stead but also the many organizations, both National and International, which Zafar was to be involved with.

Zafar was the Founder Trustee and Vice-President of World Wildlife Fund – India which was launched in 1969 – a responsibility he shouldered for about a decade. A member of the National Committee for Environment planning, of the Government of India. Zafar, along with M. Krishnan, was a ‘non official’ Member of the Steering Committee of ‘Project Tiger’. Internationally, Zafar was elected to the Executive Board of the IUCN in 1966. Besides being closely involved with the International Ornithological Congress. And yet over this period of over a decade, he steered the affairs of the Society as Vice President besides co-editing the prestigious Journal of the Society from 1963 to 1973.

One of Zafar’s major achievements was to start the ‘Newsletter for Birdwatchers’ in 1959. Beginning as cyclostyled sheets the first printed issue was brought out in September/October 1988. Zafar edited the Newsletter for 45 years handing over the baton to Aasheesh Pittie and V. Santharam in January 2004.



(1920 - 2013)

Zafar’s contribution to conservation in India was recognized across the globe. He was awarded the Padmashri by the Government of India in 1971. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands presented Zafar with the Order of the Golden Ark in 1981 and the Government of Karnataka presented him the Rajyotsava Award in 1983. Zafar was made ‘Member of Honour World Wildlife Fund’ in 1994 and was conferred with the Salim Ali International Award for Nature Conservation in 1997 for his efforts towards the conservation of Karnala and Borivili, national parks in Mumbai.

All the achievements and awards sat lightly on the shoulders of the great personality of Zafar – he did his duty to save the lakes and trees of Bangalore like any responsible citizen and was bothered by little else. He believed that “Conservation would become the Religion of the Future because men can only survive on renewable natural resources – air, water, soil, flora and fauna.”

When we pray for his soul to rest in peace, we also need to remember the humbleness and self effacing nature of this giant of a personality who unassumingly pioneered the Conservation movement across the globe and more so in our country taking along with him people from all age groups.”

What is not so well known is Zafar’s association with the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, the publishers of *Freedom First* and its sister journal *Quest*. The latter ceased publication way back in 1976 – a victim of the censorship during the Emergency. In fact his widow was *Quest*’s reviews editor. *Freedom First* carried Zafar’s articles particularly book reviews particularly in the late fifties and early sixties. In a letter published in the August 2011 issue of this journal he wrote “Am enjoying *Freedom First* immensely. Greatly looking forward to CR correspondence. This was a fine idea.” We are also beholden to Zafar for suggesting and then persuading Ashish Chandola to contribute a column “Brush with Nature” on wild life conservation. We therefore felt it more than appropriate to carry his tribute to Zafar.

To Layeeq and their daughter Zahida our deepest condolences. We share their sorrow and will miss a good friend.

From Our Readers

“Gold Is Best Left Alone”

While I fully endorse the logical structure of Mr. D. R. Pendse's argument in support of gold (*Freedom First* No.554 August 2013), I wish to set out my disagreement on some of the key points.

- No denying the fact that gold is an asset. Indeed, this asset never depreciates either in its physical form or in its market value. It offers convenience of storing [smaller bulge with larger and often rising value] – mostly in safe deposit vaults of banks. Individuals/households often derive great comfort in holding some (or large) part of their wealth in gold.
- But gold diverts the potential financial savings into a non-productive asset. This problem has been acutely felt in the last few years. The ratio of financial savings to GDP has dropped sharply. This is so evident from the deceleration in the growth of bank deposits.
- No doubt, gold purchases pre-empt purchasing power and can be seen to be anti-inflationary in their impact in the first round. But by hampering the future potential growth of the real economy, it tends to lead towards a shortage economy – of real goods and services, thereby promoting inflation.
- Import of gold can surely be looked upon as “the

privatization of the addition to India's foreign exchange reserves”. Indeed, over the last six decades, Indian citizens might have through imports accumulated about 25,000 tonnes of gold imports valued at current international prices of over US 1000 billion [US\$41.28 million per tonne]. But this is no comfort for the RBI or MOF when it has to strategically intervene in the currency market to curb speculative activities.

- Instead, if the economy were to have created conditions for better deployment of savings into financial forms and channelize these into productive investments, India could have built export capability and accumulated forex reserves.

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*

I am always in sympathy with *Freedom First* magazine, but especially so with the article “Gold Is Best Left Alone” by Mr. D. R. Pendse, *Freedom First*, No.554, August 2013,

Major Publications such as *The Economist* and *Financial Times* endorse ultra low interest rates/money printing, thus it was refreshing to read a rare, contrary

Lenin's Vain Boast – Toilets Made of Gold

Lenin, the greatest communist, once boasted before the Revolution; he mocked at gold. “When we are victorious on a worldwide scale,” bragged Lenin in 1921 soon after coming to power, “we will make public toilets out of gold on the streets of the world's largest cities.” Lenin has gone, but gold remains, and today Soviet Russia is not building toilets out of gold. It has come on the world market to offload gold and to buy grain. In the last year, they have delivered 200 million dollars' worth of solid gold and by the end of this year it is estimated another 350 million dollars' worth of gold will be unloaded on the market by Lenin's successors.

Lenins may come and go. I predict, Madam Chairman, long after all of us have passed away, gold will remain as it was, because gold is pure and the Government's policies are impure and filthy.

MINOO MASANI. Excerpted from his speech in the Lok Sabha on 21 December 1964 in the course of the discussion on the Gold (Control) Bill, 1963.

The Liberal Position on Gold Control

The Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party is of the view that the new regulations for the control of gold are economically unsound and not calculated to further the purposes for which they are stated to be devised. Since the inflationary policies of the Government and the consequent high level of prices are the basic cause of the smuggling and hoarding of gold and since the price of a commodity like Gold is linked with the general level of prices in the country, the Board fears that the attempt at control quite apart from creating fear of expropriation, inflicting harassment on large numbers of people of moderate and small means and depriving an important class of artisans of their livelihood, will push the precious metal underground and deprive the small traders and agricultural population of an important source of credit. The Board disapproves of any operation at present against gold being held by the common people which has been the ultimate reserve of the country's economy throughout history.

Resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party on January 13, 1963

view advocating sound money (as good as Gold!!).

Currency debasement is prevalent all around the world and it is increasingly difficult to believe that we will have honest government anytime soon. Indeed regular folk are also resorting to extra legal means to get by. See enclosed story, "Japan's Elderly Go On a Petty Crime Spree", Bloomberg Businessweek, July 22-29, 2013.

Robert Stewart, Scotland, U.K.

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On Secularism

Some comments on the article "On Secularism" by Saratchandra Panda which I would like to share with FF readers:

The author states that Gandhi fasted against Hindus who were killing Muslims. This is true. Gandhi fasted to ensure that the virus of violence and hate did not take possession of Hindus. Jinnah injected this virus in Muslims first in Bengal ('Direct Action') later in Western Pakistan, resulting in the killing of Hindus and their migration to India. Later rulers of Pakistan injected a double dose of that virus in their army which led to the raping and killing of millions of Muslims in East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh. Gandhi gave his life to avoid the spread of that virus in India. Had that virus spread in India, rest assured, India would have disintegrated by this time. Gandhi had vision, which is absent in many political thinkers of today.

Gandhi also wanted to keep the Muslim population in India. He knew they are a national asset as they are sons and daughters of Hindu artisans of the past converted to Islam. They have better technical understanding and are masters of handicrafts compared to the Hindus. With proper training they can help in developing industrial products India better than any other community can do.

According to the author, Muslims destroyed 30,000 temples in India. Hindus have destroyed just one old mosque. Statically it is an insignificant event. This is not true. Times have changed. This one demolition was seen by millions of people including Muslims of the world. The result has been disturbances throughout India and the springing up of numerous terrorist cells in every corner of India which are getting aid from neighbouring countries. On the other hand India's expenditure to control these organisations has increased thousand fold. Because of this India has become economically weakened. The people who did it had no love for their motherland.

History shows that Christians were the most the

violent people on earth. But gradually they found the road to enlightenment so much so they gave us the concept of human rights, liberty and democracy. Islam is also a violent religion but it has also given many things to mankind. They are currently in a crisis. Sooner or later Islam too will discover the road to enlightenment.

B. P. RASTOGI, Mumbai.

*

Thank you for the excellent article 'On Secularism' by Saratchandra C. Panda in the August issue of *Freedom First*.

Mr. Panda has systematically & most cogently demolished all hypotheses of Prof. Amartya Sen. I also think that it was a very timely piece, because Secularism vs Communalism is most likely to be one of the key issues in the next general elections.

'Secularism' has been one of the most misused & misunderstood concepts in our public discourse. It is about time that the term 'Secularism' is clearly understood and defined in the Indian context.

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Achievements of our Engineers and Scientists Ignored

Recently there were government advertisements and press reports about three important events:

**Arihant Reactor goes critical
Aircraft Carrier launched in Koshi
Prithvi II tested.**

These are significant achievements of Indian engineers and scientists. Yet, nowhere is there mention of their names or their contribution. This is not only doing an injustice to persons who have worked for the success of these projects but also a disincentive for our younger generation to take up professions where they can take part in the nation's technological development.

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It is not enough for the courts and NGOs to castigate the mafia and progressively ban ever more types of mining. They must also explain where India will get enough stone and sand for an economy that will soon need ten times as much as today. We cannot just have rules and court interventions imposing ever more curbs. We must also have rules that facilitate a massive expansion of legal mining.

Swaminathan S. Anklesria Aiyar in his column
"Swaminomics", *Sunday Times of India*, Mumbai,
August 11, 2013

Shoot Out at Poonch

Brig. S. C. Sharma

It is armed aggression and not infiltration.

About 20 heavily armed Pakistani soldiers of Border Action Team [BAT] ambushed a patrol of the Indian Army on 6 August and killed five soldiers at the Sarla post in Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir. It was not an isolated incident and is part of a planned campaign. The number of cease fire violations and cross border infiltrations has been on the rise. Compared to 200 violations in 2011-12, there have been 57 incursions in 2013, representing a rise of 80%. Thirty seven security personnel have been killed in 2013 compared to seventeen last year. In July 2013, there were four incidents of cross border firing and infiltration in the Poonch sector.

The five soldiers belonged to the Bihar Regiment. Not only Bihar, but the entire country is boiling with rage. All the major political parties except the ruling Congress have voiced concern and have demanded strong counter action by the Government. Former Army Chief, General Shankar Roy Chouhary and former Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh have called it a serious matter which demands strong action by us. Farooq Abdullah said “the hand of friendship cannot be extended from one side only. Pakistan must stop killing Indian soldiers. The dialogue process cannot continue if such a situation continues.” After the barbaric incident of the beheading of two soldiers, the Army Chief had authorized the local commanders to take punitive action. It is time they resorted to it before the Government changes its policy.

The Government handed over a protest note to the Pakistan High Commissioner and the Pakistan Government lost no time to deny any cross border firing by the Pakistan Army. India’s Defence Minister, Anthony accepted the views of the Pakistan Government and declared in the Parliament that non-state actors had ambushed the Indian Army patrol. This was contrary to the statement by the Army. The Foreign Secretary, Ms Sujata Singh said that India should soon pick up the thread of peace talks with Pakistan.

Pakistan’s denial is in line with its past attitude. It never accepts responsibility. The statements of our rulers and a host of defence experts are baffling. The increased infiltration and violence is being attributed to a reaction to the execution of Afzal Guru and frustration in the Pakistan Army and militant groups due to the killing of 13 terrorists by the security forces. They are supposed to be desperate as many infiltration attempts have been foiled. Do they

imply that militancy would decrease if we stopped foiling infiltration and killing militants? The stark facts belie this belief. The casualty figures are two security personnel against one militant. Intelligence reports have confirmed that 250 militants are ready to be launched from forty seven pads. It is we who should be concerned and not the Pakistan Army. Another reason being forwarded for increased militant activity is that the Pakistan Army does not want any progress on peace talks. It may well be. Yet, considering the results of the peace talks in the past, the results have always been in favour of Pakistan’s interests.

In January 2004, Pakistan made a commitment that Pakistan would not let its territory be used for attacks on India. This clause was not included in the joint statement between India and Pakistan in April 2005. In June 2006, the joint statement issued in Havana said that Pakistan was a victim of terrorism. The exporter of terrorism became a victim. In July 2009, the joint statement in Sharm El Sheikh accepted India’s responsibility for insurgency in Balochistan. It was termed Shame and Shame by a political analyst. This time, statements of the Defence Minister, Foreign Secretary and silence of the Prime Minister indicate the soft approach of our Government. The two armies are standing almost in eye to eye contact at the border. It is not possible for the militants to cross over without the complicity of the Army. It has invariably supported the incursions by artillery firing in the threatened sector. If the Prime Minister has to talk to Pakistan due to compulsions of his own choice, he must remember that Sharif was party to the Kargil War while talking of peace. He is totally committed to annexing Kashmir by force or fraud.

It is armed aggression and not infiltration. We should strike back immediately by artillery fire. That is how peace was kept in the past and must be resorted to now. We must dominate 1000 metres area across the border in sensitive areas and not be taken by surprise.

The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The Army loses if it does not win. – Kissinger

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Politics of an Incursion

Firoze Hirjikaka

And so, as has happened so often in the past, the army engineered an incident which has guaranteed to thwart any constructive dialogue between the two neighbours.

The early August transgression across the Line of Control (LOC) by a group of terrorists and uniformed Pakistani soldiers, which resulted in the unfortunate death of five Indian soldiers, has predictably brought out the banal, the ridiculous and the worst in our political class and our electronic media. If the politicians displayed their usual immaturity, insensitivity and boorishness, our media can be held accountable for sensationalizing an incident which, though certainly lamentable and newsworthy, hardly deserved the hype worthy of an earth shattering event.

Let us first examine the bare bones facts about the incursion. First of all, it should have been anticipated. It is a reasonable assumption that the Pakistani military was getting perturbed at the peace overtures displayed by their new Prime Minister, which they probably interpreted as a sign of weakness. And so, as has happened so often in the past, the army engineered an incident which was guaranteed to thwart any constructive dialogue between the two neighbours. Quite predictably, our sham-patriotic politicians - particularly from the Opposition - and our self-important media anchors fell neatly into the trap. To start with, they bulldozed India's Defence Minister (DM) to retract a perfectly reasonable initial response - much to the delight of the generals across the border - and issue a virtual war cry, thereby ensuring that the mutual antagonism is perpetuated *ad infinitum*.

Somehow it never occurs to the powers to be that six decades of unrelenting mutual hostility has not only failed to produce any positive result, but has been a constant drain on our resources. The Indian establishment constantly complains that democratic polity in Pakistan is subservient to the military; but we do nothing to support them. A nation aspiring to be a world power should display the maturity to resist the Pakistan military's constant ploy to maintain a perpetual state of hostility between the two nations. Engaging in an unconditional and constructive dialogue (it is a misnomer to call them peace talks) with our neighbour's democratically-elected leaders would erode the hegemony of their military. And if the talks produced

a prosperity dividend for the people of Pakistan, in the form of improved trade and so on, the people would see through the army's game plan which has yielded no positive benefits to them.

Let us now examine DM Antony's initial statement which provoked such unwarranted outrage. He merely stated that the aggression was carried out by militants accompanied by a group of men dressed in Pakistani army uniforms. This does not qualify as giving a clean cheat to the Pakistan army, as it was made out to be. After all, even regular Pakistani army soldiers would be wearing their uniforms, wouldn't they? Antony's statement merely stated the apparent facts on the ground and in fact, put the onus on the Pakistan military to prove that the intruders were not their regular soldiers. The subsequent retraction only demonstrated to the Pakistanis how weak-kneed and lacking in conviction is our ruling establishment. The hue and cry raised by the Opposition once again proved that even at a time when national solidarity was the appropriate response, their prime objective remained to cause maximum discomfiture to the ruling dispensation. They were disgracefully abetted in this enterprise by a vociferous and near-hysterical media (Arbab Goswami became so apoplectic, I was afraid he was about to burst a blood vessel).

Then there is this business of martyrdom. I'm afraid the word 'martyr' has been thoroughly misused and devalued in the modern lexicon. The classical definition of a martyr is one who has died or been killed in defence of his faith. This was not the case here. These days, being a martyr is also supposed to define someone who has displayed extraordinary heroism and has suffered the ultimate penalty. When a soldier enlists or is commissioned, he knows his primary task is to defend his country; and that the job entails the acceptable risk of losing one's life in battle. I am sure the five soldiers who died fought valiantly and paid the ultimate price; and therefore deserve a high accolade. However, their action does not qualify as an act of heroism above and beyond the call of duty. In fact, they were performing their primary duty. Therefore

all the subsequent hoopla created by the media was uncalled for and only succeeding in affording our venal and hypocritical politicians the publicity they crave. For example, the media went to town over the fact that some prominent Bihar ministers were not at the airport to receive the bodies of the slain soldiers. Everyone knows that even if they had been there, it would have been to get their faces on television and certainly not out of genuine concern or remorse. Hence there was no justification for the media blowing it out of proportion just to improve their ratings. Our media does a commendable job in exposing the misdeeds of the political class, but it would be appreciated if they curbed their tendency towards sensationalism and behaved more responsibly.

So what is the final outcome of this fracas? The Opposition is feeling smug about having scored brownie points over the Congress, oblivious of the reality that they

have in fact not acted in the best interests of the country. The Congress is, as usual, going through the motions. Sonia Gandhi expressing “a great sense of anguish” is meaningless unless it is accompanied by concrete directions for future action. In short, the *status quo* remains and India will continue to be compelled to spend thousands of crores to guard against an enemy who has to do no more than inflict “a thousand cuts” at regular intervals. (Do I see the Pak generals smiling?). After a decent interval, India will again attempt talks with our neighbour and almost inevitably, the military there will provoke another incident to negate any positive outcome. The cycle will go on. Perhaps the powers on both sides should study Sisyphus.

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Young Dynasts are Making Parliament Irrelevant

An analysis of Parliament's demographics reveals a linear relationship between age and hereditary occupation of parliamentary seats. The younger the MPs the higher the likelihood they have entered the hallowed portals through family routes. All MPs under the age of 30 have assumed the mantle of a parent or a relative.

Today, 27 MPs have more than one generation who is involved in politics. Of these, 19 are in the Congress. The average age of hereditary parliamentarians is 48 while it is 58 for those who have no claim to any political family background. Nine out of 10 Congress MPs below the age of 30 are appendages of dynastic politics. All five RLD MPs, seven of nine belonging to the NCP, two of four from the Akali Dal and two of three from the National Conference entered politics because of family connections.

Unlike their forerunners, the new kids on the block refuse to venture out of their comfort zones, happy with their latest SUVs, designer outfits and branded watches. Most of the MPs in the 1990s did not hesitate to use the regular minibus provided by Parliament; sprawling, luxurious cars in Parliament's parking lot were a rare sight. But today, BMWs, Mercedes, Audis and the odd Rolls Royce crowd the parking bays. Time was when Parliament not only functioned, but was relevant; today, it has lost its relevance. It seems that we have lost touch with the

country's ethos and the values for which our freedom fighters martyred themselves.

Back in the late 1940s, every member of the Constituent Assembly was capable of leading the country. But compare the founding fathers with today's Parliament where perhaps none has what it takes to be a statesman and inspire a nation. Jawaharlal Nehru rarely left the capital when Parliament would be in session, attending every question hour, all major debates besides encouraging members, irrespective of their party affiliations, to take wholesome part in those lively discussions.

Tolerance, debate, institutional development and respect for each other are the hallmarks of a parliamentary democracy. Without these pillars, a country cannot be called a functional democracy. The polity today is marked by a huge disconnect between the talented youth outside Parliament who have done India proud in every field - sport, the arts, music and education - and the young MPs within whose contribution to nation-building has so far been negligible.

Excerpted from the article by Dinesh Trivedi, Member Rajya Sabha and a former railway minister. COURTESY: *The Times of India*, July 26, 2013

“Durga Puja” - UP Style!!

V. G. Vaidya

People heaved a sigh of relief at the prospect of politics free of criminals. But their joy may be short lived because the political gentry, never uniting on any issue of national interest, found common cause and are inclined to amend the statute that will circumvent the court ruling.

Independence Day is an occasion as much for rejoicing as also for reminiscing, asking ourselves where we have failed our freedom fighters. This is an embarrassing question because indeed we have failed on various fronts. Some recent developments force us into this conclusion. Just look around.

Let us start with the famed steel frame of administration we were so proud of when we achieved freedom. Politicians have tampered with the administrative system to an extent that people have lost faith in and respect for it. Corruption amongst civil servants which was a rarity then is now the prevailing malaise thanks to the political masters who view it as a tool for acquiring political and fiscal power. Also to be blamed is the rapid decline in the values of life imbibed by our officers whose approach has now become more careerist, materialist and survival oriented.

The IAS and the IPS constitute the backbone of the steel frame of administration. Their conduct and work is governed by the All India Services (Discipline and Conduct Rules) which also provide a protective shield to them against victimization. The Governments at the Centre and in the States enforce these rules within their respective limitations while proceeding against erring officials. This restraint was recently thrown to the winds by the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh while dealing with a young IAS officer, DURGA SHAKTI NAGPAL whose actions were absolutely constitutional.

Dubious vote bank considerations as also the alleged wrath of the sand mafia led the UP Govt. to suspend her with vulgar haste for demolishing a wall around an unauthorized under- construction mosque. And to cap it, a Minister bragged in public patting himself on the back for the speed with which the suspension was inflicted. When the Central Govt. sought clarifications on the episode, another UP Minister brashly retorted that the State Govt. could do without the services of the IAS altogether. The service lobby in the State rose in protest against this wanton action which also invited a barrage of protests from all over the country. This is just an example of how

civil servants are being treated by the political masters elsewhere in the country also.

Beginning of the Slide

The working philosophy for the civil services is: Render sound administrative advice, consistent with the law of the land, to the duly elected political rulers regarding the enforcement of political decisions taken by them and ensure efficient compliance of those decisions. There is no scope for another interpretation. Subversion of the bureaucracy started almost immediately after independence and was perpetuated during the emergency in mid-seventies when Smt. Indira Gandhi, its architect, propounded the concept of a “committed bureaucracy”. The slide gathered momentum thereafter. It helped rationalize the moral degradation amongst officers and a justification for the politician for all his shady actions.

The Caged Parrot

The saga of the autonomy of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and liberating it from political stranglehold presents a pathetic story indeed. The CBI earned the epithet of a ‘caged parrot’ of the Central Government during its investigation of the COAL scandal.

The Supreme Court directed the Centre to furnish proposals for granting more autonomy to the CBI. Recently the Govt. filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court with its proposals which fall far short of a meaningful autonomy. In taking this stand the Centre has even ignored some of the suggestions put forward by the CBI which is not surprising. Which Government will allow a caged parrot to fly out and transform into a falcon. The political party wielding power needs the CBI to pressurize the opposition to fall in line, be it for a majority in a confidence vote or getting a desired bill passed in the Parliament. The nation is anxiously waiting to know where precisely this road map to autonomy terminates. Given the past record of politicians it has little hopes.

The trial by media of the Intelligence Bureau in the CBI investigation of the Ishrat Jehan encounter death and

the Centre's meek role allowing two vital security agencies of the nation to pit against each other has sapped the morale of the IB. The adverse effects will become evident only with passage of time. But one thing is certain; Pakistan's ISI must be celebrating this self-goal by Indian security agencies.

Testing People's Patience

So much for the civil services! Turning to the public mood, one sees a wave of disillusionment and anger against the ruling class for the rampant corruption, galloping inflation, criminalization of politics and shoddy governance. These were well and truly manifest in the widespread upsurge of response to the agitations of Anna Hazare and others. Daily exposure of scandals has taken a heavy toll of people's patience. No wonder the Supreme Court's decision, forbidding convicted people from contesting elections and disqualifying them was widely appreciated. People heaved a sigh of relief at the prospect of politics free of criminals. But their joy may be short lived because the political gentry, never uniting on any issue of national interest, found common cause and are inclined to amend the statute that will circumvent the court ruling. (Recall the SHAH BANO case of the mid eighties?). Is this not a lethal attack on the roots of democracy?

Another malaise afflicting public life is the role of black money. All the political parties, without exception, reacted against the directive of the Chief Information Commissioner bringing them within the ambit of the Right to Information Act. This was indeed a salutary step to curb the role of black money in the conduct of elections as also the functioning of the political parties. Efforts are now on to prevail upon the CIC to rescind his directive or amend the RTI Act. This is another shameful move preventing responsible and clean politics. The doors are closing one by one to suffocate the democratic order, what else?

Is there anything left to lament? Yes indeed: The disgusting insensitivity of the politicians to the pangs – emotional and physical – of the people at large. Recall Iftar parties hosted by those in Government while Anna Hazare was critical during his fast unto death last year. Or the cruel joke played on the people on the basis of some wretched survey saying that a full meal could be had for just Rs.12. Contrast this with costly five star parties at public cost enjoyed by the 'netas'; or the comment of a senior minister in Maharashtra relating to the severe drought in the State! His arrogant outburst, "Now do I have to urinate to fill the dams?" And now Rahul Gandhi propounds the ridiculous philosophy that "poverty is a state of mind". How absurd.

Then look at this one. Far from consoling the

bereaved families of the martyrs who fell to the enemy bullets during the recent incursions in the Poonch sector, a Bihar minister publicly commented that the jawans join the army to become martyrs!! These are just a few samples but enough to show how deep is the emotional divide between the common man and the rulers. Is the nation safe in such hands? Think it over.

Silver Lining

During over three decades in the intelligence services I have watched the gutter of Indian politics from outside. Against that background I have some elderly advice for the civil servants: Brothers, do not abandon the crusade for clean governance you chose to embark on. There still remain in service some upright and honest officers who need your support. The system has to be and can be cured ONLY FROM INSIDE. And yes, resist the temptation of swimming in this political cesspit for material or career benefits. You will only end up as victims of the political sharks and crocodiles.

The narrative above is enough to drive the reader into a state of depression. But I suffer from the disease of optimism. I see a silver lining even to this dark cloud. The nation is poised for a historic general election. It has a chance to improve its lot. And the present scenario favours this possibility. We have a very big middle class, an even bigger young population and a very sizeable addition of newly empowered voters. The middle class is fed up and wants a change. The minorities have realized that they have been exploited for votes all along. They are no more a monopoly of any single party. The majority community feels that the ruling party has taken it for granted and is forced to choose between communalism and secularism all these years when all it wants is to choose between good and evil. The new generation is impatient too.

This anger should not end up in mere candle marches, chain fasts, long runs etc. They must jettison their inertia and participate massively in the ensuing poll exercise, in the states as well as the Centre. They must cast their vote ONLY for candidates with a clean image. It is time for an Indian spring, not on the streets but at the polling booths and culminating in the ballot box. Their tryst with destiny will be now. If they miss it, the nation will again witness their representatives alternating between the Lok Sabha and Tihar jail.

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Reopening the Pandora's Box

Jai Telengana, Jai Andhra, Jai Rayalaseema

T. H. Chowdary

The reorganization of the State of Andhra Pradesh will not stop with the formation of Telengana as a separate State.

After excruciating and costly inflictions upon the hapless people of Telengana, who had been agitating for a separate State of their own even since 1956, the Congress Party and some of its allies, have, at long last, decided that the new State of Telengana, the 29th in India, would be created soon. It is relevant to note that the Congress has kept up its tradition of yielding only to militant agitations and even violence to concede a point.

For example, for too long the Congress led by Gandhiji and Nehru called the idea of Pakistan absurd and fantastic. They resisted the Muslims' demand that they be recognised as a separate nation and that by dividing India, Pakistan should be created as the homeland for the sub-continent's Muslims. Gandhiji even said that India would be partitioned only over his dead body. But he outlived the partition. The partition was precipitated by Direct Action of the Muslim League in which the Muslims were called to take violent actions to overwhelm those who oppose Pakistan that is, Hindus. The first ever government-sponsored pogrom of mass killing was undertaken by the Muslim League government led by Bengal's Premier H. S. Suhrawardy on 16 Aug 1946. In that Great Calcutta killing, thousands of Hindus were butchered, their properties torched and women outraged. It was this violence initiated by the Muslim League and which quickly spread to other adjacent parts that finally convinced the Congress that partition was inevitable and that it has to be agreed upon. Even then, some Congressmen were opposed to it. Gandhiji himself had to address the AICC in June 1947 requesting the opponents of partition to acquiesce to the partition of India. When he was jeered he walked out.

The 'I-Command' Commands

This tradition of heroically asserting principles and denying the popular demands and finally submitting to violence is what has been exhibited once again by the Congress-led by Sonia Gandhi in regard to Telengana. It is significant that, Her Imperial Majesty, the President for 15 continuous years of the Congress-I, has not spoken

one word either for or against the de-merger of Andhra Pradesh and creation of Telengana. But Congress groups mutually opposed to one another, one pleading for Samaikyandhra and the other for separate Telengana offered their unconditional acceptance of whatever 'I-Command' would decide. They have once again exhibited their absolute slavish submission to a leader from the Dynasty.

The reorganization of the State of Andhra Pradesh will not stop with the formation of Telengana as a separate State. Firstly, it is absolutely wrong to allow the Seemandhra to have its capital in Hyderabad for the next 10 years. Why should the Andhra legislators and government officials like the Collector and the poor people have to travel from their State for over 200 kms to Hyderabad, their temporary capital? Who benefits from this? And will it take 10 years for Seemandhra to decide upon where to build its capital and build it? When Andhra was separated from the Madras province, Andhras were not allowed to have their capital even for a single day in Madras nor did the Andhras feel small and helpless to move out of Chennai. Very bravely, they built up a tented capital in Kurnool which was just a very undeveloped district town. What with great entrepreneurs like the three MPs from Guntur, Vijayawada and Eluru, cannot Andhra find one of its towns even as a capital? For the sake of some builders and business men and the very rich people, the four and a half crore Seemandhra people should have to make a pilgrimage to Hyderabad for 10 years? It is insulting and greatly derogatory of Seemandra people. They should decide upon a place for their capital immediately and start functioning from there just as they did in Karnool.

Issue of Rayalaseema

It is a historical fact that the people of Rayalaseema (Bellary, Anantapur, Chittoor, Kurnool & Kadapa) in the undivided Madras province were not in favour of secession from Madras province. They thought that they would not be comfortable with the costal Andhra people. They were unwilling to join the movement for separation of the Telugu

districts from Madras Province preferring to stay with Madras. The great Desodharaka Nageswara Rao Panthulu garu invited leaders of the two regions, Rayalaseema and Costal Andhra, to his house, Sri Bag, in Chennai and made them to come to an agreement on where they would have their capital and the High Court, University, etc. That was known as Sri Baug Pact. Would the Rayalaseema people now be willing without any conditions to be in the combined Seemandhra State or would there be one more agitation for separation of Rayalaseema districts from the Andhra state of 1953 geography. There is already a vocal movement in Rayalaseema for a separate State. It is better that, along with Telengana, a decision be taken now itself with mutual consultation and discussion whether Rayalaseema and Costal Andhra should be together or a separate State comprising of the four Rayalaseema districts.

It is not that the Rayalaseema districts with an area of 67,299 Sq. Km and a population of 15,174,908 will be too small a State. There are 11 States in India which have a population less than there would be in Rayalaseema State. There are several States that depend on special grants from the Union for their functioning. It is the responsibility of the people of the entire Union of India to come to the help of every region whether it is Rayalaseema, Vidarbha or Gorkhaland or Bodoland. The Union Government should, therefore, not think it a burden to financially support, for some time at least, the new State of Rayalaseema. The weird idea of dividing Rayalaseema, putting Anantapur and Kurnool in Telengana and calling the new State Rayala Telengana should be buried. It is anti-people and is the brain child of Resident Non-Indians (RNI) people who have got the ear of the 'I-Command'. Rayalaseema has a distinct Telugu culture. It is the nearest successor to the great Vijayanagar Empire. Given initial help, it could become not only self-sufficient but as prosperous as Haryana or Himachal Pradesh. Without settling the separate Rayalaseema State issue, if Andhra is separated, then within months, there would be violent agitations on where the High Court and the capital and new universities for agriculture should be located. This looming uproar and disquiet and militant movements should be tackled now itself.

Just as the State's Re-Organisation Commission (SRC) was constituted in the wake of the formation of Andhra after violent incidents, the Congress true to its tradition of moving only in the aftermath of violence is talking of a second SRC. It is better late than never. The second SRC must address itself to the demands for Vidharbha out of Maharashtra, Bundelkhand, Harita Pradesh and Poorvanchal out of Uttar Pradesh; Jammu out of J&K and Gorkhaland out of West Bengal and Bodoland out

of Assam. Instead of giving scope for agitation after agitation for division of one State after another, wisdom requires that we address all the issues before they become violent.

The second SRC must take into account the people's sentiments, emotions and viability of new States. Long ago, Thomas Jefferson, the very wise constitution maker of the US said that every generation could consider itself as a new nation deserving a new constitution. India's population has increased from under 40 crores in 1951 to 123 crores now. A 32 crores USA has 51 States. Would it be wrong if we have 50 states?

What is necessary is a very strong Centre which will dedicate itself to the defence of our borders, to the integrity of our nation, and to ensure that the natural resources are shared by all the people in the country. The most pressing need is for a National Water Grid linking up all the rivers. All inter-state rivers should be treated as a national resource, and administered by the Union Government. Just as we have several power stations distributed all over the country and owned by the Union Government pumping power into the national grid and allocated to different States, India's national water grid could have several reservoirs and dams for all the inter-state rivers and just as we have the national transmission lines for power distribution we can have national canals delivering water to different reservoirs in the States and the States can have, like State high ways, State canals for distribution within the State. This question of water resource is a burning one and must be tackled right away.

Finally, let us hope that all the Telugu people will remember their common great literary heritage through Mahabharata and Bhagawata and Ramayanas. Our temples, our past, our great kings and artists have given us a great heritage. We people should learn to live amicably as peaceful neighbours, as inheritors of a common great past and literature and traditions.

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Many secular Arabs now argue that because Islamists tend to regard their rule as God-given, they will never accept that a proper democracy must include checks, including independent courts, a free press, devolved powers and a pluralistic Constitution to protect minorities.

The Economist, July 13, 2013

Emergence of Telangana: Need to Learn Lessons

Yalamanchili Sivaji

It is time that wiser counsels prevail and the leaders concerned sit together to prepare a blueprint for the comprehensive development of all the areas for comprehensive development

The ambition of Andhras for their own state is more than a century old. Mainly it was due to the injustices done to them in the old Madras state.

Initially the erstwhile Rayalseema leadership opposed this move and to rope them in the late K. Nageswara Rao Panthulu gathered the leaders of both sides at his residence 'Sribagh' in Madras. An agreement was reached between them in 1937 and it came to be known as the Sribagh pact.

Under this agreement, if a separate state was carved out for the Telugus the privilege of choosing the capital as well as the High Court would lie with the people of Rayalseema. In the 1952 General Elections, Congress was in a minority in the composite Madras State. It lost heavily in Telangana region, while the Progressive Democratic Front, the Socialist and other non-Congress outfits bagged a good number of seats in this region. The then Congress leadership, including Kamaraj Nadar, R. Venkatraman, and

C. Subramaniam persuaded C. Rajagopalachari, to lead the Congress Legislature party and form a minority Government. The armed Communist insurrection gave a fillip to the Communists both in Telangana as well as in Andhra

After the formation of the Andhra State, with Kurnool as its capital, Shri T. Prakasam Panthulu who got elected to the Assembly on a Praja Socialist Party ticket was inducted into the Congress and elected as the leader of the Congress Legislative Party. However, the Government was voted down by a no-confidence motion. Though Rs.1.9 Crore was allotted for the development of the capital at Kurnool, precious little was done to execute the works, since they were eyeing to go to Hyderabad sooner or later.

Even at the time of the formation of Andhra State, several critical areas like Bellary District went to Karnataka along with the Tungabhadra dam, Hampi, Vijayanagaram, Hubli railway division and the Hospet mines. Had Bellary

Andhra was created in 1953 as India's first linguistic state by hiving off 11 Telugu speaking districts of Madras. It was only a partial fulfillment of a long cherished goal of Andhras for a united state for all Telugu-speaking people, 'Vishal Andhra'. Prakasam, the new state's first chief minister, was asked why he had chosen Kurnool, a ramshackle district town of Rayalseema, as the capital. He replied: 'Because it is on the way to Hyderabad.' According to an astute Telangana observer, it gave an inkling of their long term plans...

Hyderabad (also called Telangana) was a medieval state, which in 1798 had ...become a vassal state of the East India Company. It was controlled by British Residents who allowed nominal internal autonomy to the Nizam...Hyderabad was a prize capital for Andhra Pradesh. It was founded in 1591 as a "replica of Heaven" by Mohammad Quli, the poet king of Golkonda...So when Andhra Pradesh was

enlarged by adding nine districts of the Hyderabad state to it, there was euphoria amongst the people of Seemandhra (Andhra plus Rayalseema). In contrast, the leaders of Telangana worried that they would be "colonised" by people from Andhra.

These apprehensions were assuaged by evolving a "Gentlemen's Agreement" embodying 14 safeguards for Telangana. For example, it provided that if the chief minister of the new state was from one region, his deputy would be from the other. Further, there would be a Regional Council for Telangana for its all round development." Allegations of the breach of safeguards cropped up soon after the creation of Andhra Pradesh..."

Excerpted from an article on the subject: "Where the Hearts Never Met. Hyderabad has been a bone of contention between Telangana and Seemandhra since 1956" by Narendra Luther in the Eye, the Sunday magazine of The Indian Express, August 11-17, 2013.

continued in Andhra, it could have been the natural capital instead of Kurnool. With Bellary in Andhra, Anantapur would have not remained a desert.

Andhra Pradesh was created in 1956 to include the Telangana region with Hyderabad as the capital, though the States Reorganisation Commission had recommended a wait of 5 years until 1961-62. For political expediency and romanticism, the then leaders were eager to merge Andhra with Hyderabad State to form Andhra Pradesh.

To dispel the apprehensions of Telangana, a Gentlemen's Agreement was reached. But the agreement was violated. A series of omissions and commissions took place and no emotional and social integration took place between these two regions. On top of it, during 1969 and 1972-73, mass movements erupted in both regions, demanding separate states. On the other hand, with the introduction of the zonal system, the state was further fragmented into several water-tight compartments.

There is an unbridled growth of Hyderabad with huge revenue collection. Even the State and Central agencies are concentrated in and around the State capital. We should draw lessons from this experience and decentralize various governmental departments and industries so that equitable development and inclusive growth takes place in all districts. It is the time that wiser counsels prevail and the leaders concerned sit together to prepare a blueprint for the comprehensive development of all the areas.

This is the right time to introspect and to draw a roadmap to unleash the inherent potential of all the regions. Even though the State will soon divided, it does not necessarily mean that the people settled down in Hyderabad should go back to their birth place. We should create confidence among them to pursue their life and vocation.

DR. Y. SIVAJI, a kisan leader and political activist and former memembr of the Rajya Sabha.

Regal, but not yet Imperial

I am surprised over the ease with which a public figure like Pranab Mukherjee has slipped into the regal environment of the President's Office. In six months' time he is a different person in the midst of an array of *kamarbandh* (a belt-like band round the waist) who bow whenever he passes their way. I thought he would change the office to bring it nearer the people. But he has changed himself, to enjoy the ostentatiousness that the British viceroys had displayed when they ruled the country.

Kuldip Nayar, *Janata weekly*, February 10-17, 2013

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Back to 1991?

Sunil S. Bhandare

The current economic scenario has been vitiated by a non-performing government and “prolonged policy paralysis”.

“Now there is 10-20 per cent chance that we might see 1991 again” commented eminent economist Dr. Arvind Panagariya very recently. Incidentally, he, along with India’s another internationally acclaimed and outstanding economist Dr. Jagdish Bhagwati, have been ardent critics of the on-going policy paralysis, and also of the position taken by Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen and Dr. Jean Dreze on issues of growth *versus* equity (“more participatory growth”) – the latter primarily manifesting in standards of social indicators.

The purpose of this article is certainly not to reflect on this on-going raging debate, but suffice it say that India’s current rapid deceleration in growth performance is in no small measure attributable to the dilemma or veritable confusion that has shaped the economic policies and strategies of UPA II. Whether Dr. Sen has had an overwhelming influence in such policy formulation would call for more detailed discussion. Our focus, however, would specifically be on key current macro-economic parameters and bring out the extent of their convergence or divergence with the crisis year 1991-92.

Comparing Key Macro Parameters of the Economy Then & Now						
(Annual %)	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92 Crisis Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14*** Perceived Crisis Year
Real GDP Growth	6.1	5.3	1.4	6.2	5.0	~5.5
Savings/ GDP Ratio*	21.3	22.9	21.3	30.8	31.8	~30.0
Investment / GDP Ratio*	23.7	26.0	21.8	35.0	35.4	~34.0
Inflation – WPI	7.5	10.3	13.7	8.9	7.4	~6.0
Inflation – CPI	6.1	11.6	13.5	8.9	10.4	~8.5
Fiscal Deficit/GDP Ratio #	8.8	9.4	7.0	8.2	8.4	~8.4
CAD/ GDP Ratio	2.3	3.0	0.3	4.2	4.8	~4.0
Forex Reserves [\$ Bn.]**	4.0	5.8	9.2@	294.4	292.6	250
Import Cover [months]	1.9	2.5	5.3	> 7	~6.5	<6
Short-term Debt [\$ Bn]	NA	8.5	7.1	78.2	96.7 ^	??
Short-term Debt to Total External Debt Ratio	NA	10.3	8.2	22.6	24.8	??
Short-term Debt / Forex Reserves Ratio	NA	382.3	141.6	26.6	33.1^	??

* At current prices. # Combined Centre and States. ** End-March data. @ Forex reserves were at low of U.S.\$1.3 bn. by end-July 1991. Reserves were gradually built-up with loans from IMF / World Bank / ADB and India Development Bonds. ^ **Short-term debt with residual maturity of up to one year is US\$172.3 bn. or equal to 44.2% of total debt and 59% of reserves.** NA = Data not immediately available. *** Our projections.

A sense of despair and despondency about the current state of the economy is found to be widespread. Both the RBI and Govt. of India have also been making desperate efforts to anchor the external value of Indian rupee through a sequence of some tough policy measures practically every week. But all these have so far proved to be mostly in vain! The crucial question is: whether various manifestations of current economic scenario are in any way comparable with the “economic crisis” of 1991-92? And there are lurking fears that these could well be. In almost all the recent monetary policy reviews, the RBI has also been expressing great caution about *a series of risk factors* – both external and domestic.

Normally the conditions of economic crisis are built about two or three years before the actual blow out of the event – hence, the need to set out data of two prior years, as shown in the table on the previous page (page 16)

Commonality of Two Scenarios – the Negatives

What are the common features? The 1991-92 economic crisis was driven by multiple factors – domestic political uncertainty and external shocks, the latter manifesting in the *1990 oil price* spike in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. *Three key adverse macro-economic parameters then were:* (a) high inflation; (b) high fiscal deficit; and (c) high current account deficit (CAD) causing a huge drop in the forex reserves. The loss of confidence also led to the flight of short-term credit and withdrawal of NRI deposits. Indeed, the 1992-93 Economic Survey observed that “...*External payments situation had been allowed to deteriorate to a state of near bankruptcy in June 1991*”.

Much of such damage to key macro-economic fundamentals, including the deceleration in savings and investment ratios, was being gradually built up over the previous two or three years of poor economic and political management. With erosion of fiscal space as well as forex reserves, there were virtually no economic policy options. Those were also days of stringent imports and capital account controls accompanied with the system of fixed exchange rate regime. Eventually, it led to *India approaching the IMF, World Bank and other international institutions* for a huge external borrowings program linked with “conditionalities”, which, among other things, included *devaluation of the rupee by 18% in early July 1991*.

The current economic scenario has many similar characteristics – stubbornly high inflation, high fiscal

deficit and even more worrisome unsustainable high current account deficit. Already, the forex reserves during the current financial year so far have dropped by as much as US\$15 bn. to around US\$277 bn at present. Short-term debt with residual maturity of up to one year is US\$172.3 bn as of end-March 2013 or equal to 44.2% of total debt and 59% of forex reserves. In our projections, despite the best of efforts of RBI and Govt of India, we expect a further drop of at least US\$25 to 30 bn by March 2014. Even the savings and investment ratios are decelerating in recent years, albeit from their significantly higher levels as compared to 1991-92.

In the crisis year of 1991-92, *India's growth rate had slumped* accompanied by a severe industrial recession, which lasted for almost two years. In contrast, *the prospect of real GDP growth still looks reasonably good in 2013-14*, albeit a few forecasts are now suggesting the prospect of even sub 5% real GDP growth rate. Indian industry too is going through a similarly prolonged recessionary phase.

The current economic scenario has been vitiated by a non-performing government and “prolonged policy paralysis”. This is comparable with the period prior to the 1991-92 crisis, wherein, apart from adverse shocks from external factors, there had been intense political uncertainty – the coalition government then embroiled in caste and religious disputes and riots spread throughout the country.

The Current Flagging Positives

What are then the positive factors on the scene in comparison to 1991-92? A few indeed! Witness: (a) “relatively” good growth supported by conducive monsoon conditions; (b) “relatively” high domestic savings ratio; (c) “relatively” better forex reserves in terms of import cover, debt servicing capability, etc; and (d) market determined exchange rate, which mirrors macro economic imbalances and can correct almost automatically the situation of overvaluation of the Indian rupee (subject to strategic RBI intervention), as is currently happening. There is thus a thin edge of positives, which calls for constant strengthening through more holistic policy response. Much of such efforts would be determined by how the political economy shapes up – before or after the general election!

Both the RBI and the Govt. of India are, doubtless, engaged in serious fire-fighting operations to bring down current account deficit (CAD) and combat depreciating rupee. There is supposedly a blueprint drawn by the Finance Minister, which includes (a) restrictions on select

imports – gold, silver, luxury goods, etc. and (b) more liberal guidelines for raising external loans – ECBs, NRE/FCNR deposits, trade finance, allowing some of the PSUs to raise quasi sovereign bonds, etc. Already import duty on gold has been raised further from 8% to 10% with immediate effect.

The objective of import restrictive measures is to reduce imports by about US\$6 billion and augment capital flows by over US\$11 bn. during 2013-14. Thus, the FM is seeking to cap CAD/GDP ratio at 3.7% as compared to 4.8% in the previous year. In absolute terms, the contraction in CAD would be from over US\$88 bn in 2012-13 to US\$70 bn in the current F.Y. Albeit modest, this correction in CAD/GDP ratio would be a welcome reversal of the trend and would be beneficial in arresting pressures on the external value of Indian rupee. At the same time, the RBI has initiated some restrictions on capital outflows.

Of course, there is going to be collateral damage due to many of these ‘emergency-kind’ of measures. For example, the progressive increase in the import duty on gold: there are already some indications of revival of gold smuggling in the last couple of months. Also, unless various recent restrictions on capital outflows [the return

of capital controls] are treated as purely temporary, these would be looked upon as retrograde and contrarian to the basic tenets of liberal economic policy.

Surely, these are challenging times comparable with the 1991 crisis year. We would like to conclude our reflections by highlighting *two very significant factors that were different in 1991*: first, we were fortunate then to have a decisive Prime Minister in Dr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, who did not have to look over his shoulder to ensure that he had the tacit approval of the “Nehru-Gandhi” family; and secondly, a feeling of exhilaration among industrialists, entrepreneurs and professionals that economic reforms on a meaningful scale – the decisive U-Turn from the erstwhile framework of licence-and-permit raj economic policies – was finally happening. This combined with the inevitable IMF/ World Bank “conditionalities” for their financial support brought about a paradigm shift in economic policies then and the rest has become a history! Let us hope 2014 election year becomes some such turning point!

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Politics of the Poverty Line

Sharad Joshi

Jayaprakash Narayan was one of the most extraordinary personalities, in the country post-independence. In the General Elections of 1977 he performed a miracle by defeating the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty and giving the country an alternative government in Delhi.

Earlier, in the elections of 1971 Indira Gandhi gave an economic perspective by answering the slogan 'Indira Hatao' with her slogan 'Garibi Hatao'. From her resounding victory in this election, it became clear that more voters were in favour of eradicating poverty than de-throning Indira Gandhi. In this context, though Socialism took a backseat, it cannot be declared as a victory for the call for the eradication of poverty. Indira Gandhi also abolished the privy purses of the Princes and nationalised banks. Both these were not related to the eradication of poverty. Later, during the global recession, it became clear that India could survive mainly because of the basic tendency of Indians to save and not because banks were nationalised.

The fact that a majority of the voters in 1971 were in favour of 'Garibi Hatao' proves the hypocrisy of Indian voters. It is not just Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi who nourish such hypocrisy – every common Indian is equally so. Even the poor, for a number of reasons does not want poverty to be eradicated.

In the USA, as the country became wealthy the institution of the family set up was destroyed, there was an increase in the number of suicides and anti-social behaviour became prominent. It is in this context it becomes imperative to ask the question – What is the price of being wealthy?

The concept of poverty as a virtue and wealth as poison as stated by Sane Guruji (wealth is like a cripple whereas poverty is healthy and strong) was discarded. It was realised that while there might be

some virtue in being poor, poverty also induced unhappiness and mental imbalance.

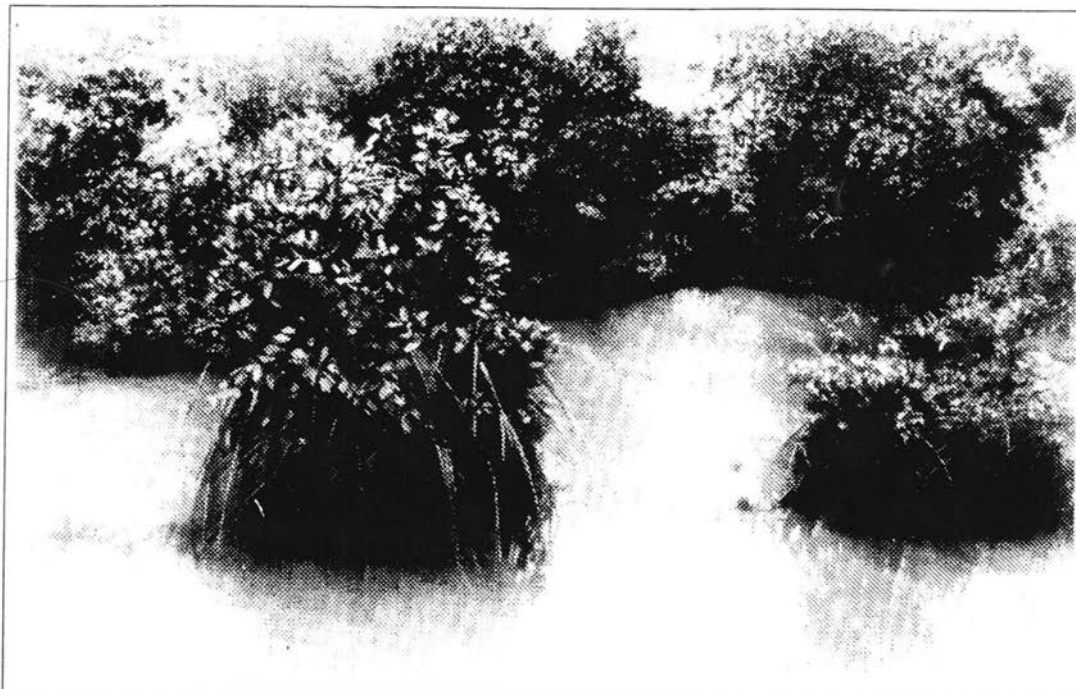
Wealth, on the other hand, was not vice per se. More wealth implies more choice of products for the consumer rich or poor to choose from. This does not necessarily mean that he or she should consume all available products. What is important to note is the freedom to choose from a wide choice became available.

For example, a child can choose and play with an assortment of toys – of different kinds, colours and shapes. This same freedom of choice becomes possible when choosing a job or finding a life partner. If one takes into account this wide range of freedom of choice, and if one utilizes this freedom prudently consumerism can be curbed.

Traditional thinking making a virtue of poverty has by implication been rejected by the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' with the argument 'What is wrong in being poor?' Since then in India's electoral politics, it has become an accepted norm to give slogans emphasising economic changes.



CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



A unique feature of the Industrial Garden Township, Pirojshanagar, is a large expanse of swamp, one of the very few such areas existing in the city under original mangrove forests.

At a time when mangroves are being destroyed at an alarming rate in the process of excessive and damaging reclamation..., Godrej has taken steps, at considerable care and expense.

to preserve and protect this Nature's gift in the awareness that mangrove destruction leads generally to loss of food, breeding grounds and shelter for numerous forms of life.

It is almost unbelievable that, like the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Borivli, such a mangrove still exists in the excessively congested and polluted megapolis that Mumbai is

HELP BRING OUR INDIA UP - QUICKLY!

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WELFARE : ENVIRONMENT / POPULATION NEXUS...

The credit for the catchy phrase 'India Shining', created during the general elections of 2009 is given to Pramod Mahajan. This slogan conveyed that because citizens are saving, investing and taking risks, India is on the path to become a world superpower. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA), formed under the leadership of Congress, on the other hand, coined the slogan 'Aam Admi' which involved the common man and in the 2004 elections voters showed their preference for the common man rather than for the entrepreneurial spirit.

As of now, this is the status in the game of politics. How to draw a median which will divide voters? The party which can identify itself with more than half of the voting community gains a strong foothold in the elections. This has resulted into political parties – both in power and those which are hoping to be in power – resorting to unique modus operandi. They are enticing voters by announcing futile development projects which will drain the Government's money. In other words, without respecting the code of conduct during elections, parties resort to indirectly tempting voters with promises of employment, education, medical aid etc. We have come a long way from the original 'Garibi Hatao' slogan.

One can easily play with numbers while defining 'poverty'. Who is considered as poor in India? If you take into account the statistics given by the Planning Commission according to which only 20% of the Indian population is living under the poverty line, the party with 'Garibi Hatao' slogan loses the chance to procure more than 20% of votes. But if the definition of the poor is made ambiguous by removing its base then it becomes all inclusive in which every 'Aam Admi' can be accommodated.

Dr. Ambedkar gave a slogan to his followers – 'Educate, Unite and Fight'. One may want to check the

possibility that the rampant corruption in today's education system is a result of the inconsistencies in the message to 'Fight'. Thus, equations like education = job and job = money were destroyed along with Socialism. Had Dr Ambedkar emphasized on the vocational training of the traditional artisans rather than emphasizing on school and college education, his vision of a casteless society would have been achieved and the country would have benefited.

In today's ethos we can no longer claim to 'eradicate something'. No one can guarantee success for the slogan 'Garibi Hatao'. We have also seen the debacle of the slogan 'India Shining' designed in 2009 to encourage the industrialists. Now under the pretext of 'Aam Admi' the same old wine of socialism is being sold in a new bottle. The vicious circle is now complete. Now the search for a new phrase which will appeal to the masses is on. In this process instead of using vague vocabulary, those who are making statements like 'one can have a hearty meal in Rs.12 in Mumbai', 'You can eat well for Rs.5 in Delhi' are going to be laughed at..

At the same time, since the number of 'have nots' is increasing in the country, there is a need to devise a new vocabulary which will respect everyone's pride and which everyone can identify with. Otherwise history will be repeated and regional politics will become prominent exactly the way religious politics surfaced after the downfall of socialism. If that happens there is every risk that Churchill's prediction of the country being divided into small states will come true.

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This is from his column in the popular Marathi daily *Loksatta*. English translation by Meera Tamhane Agrawal.

Skewed Reportage

The self-inflicted death of several pilgrims on the railway tracks in Bihar has revealed how our newspapers - without exception - dramatize the tragedy in a manner that alludes blame on the train, and not only exempts the victims of responsibility, but also sympathizes with them. Has it not occurred to anyone that it was not the train but the stupidity of mindlessly barging across active railway tracks that was responsible for this tragedy?

It's the bane of Indian culture never to be responsible for one's own well-being but to invariably

hold others accountable, and the epitome of such attitude is, unsurprisingly, exemplified by pilgrims, who en masse visit deities to take care of their lives, even to the extent of dying doing so.

Such incidents remind me of the title of Mario Puzo's book, "Fools Die". Wake up, Indians, and be responsible for yourselves.

PHIROZE JAVERI, Mumbai.
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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

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

Politicos Vs. Babus

1. Politicians and Babus are both objects of derision and contempt until one is juxtaposed against the other. Recently Babus have emerged as heroes against the politician arch villains. The truth is that a few Babus are good enough to become heroes and a few politicians may also be good enough not to be villains. This is an old fight between the two but became a national issue due to the battle that an IAS probationer, Durga Shakti has had to fight with the UP Government, already noted for highhandedness. Durga was suspended for allegedly demolishing a wall of a masjid being built illegally. It was suspected that she was made a target as she had taken up cudgels against a sand mining mafia that was close to some Socialist Party politicians. Some politicians think that bureaucrats are their personal servants, not realizing that bureaucrats are appointed to administer lawful policies and not work at the whim and fancy of politicians. Durga became a cause célèbre overnight as a girl facing the wrath of politicians interested in playing the minority card. The UP Government charge-sheeted her for taking reckless action that allegedly disturbed communal harmony. The furore over the injustice done to her forced even the ever silent Sonia Gandhi to take her side and the somnolent PM to speak

(Politicians are in the firing line now as the Supreme Court has ruled that convicted politicians stand disqualified from elections and posts they occupy and the CIC brought political parties under RTI)

1. In the wake of l'affaire Durga, other brave babus who were victims of politicians' vendetta came to public notice. Ashok Khemka, IAS who was harassed in Haryana for taking on Robert Vadra, son-in-law of the first family, for land manipulations and Pankaj Chaudhary, SP, Jaisalmer, who was shunted out for acting against the underworld came into limelight. These examples would no doubt encourage other babus to act fearlessly in spite of dangers to their careers. The Centre which controls the all-India service officers is unable to intervene initially as States, to which these officers are allocated, control their postings and promotions. Only the disciplinary action taken against them can be challenged by the Centre after it is imposed – not before the process is completed. Immense emotional damage is caused in the interim. Even the Centre is not free from bias if its political interests are involved as seen in the Khemka-Vadra affair. There is, therefore, no guaranteed remedy to prevent injustice to bureaucrats; they have to take the chance of suffering the consequences of being honest. While the heroism of the lonely warriors needs to be applauded, every officer who complains against the Government would not necessarily be a hero. It may become a fashion to claim victimhood every time an officer is penalized. Care will have to be taken to separate the chaff from the grain.

Dawood in Pakistan

2. There was needless sensation in the media about Shaharyar Khan's admission that Dawood was in Pakistan earlier but he was 'chased out' and may be in UAE now. Since Shaharyar Khan is a Special Envoy of the Pak PM, his statement was accepted as a confession by Pakistan. There were two errors in this assumption: a) Shaharyar Khan may be a respected diplomat but he was not making this statement on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and b) he made it clear that as a former Foreign Secretary, he had no information about Dawood (a lie) and that he was saying what the Pak press was reporting for quite some time. He clarified that in the present Nawaz Sharif regime, if Dawood were to be in Pakistan, he would have been arrested (again a lie) and most likely he was in UAE after being chased out of Pakistan. Dawood's presence in Pakistan is known universally and it is only Pakistan

2. Indian media got excited, claiming it to be a great revelation after 20 years of denial by Pakistan that Dawood was indeed in Pakistan. Shaharyar Khan failed to give any time frame or answer obvious questions why Dawood was chased out when he should have been arrested as an international terrorist, so declared in 2003. Careful consideration of the so-called confession reveals that Shaharyar Khan did not confess to any guilt. The question then is why did he make such a statement? It should be read with his other statement that the killing of 5 Indian jawans on the LOC was a condemnable act of terrorists and not of the Pak army. The Dawood statement was an attempt to show that the Nawaz Sharif Government is not guilty of sheltering wanted terrorists and has a clean slate to start a dialogue with India. The September meeting between the two PMs, on the sidelines of the UN General

that has kept on denying the reality; it would have been a sensation if it had confessed to his presence there.

Assembly, is important for both to emerge as messengers of peace. Shaharyar Khan was merely doing what A.K.Antony unsuccessfully tried to do in our Parliament.

Bargirls and Ban

3. The ambitious move of R. R. Patil, Maharashtra's Home Minister, to improve the moral standards of the people met with disapproval from the Supreme Court. The question is whether the State should determine the moral compass of its citizens. What should be the parameters for the State to decide what a person should do or not do? If an activity is harmful to others, the State has the responsibility to check such activity but if it is harmful only to the person himself/herself, should the State intervene? Bar Girls entertain people in liquor bars and often turn the bars into dens of prostitution. Patil tried to stop this by banning the dance girls, which deprived them of their livelihood. The bar owners raised issues like fundamental rights and claimed that their business was clean, which nobody would believe. The liquor bars are undoubtedly dens of inequity, sexual exploitation and underworld activities. The issue is whether it is right to deprive the bar girls the right to earn their livelihood because somebody in the Government thinks that it is morally wrong. What else should the bar girls do to keep the home fires burning?

3. A well-intentioned measure floundered against the complexity of law. Maharashtra Government failed to explain the difference between dance programmes in 5-star hotels and dances in liquor bars; it could also not provide alternative career for thousands of bar girls. The Court suggested that restrictive measures could be taken to prevent misuse of proximity between patrons and bar girls. The Government should draw a line beyond which it should not impose its notions of morality. If the Government is allowed to decide what a citizen should or should not do, we all may soon end up in jail. Today, it is the dancing girls; next, there would be demands for ban on smoking, alcohol, racing, short dresses and ultimately on the mingling of the two sexes. Shades of the Taliban, if we are not careful! It should be up to the parents and the society to advise (and advise only) what is right and wrong and not for the Government to issue a dictat. Police should attend to crime and leave out moral transgressions from their ambit. Notwithstanding the setback, R.R. Patil insists on pressing for the ban through an ordinance to impose Government's will on matters that are better left to other organs of society but it is hard to stop moral warriors.

Batla House Encounter

4. The court verdict (July 25) in the Batla House encounter of September 2008 came after a 5-year long controversy whether it was a stage managed incident. The police held that the Batla House module was responsible for the serial blasts in Delhi a week before. It belonged to the Indian Mujahideen. It became a political issue with Digvijay Singh questioning the police version while his own Government through the Home Minister asserted that it was indeed a genuine encounter. Obviously, for the UP Muslim votes, SP and BSP joined the anti-police tirade in claiming that the Azamgarh Muslim youth were being targeted by the police, blaming them for terrorist attacks anywhere in the country. That a Police Inspector had died during the Batla House encounter eluded the sensibilities of the doubters. The Human Rights groups, Jamia Millia teachers and residents of the Batla House area led the charge against the police. The court verdict vindicated the police but the case is far from being closed as appeals against the judgment would no doubt prolong the debate for years more.

4. There is never a closure to such cases as both sides hold on to their opinions despite court judgments. Remember, Afzal Guru's defenders kept on adducing arguments in his favour long after the Supreme Court confirmed his death sentence. In the present case too, there are leaders who question whether the IM exists and wonder if it is a part of IB's dirty tricks. There are always discrepancies in police versions in such cases as the actual events remain a mystery and the police try to make out a cogent story. They are often caught in the details. In this encounter, it is not known how other IM militants received wounds found on their bodies – who shot whom and how? The questions will remain and the critics of the police action will keep pointing out the discrepancies. They were not satisfied with the findings of the Human Rights Commission who gave a clean chit to the police; they are not happy with the court verdict and want a judicial commission to enquire into the entire episode. There is no guarantee that even that would satisfy them.

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, 400 001.



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjika

Is India Ungovernable?

We are back to the old system of autonomous feudal lords who give only lip service to the concept of a united India - as and when it suits them.

Reams of newsprint and endless hours of television debates have been expended bemoaning the pathetic state of India's democracy and the abysmal governance we have suffered through for decades. Most of it is justified of course. The sad truth, however, is that despite the years of brainstorming, intelligent suggestions and public outrage, there is only a faint glimmer of optimism that anything will improve in many of our lifetimes, if ever. This leads me to wonder: is India ungovernable?

I'm beginning to come to the conclusion that the very concept of India as a united, democratic country is a flawed one belied by centuries of ancient history. Before Babar's invasion in the early part of the 16th century, India was a cacophony of small kingdoms that considered themselves fully autonomous and had only passing traffic with each other. The Mughals managed to unite the Northern part of the country, but only through conquest and force of arms. Democracy was an unknown idea at that time. Then the British took over where the Mughals left off. Their methods were somewhat less brutal. They tried to convince the natives that they should consider themselves blessed to be afforded the privilege of Anglo-Saxon governance. The British were very clever. They did not try to alter or overturn the feudal system that had been part of the Indian tradition for centuries. Rather they fostered it. The only change they made was to put themselves in place of the old feudal overlords. The message they sought to convey to the 'ignorant natives' was that we will look after you, as long as you do as you're told. After a couple of generations, many Indians came to accept this relationship as the natural order of things. Some even regarded it as an improvement over the previous zamindars who treated them like dirt. The British did the same thing, of course, but at least they said "please" and "thank you" after every command.

Gandhi, Nehru, Sardar Patel and the other stalwarts of our freedom struggle had a grand vision of India as a united, modern, self-sufficient democracy and to their credit, they did work towards it. They did not entirely succeed, but at least they tried. The succeeding generation of politicians soon realized however, that this democracy nonsense did not pay them any personal dividends. The Lincolnian ideal of serving the people was a fool's game:

and useful only to fool a gullible public. They also caught on that the Union government only benefitted the party in power. It was far more practical and profitable to carve out their own fiefdoms.

This trend took hold and strengthened over the years. And so today, we have the hegemony of the likes of Mulayam Singh, Mayawati, Karunanidhi, Jayalitha, the Thackeray cousins et al. Anyone who believes that these overlords believe in democracy is deluding himself. They demand - and get - total obedience, even obeisance. Remember the 'edifying' spectacle of AAIDMK party men prostrating themselves before empress Jayalitha? Bal Thackeray's (who openly expressed his scorn for democracy) passing away brought forth lakhs of followers into the streets. The few idealistic politicians remaining have become almost inconsequential. When Manmohan Singh shuffles off his mortal coil, my guess is that the Congress will be hard pressed to muster a few hundred to participate in his funeral procession - and most of them will be party men.

And there you have the present system. We are back to the old system of autonomous feudal lords who give only lip service to the concept of a united India - as and when it suits them. This notion of a third front is fanciful because if these satraps are indifferent towards the Centre, they are positively hostile to each other, hypocritical platitudes notwithstanding. They brook no interference from an ineffective Union government. A case in point is the recent sorry episode relating to the farcical suspension of an upright IAS officer who dared to take on the sand mafia in Uttar Pradesh. Oblivious to strictures from the Prime Minister and universal condemnation in the media, the Chief Minister and his colleagues have chosen to brazen it out. One minister has gone to the extent of boasting that they can safely send back all the state's IAS officers without affecting what he optimistically refers to as "governance" in his State. Such open disdain for Central administration is typical of the all-powerful regional leaders. They are quite content to hold near-absolute power in their mini-kingdoms. If fortune and circumstance - not to mention politics - affords them a national role, they will welcome it, but will not be broken hearted to continue in their present positions.

That then is the unappetizing choice facing the electorate in next year's general election. With neither the Congress nor the BJP having a realistic hope of forming the next government on its own, we the people are destined to suffer through another fractured coalition. Each of the regional leaders will demand his or her pound of flesh in the form of ministerial posts into which he/she will thrust

his/her cronies; with their eligibility for the position being the least of their priorities. So we are facing five (or less) more years of petty squabbles, parliament disruptions and egotistical tantrums. In short, more of the same. Tell me, how can anyone govern a country which, in effect, is not even a country? Maybe I should emigrate.

The Mouse that Roared

Our Fevicol PM is so determined to stick to his seat that the thought of challenging the Grande Dame is a non-starter

It has long been an open secret that our effete Prime Minister has been spectacularly unsuccessful in standing up to Sonia Gandhi. True to his creed, he has some sound ideas about pumping up the Indian economy, but they have been routinely stonewalled by Mrs. Gandhi who regards herself as a benevolent and generous empress with a mission to feed, house and clothe the country's teeming millions who exist in abject poverty. Naturally, she does not clutter her mind with petty details like where the money is supposed to come from to finance her grandiose scheme. Her job is to command. It is left to her minions to figure out those troublesome details.

Manmohan Singh does not have to be minion. Constitutionally, he is the head of the government. Constitutionally, the party president has at best merely an advisory role in the Executive branch; but that is not the way things work in the Congress. If you are a Nehru-Gandhi, you have a divine right to rule; and can be challenged only at one's own peril. Our Fevicol PM is so determined to stick to his seat that the thought of challenging the Grande Dame is a non-starter. After all, he has a cushy job with all the trappings and privileges of power without actually exercising it. Why shake the tree?

Of late, however, the country has been witnessing a peculiar phenomenon. The mouse has begun to roar, albeit feebly. Manmohan Singh has ordered a slew of economic initiatives, including massive infrastructure projects in the near future; and investment schemes which may not necessarily benefit the aam aadmi. Surprisingly

there have been no protests or shouts of elitism from Madam's pet hobby, the National Advisory Council - at least not yet. What accounts for this reversal of attitude?

My guess is that Sonia Gandhi has finally seen the writing on the wall. As the next general election creeps ever closer, it is finally dawned on her and her dutiful son that there is a very real danger of the Congress party being swept from power. They cannot play mai-baap if they have no authority. Their only hope was that the economy - and collaterally, the standard of living of the people - would quickly improve, however gradually. Perhaps it was time to let Manmohan Singh have his head and go for broke. They had nothing to lose really. Even if the PM succeeded, it was highly unlikely that he would try to assert his authority over the 'Family'. He just does not have it in him. And if he fell flat on his face, the Gandhis would have a convenient scapegoat.

In my opinion, they have left it too late. Announcing economic initiatives is one thing; implementing them is another. The Congress - or any other political party for that matter - has a lousy track record in taking fast decisions. It will be ironical if the BJP coalition reaps the benefits of the reforms started by their hated enemy - and you can bet they will claim full credit for it. Perhaps Manmohan Singh will ride off into the sunset, kicking himself for forgetting the dictum: fortune favours the brave.

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Whose' State of Mind?

...Rahul Gandhi is right. Poverty is a state of mind but not of the poor but of the politicians who only seek to measure poverty to locate how much money they can spend feeding the poor but not giving them hope. This is because the idea is to keep the people confined to their electoral constituency grateful and ready to vote for the *mai-baap* Congress. Rahul could persuade his party to scrap the Food Security Bill and spend the Rs.1.25 lakh crore on job creation. But is that his state of mind?

Meghnad Desai in his column "Out of my Mind", *The Sunday Express*, August 11

National Security to Human Security: A Conceptual Evolution

B. Ramesh Babu

“Desamante mattikadoyi, desamante manushuloyi!”
Desam does not mean soil, desam means people

- Gurajada Appa Rao

“The whole world is a tree and all the countries are its branches.”

- Atharva Veda

Usage gives words and phrases specific meanings that often differ from their literal meaning. For example, *Pankaj* and *Neeraj* mean lotus, though many other things also grow in mud and water. ‘Social Security’ should normally mean the security of all the people in the society. However, usage made it to mean the welfare of all the citizens in the country, i.e. unemployment relief and insurance, old age pension, and health care, etc. Similarly, usage by Americans and others made “National Security” to mean the security of the nation state, i.e. protection of its territory and the integrity of the government and to ensure them both primarily through military power. After the end of the cold war and in the aftermath of globalization, the concept of national security is transformed into the all inclusive “Human Security.”

Militarisation of National Security

During the cold war era, the two Super Powers (and their allies) launched the most compelling and fierce arms race in human history. The US and the USSR went crazy acquiring deadly weapons (atom bombs, hydrogen bombs, cobalt bombs) and the capabilities to deliver them (rockets, IRBMs and ICBMs). They also built a network of military bases abroad to ensure their “national security.” In the process, the global balance of power degenerated into balance of terror. With advances in the weapons technologies, the balance became more fragile and the terror became more awesome! Consequently, the whole world was condemned to live on the brink of a nuclear disaster for decades. This precarious nuclear stalemate was grounded on what was aptly called **MAD** (Mutual Assured Destruction), which in due course advanced into **NUTs** (Nuclear Utilization Theories) with the “development” of miniature (theatre) nuclear weapons. Neither the Americans nor the Russians had any moral qualms over their “sovereign right” of holding the whole world to ransom in their blind and paranoid pursuit of “national security.” The rest of the world had no choice but to grin and bear

it. That was the era of politics of fear and panic in world affairs, which passed into history with the end of the cold war.

Towards Human Security

The real and perceived compulsions of the global strategic balance of terror during the cold war bound the allies to the apron strings of the Big Two. The non-aligned nations could at the most play the role of mediators and fire fighters in crisis situations. However, the sense of safety and “national security” contingent on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) was neither very reassuring nor intellectually exhilarating! Many perceptive thinkers and enlightened leaders around the world naturally looked for more rational and more “secure” alternatives. Norway, Canada, and Japan have taken the lead in this respect. However, it was the 1994 Report of the UNDP on Human Security that set the ball rolling.

UNDP and Human Security

The UNDP’s Human Development Report declared that the “world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives.” This people-centred approach initiated a global debate on the new concept of *human security*. The Report listed seven key constituents of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal (physical) security, community security and political security (not necessarily in that order).

A Secure Europe in a Better World

Many European leaders and thinkers were deeply dissatisfied with the global strategic security compulsions of the Cold War era. While they recognized the logic of survival within the global strategic balance of terror, they saw a secure Europe in a more stable and peaceful world to be a better alternative to ‘sharing hegemony’ with the US in an increasingly dangerous world.

Furthermore, the entrenched habit of the *US to go it alone* aggravated the situation. Since the end of the cold war, European countries and their regional international organization, the European Union (EU), are hewing an increasingly more independent path in foreign (and domestic) affairs. The emerging concept of European Security Strategy emphasizes “cooperative engagement” with all countries in contrast to the unilateralism of the US. The new European approach insists that the rights of the individual are at least as important as the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the nation state.

“Europeans cannot be secure while millions of people live in intolerable insecurity,” asserted Mary Kaldor, leading advocate of the European Security Doctrine. “Where people live in lawlessness, poverty, exclusivist ideologies and daily violence, there is fertile ground for criminal networks and terrorism. Conflict regions export or transport hard drugs and guns to European Union. That is why a contribution to global human security is now the most realistic policy for Europe,” she argued. Human security is to be achieved through “protecting individuals through law enforcement, humanitarian assistance with occasional use of force.” However, armed intervention to promote human security is laced with bobby traps, I must warn.

Putting People First

In the conceptual transition from national security to human security, Lloyd Axworthy, a former Foreign Minister of Canada, played a worthy role. He asserted that the meaning of security was changing because the task of protecting the citizens, the fundamental purpose of the State, was becoming increasingly more complex. “Hobbled by economic adversity, outrun by globalization, and undermined by bad governance, the capacity of some States to provide this protection has increasingly come into question,” Axworthy pointed out rightly. Protection of individuals has become especially vulnerable in war torn societies. At times the State itself became a threat to the rights and welfare of its citizens. This leads us to broaden the focus of security beyond the level of the State and shift it toward the individual human beings, he argued. Therefore, there is need “to consider appropriate roles for the international system to compensate for State failure,” he argued.

Axworthy asserted that “intermediate powers” (like Canada, Norway, Japan, etc.) have a responsibility of their own for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security of people. The Canadian approach also advocates military intervention in the internal affairs of States though *with good intentions*. But, the risks and

dilemmas inherent in such an approach remain unaddressed. Axworthy argued that human security “puts people first” and recognized their safety as integral to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. Security of the State is essential, but not sufficient to fully ensure the safety and well-being of the people. He advocated that like-minded States and non-State actors should work in concert to create new forms of diplomatic action and promote a “culture of prevention”. Development policies at the State and international levels should tackle the root causes of conflict, Axworthy insisted. *This is not dissimilar to the dilemmas India is facing in dealing with its most dangerous internal challenge, the growing threat of naxalism and violent demands for justice.*

Comprehensive Security

In their addresses to the UN General Assembly the Japanese Prime Ministers Murayama (1995) and his successor Hashimoto (1997), reiterated their country’s commitment to the human rights of every citizen on earth and his/her protection from poverty, disease, ignorance, oppression and violence. They stressed that all nations should change their life styles in view of “our responsibilities for future generations and global human security.” In response to the Asian financial crisis of 1996-1997, Prime Minister Ouchi shifted the focus of “comprehensive security” by locating the need for human security in foreign policy. He said that the Asian economic crisis aggravated social strains threatening the daily lives of people. Therefore, he urged the adoption of “strategies of economic development” that give importance to human security with a view to enhance “the long term development of our region.” Human security, according to Ouchi, is a “concept that takes a comprehensive view of all threats to human survival, life, and dignity.” He said that environmental problems like global warming are “dangerous to us and future generations.”

The Japanese approach stressed economic development and provision of basic necessities of life – i.e. freedom from want. The Japanese launched a Trust Fund for Human Security at the United Nations and concentrated their effort on crisis prevention and sustainable development in contrast to the interventionist and legalistic approaches of the Europeans and the Canadians. The Japanese Government also launched an independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) to promote public understanding of the concept and its development as an operational tool of foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Macro concepts and organizing principles seeking

to govern human affairs gain currency across the world because of their inherent merit and the clout of the 'powers' championing them. The American concept of "national security," which literally governed the foreign policies and strategic doctrines of the whole world for over half a century, certainly proves the point. Since the global balance of power, by all accounts, has shifted from the Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific, it is high time that India and China (and other ancient and living civilizations of the world) come out into the open and propagate their own ideas and concepts of individual security, international order and world peace. For example, the Hindu concept of *dharma*, a unified and balanced formulation of rights, duties, and justice, is inherently superior to the western concept of individual rights, which over time degenerated into unilateral entitlements against the State and society. In the process, the corresponding and equally important obligation of the citizens to perform their duties is downgraded and even sidetracked. Such gross imbalance between rights and duties is more than partly responsible for the decline of social values and moral standards in most of the western countries (and elsewhere in the world, including India).

Security of humans is intimately – symbiotically – intertwined with the wellbeing of all the other living and non-living inhabitants of the planet earth, which is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the insatiable greed of man. Misguided by the skewed western concepts of "development, progress and modernity," misusing and abusing nature, humans have seem hell bent on exhausting the finite resources of mother earth beyond its capacity to replenish and renew. The Himalayan tragedy of June 2013 in the char dham region of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in which thousands perished and many more wounded is probably one of the worst examples of human greed versus ecological balance. Mining mafia, real estate mafia, reckless number of hydro projects, and above all criminal collusion of them all with politicians and bureaucracy is the root cause of the monumental disaster. Nature nurtures without joy and destroys without tears! Man has to learn to live in tune with nature. *There is no other earthly choice!* Humans should realize that they are only one of the many creatures living on earth and the planet earth itself is a mere spec in the cosmic scheme of the universe, *the Brahmaand*.

Conclusion

The conceptual evolution from "National Security" to "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is indeed an inspiring journey of expansion and inclusion. National Security is preoccupied with the protection of territory and sovereignty of the State. "A Secure Europe in a Better

World" is primarily concerned with the security and wellbeing of Europe, which requires an orderly and conflict free world. To ensure a 'better world' the European powers would intervene militarily on 'humanitarian grounds', as they see them, The Canadian view puts "people first" and contends that individual rights are no less important than national security. This approach advocates international treaties to prioritise the rights of the people. It also justifies military intervention. The Japanese approach seeks to provide "comprehensive security" to the people through sustainable development and by fulfilling their basic needs. Military intervention is not included in the Japanese scheme of things.

Freedom from fear and freedom from want are the most fundamental pre-requisites of human security. But their very comprehensive all inclusive nature and the inherent ambiguities make the concept of human security amenable to a multitude of interpretations as discussed above. However, ambiguities should not stand in the way of Nation States promoting freedom from fear and freedom from want within their borders and in the world beyond. They should cooperate with other nations and work together in multilateral fora, particularly under the auspices of the United Nations. However, the challenges of international terrorism, transnational conflicts, and above all Governments and regimes of all hues violating the life and liberties of their own people remain intractable. The "structural violence" inherent in the modern State itself remains to be the most daunting threat to the life and liberties of people and social justice.

However, it is important to recognise that the security nation state and human security should not be juxtaposed in the *either/or* mode. Both are intertwined and one cannot be attained without the other. Their relative primacy would call for re-thinking and re-evaluation from time to time.

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The Falling Rupee and Rakshabandan

Dollar on an escalator.....rupee on a ventilator....nation in ICU....we are in comaonion in showroom.....God Bless India. The only way to save the Rupee is to have it Tie a Rakhi to the Dollar and say "Meri raksha karna!

Renu Prakash, prakashrenu07@gmail.com

A Cup of Coffee Together Can Reduce Attrition!

Abhijith Nayak

*As opposed to most managers, a good leader always considers his team as a family.
He tries to gel with the team and understand the needs of his team players.*

As opposed to most managers, a good leader always considers his team as a family. He tries to gel with the team and understand the needs of his team players.

Though the current slowdown has tamed the demon called attrition, it has not killed it. The moment the Indian economy catches pace, there is bound to be an avalanche of resignation letters cluttering the desks of HR managers. This is a verbatim from an Economic Times article (Shreya Biswas, June 7, 2013) which adds that one in four Indian employees will leave their jobs in 2013 and attrition in India is going to top world charts. Expected employee turnover (also called churn rate) is 26.9% for India and way above the world expected rate of 21.2%. Attrition is the pain point for many managers. Some even lose their variable pay for not being able to control the exodus of resources. And yes, the adage is completely true - Employees do not leave companies, they leave their managers! Then the question comes – “Is keeping employees so very difficult?”

The truth is – All it takes is a cup of coffee to keep attrition away.

Causes of Attrition

If we try to analyse the causes behind attrition, we can drill down to many, ranging from a salary hike to better career prospects. But a remarkable number of employees leave because of a lack of understanding about their role and responsibilities and rewards planned for them. This simple communication gap between the management and the resources makes employees jump jobs. The same Economic Times article also mentions that 36% of employees expressed concerns about supervisory coaching for their development.

A manager is a task master – he knows what has to be done and what are the deadlines of the task to be completed. He knows who can do it and how efficiently he can do it. But, many managers do not know what lies in the minds of his team members. Are they giving their 100% to the task? Are they satisfied with the task assigned? Are they being recognized and sufficiently rewarded? These questions cannot all be answered by a manager. Some companies have a career counsellor who plays a mentor to employees yet these companies have

not been able to drastically reduce attrition when compared with their peers.

Good leader vs Manager

As opposed to most managers, a good leader always considers his team as a family. He tries to gel with the team and understand the needs of his team players. Be it a personal or a professional problem in the life of his team member, a leader makes himself available. Similarly, a leader breaks the barriers of level and hierarchy to have lunch or even a cup of coffee with his subordinates. The time spent helps him understand his team and the aspirations of his team members; what makes them happy, the problems they face, the kind of work they like and what they dislike. Once he has satisfactory answers to these questions, it becomes very easy for him to allot work and get the best from his team. This is because he now understands his team's strengths and weaknesses.

A good leader also takes time out to explain to his team members the role they are expected to play and the management's plans for them. When he conveys the significance of the task at the project / company level, there is a sense of satisfaction in the tasks he performs. The leader keeps the team informed of the progress the project is making and the latest developments in company. This creates a feeling of belonging.

Frequent meetings open-up a team player and make him vocal about his aspirations. These meetings keep the team player informed of the rewards in store for him and helps keep him motivated. The bonding and the mutual trust that the leader develops within his team creates a feeling of partnership even ownership in the minds of the team members. They feel a sense of belonging to the leader in particular rather than one of being a mere employee.

These are the kinds of emotions (and of course remuneration is important) that can kill attrition. A good manager does not have to work very hard to understand his team. He simply has to be a good leader to manage his team. Sadly leadership cannot be taught in case studies or business schools. It has to be learnt!

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The National Water Policy - 2012

An Affront to Federalism

Dr. Justice A. K. Rajan (Retd.)

According to the scheme of the Constitution of India, “water” is a State subject; List II Entry 17 reads, as follows:

“Water that is to say, water supplies, irrigation, and canals, drainage and embankments water storage, and water power subject to the provisions of entry 56 of List I”.

Further ‘Agriculture’, falls under entry 14 List II; and ‘right over land’ falls under Entry 18 List II. Entry 56 List I read thus:

“Regulation and development of inter-State rivers, and river valleys to the extent of which such regulation and development under control of the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in public interest.”

A combined reading of the above entries would make it clear that, the power to make laws on water related matters, including ground water, is vested with the States: It is made subject only to matters related to “inter-state rivers” and “river valleys”. It is also clear that the power to make law by the Parliament is limited by the constitution to make law only on inter-State rivers and river valley systems.

That is, the Union Government has the power to make laws or to regulate only matters relating to inter-State Rivers or river valleys. All other matters, outside those aspects, are beyond the legislative competency of the Union. Therefore, on matters relating to water-supply, irrigation, canals, ground-water, drainage etc. only the States have the legislative competency to make law or to regulate.

Even so, the Union Government has surprisingly framed the ‘National water policy 2012’, (NWP) as recommended by the National Water Board (NWB). In view of the distribution of legislative powers by the Constitution, as stated above, National Water Policy can be made by NWB only if it is relatable to inter-state rivers and/or river valleys. But the said policy made by NWB and approved by the Union Cabinet goes beyond the executive or legislative power conferred by the Constitution on the Union Government. Therefore, the NWP as recommended by the NWB, except as regards inter-state rivers and river valleys is ultra vires the Constitution.

The object of NWP is the ‘creation of a system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified National perspective’.

The NWB is of the view, *inter alia*, that

- i) water is a need to be managed as a common pool community resource;
- ii) water may be treated as ‘economic good’;
- iii) an agricultural system should be evolved, to economize water use and bring maximum efficiency and avoid wastage;
- iv) water quality and quantity should be managed in an integrated manner;
- v) the allocation and use of water should be governed by the principle of equity and social justice;

The above aspects appear to be in the nature of some directions issued by the Union to States on matters relating to the regulation on the use of water. But as per the Constitutional scheme, relating to administrative relations between the Union and the States, such administrative directions cannot be issued by the Union Government.

Art.257 (1) provides that the “the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for the purpose of” ensuring the executive power of the State are exercised in such a manner as “not to impede or prejudice the exercise of executive power of the Union”.

Art.257(2) provides that the Union Government can give directions to a State on the construction and maintenance of means of communication declared in the direction to be of national or military importance.

Art.257(3), empowers the Union Government “giving of directions to a State as to the measures to be taken to for the protection of the Railways within the State.” Therefore, it is clear that the Union Government can give any executive or administrative direction only

- (1) For ensuring that the exercise of executive power by a State does not impede or is not prejudicial to the executive power of the Union,
- (2) On matters of means of communication declared to be of National or Military Importance,
- (3) On measures to be taken for the protection of Railways within the State. Hence the directions, given in the name of National Water Policy, by the NWB do not fall within the Constitutional Scheme of Administrative Relations between the Union and States.

A recommendation has also been made that (i) a National Legal Framework and necessary authority to deal with local situation should be created; and (ii) such a legal framework must recognize water as a scarce resource of the State. That is, a law should be made by the Parliament creating “National Level Authorities” to be under the control of the Union Government to govern matters relating to water. This suggestion or recommendation is an affront to the Constitutional scheme. It creates a genuine doubt whether these recommendations are made deliberately or in oblivion of the provisions of the Constitution.

Another startling and shocking recommendation is that ‘The proprietary rights created by the Indian Easements Act 1882 and the Irrigation Acts, on the land owners on the ground water under his lands, should be modified’, and ‘The proposed law should be a statement of *general principles* governing exercise of legislative and/or executive (or devolved) powers by the Centre, State, and the local governing bodies’. If this principle becomes law, it is likely to result in far reaching consequences on the agriculturists in the entire nation. The law and order situation over the entire Nation is likely to become uncontrollable. That may create a chaotic situation for every piece of land. The agricultural land owner cannot have any control over his own well since others also can claim right over the water in the well. This suggestion is tantamount to saying that the legislative entry ‘water’ should no longer be a State subject.

Other important directions are that,

- i) Use of water for domestic, agricultural, recreation, hydro-power, thermal power, and navigation, should be optimized;
- ii) Community based water management should be institutionalized; community to be sensitized to adapt utilization of water as per local availability;

Agriculturists at present determine the crop pattern according to the availability of water within his reach; but the NWP requires that ‘strategies for compatible cropping pattern and improved water application methods such as drip/sprinkler irrigation to enhance water use efficiency should be adopted’. There is no difficulty in accepting the drip irrigation or sprinkling method of irrigation. But even the *Crop – pattern* will have to be followed as per the directions of the authorities. That is, even if a land owner has sufficient water for the crop he intends to grow in his lands, yet he can grow only the crop suggested by the authorities. This would directly violate the fundamental right to carry on one’s profession.

The other recommendations are that ‘(i) Availability of water and its use in various basins should be scientifically assessed every five years for planning; (ii) Inter-basin transfers of water should be considered on the basis of merits of each case after evaluating the environmental, economic and social impacts of such transfers; (iii) An institutional arrangement for efficient use of water at basin/sub- basin level will be established at the National level.

Water Pricing:

The NWB has given a few directions as follows:-

- i) Water should increasingly be subjected to allocation and pricing on economic principles;
- ii) A Water regulatory authority should be established in each State. It will, inter alia, fix and regulate the water tariff system and charges and such tariff will be periodically reviewed;
- iii) Water users Associations (WUA) should be given statutory powers to fix rates and to collect and retain a portion; it can manage within the volumetric quantum of water allotted to them and maintain distribution system; WUA should be given freedom to fix the rates subject to the floor rates fixed by WRA.

The use of the words ‘*economic principles*’ lends itself to varied interpretation; basically it will be relatable to costs and output; that is unless it is a profitable proposition, water may not be allotted in certain cases. Each State is compelled to establish a Water regulatory authority for fixing water tariff and to periodically revise the tariff. It is also required that Water User Association (WUA) should be established with Statutory Powers.

Conservation of River Corridors, Water Bodies and Infrastructure:

River corridors and water bodies should be conserved by not allowing encroachments and where

encroachments are already made, it should be restored to the earlier level to the extent possible.

There can be no difference of opinion on this aspect. But the next direction is that *“diversion of water bodies like (rivers, lakes, tanks, ponds etc.)....must not be allowed; wherever it has taken place it has to be restored to the extent possible, and maintained properly.”* If this principle is examined closely it may extend to Mullai Periyar, Parambikulam, Aliyar, Siruvani rivers as these are systems of diversion of water flow; similarly it may also apply to diversion of Cauvery waters by Karnataka to Mandya and other areas. The consequences of any attempt to restore the flow of these rivers to their original state are unimaginable. That may result in virtual war between the concerned States. Further it is contrary to the policy of linking all the rivers, as advocated by many leaders, including the former president A. P. J. Abdul Kalam; as well as *in oblivion of the orders, directions & detailed judgment given by the three Judge Bench of Supreme Court of India on 27th Feb 2012 with reference to Writ Petitions (Civil) No.512 & No.668 of 2002.*

The two other directions that (i) Sources of water bodies should not be allowed to get polluted; and (ii) It needs to be ensured that industrial effluents, residues of fertilizer and chemicals etc. do not reach the ground water; are already law. The Pollution Control Acts are already in force. Why another direction is difficult to understand.

This is a National Water Policy; hence the matter relating to safety of *Dams* does not come within the ambit of water policy. Yet it has been provided for *Dam* safety as well. Thanks to the contribution of some vested interests, there is the following direction as well: “Legally empowered *Dam Safety* services need to be ensured in the States as well as at the Centre; appropriate safety

measures, including downstream flood management, for each dam should be undertaken on top priority”.

It looks tailor made for the benefit of Kerala, as against the interest of Tamil Nadu. It would be difficult to dispel the view that it is motivated. Dam safety cannot be read ‘*ejusdem generis*’ with water policy for regulation of supply, use, crop pattern, fixing of differential price, for each use. Dam safety is beyond the scope of the NWP. Hence it appears that it is a calculated attempt to defeat all acts done and unsettle all the decisions by the Supreme Court and rob all the benefits accrued over the years to the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

Institutional Arrangements

Another and one of the most important and most controversial directions is that water supply, which is one of the services provided by the States to its people, is sought to be modified by transferring that service to *Private Sectors*. The NWP states that ‘Water resources projects and services should be managed with community participation; wherever State Governments or local bodies so decide the *private sector can be encouraged to become a service provider* in public-private partnership model to meet agreed terms of service delivery’. This would prove to be a dangerous proposition, if implemented. The result would be disastrous; a situation the people of India experience now on the fixation of price for petroleum products may become a lesser evil.

Implementation of the National Water Policy

There is also a direction that State Water Policies should be revised in accordance with this policy. As seen above, the constitutional scheme is that water supplies, irrigation, and canals and embankments, water storage etc. except relating to inter-state rivers and river valleys, fall within the legislative competency of the States; and it is

Replying to an enquiry from *Freedom First* editor seeking background information Prof. “KARGIL” M. Subramanian, International Arbitrator and a retired Armed Forces Officer *who sent us this article replied: The article, “National Water Policy-2012; An Affront to Federalism” written on 9 March 2013, may kindly be published in Freedom First for dissemination within India and abroad. Self and 11 other senior citizens, who have served the country with due diligence and merit, have come together and formed an informal group. For us in this group the country comes first and always; therefore anything that could adversely affect India as a Nation or its unity in diversity and its federal polity envisaged in Article 1 of the Constitution that “India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States” is sacrosanct. We*

have therefore taken upon ourselves to put articles like this one on the National Water Policy in the public domain so that India does not become a unitarian, authoritarian State like Sri Lanka - after all we have had a taste of it during the Emergency declared by Madam Prime Minister Ms. Indira Gandhi.

Our Group consists of 3 former Vice Chancellors and 3 former Chief Engineers of Tamil Nadu PWD, three former Judges of the High Court, an Environment Scientist and a former Dean and Professor of IIT Madras; thanks to modern information technology, time and distance have become easy to transcend and communicate.

outside the purview of the Parliament's power to make laws or issue directions to any State. Yet these directions have been given. This is nothing but a blatant violation of the Constitutional provisions. *The Times of India* in its issue of 8 March 2013 reports that,

"The 13th Finance Commission has recommended that the states set up water regulatory authorities (WRA) for getting grants for water management. Each WRA is mandated to fix and regulate tariff and charges for surface and sub-surface water used for domestic, agriculture, industrial and other purposes". But the Tamil Nadu representative has opposed the proposal for fixing tariff for water.

At this juncture one is reminded of the statement of N. A. Palkhivala, in his famous book "We, the people": While dealing with the Centre-State relations he writes:

"...over a period of years the Centre has acted in a manner which at best has been contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and at worst has been tantamount to a fraud upon the Constitution" "Without any amendment to the Constitution, 'Industries' has been nefariously transformed into a Union subject and has ceased to be a State subject.there can be no doubt that this is an indefensible violation of the Constitution". "The ways in which the Centre unduly dominates the States are beyond enumeration and are symptomatic of the Centre's attitude towards its vassals".

He also states: "Dr. K. Subba Rao wisely observed "Unless the party that happens to be in power in the Centre develops conventions to shed its party affiliations in the matter of its relations with the States, the federal Government cannot effectively function in our country"

It appears that it would be very difficult to deny or ignore these statements, even today. The Union Government has issued executive direction over a matter which does not fall within its competency, and without making any amendment to the Constitution. At the same time it tries to compel the States to fall in line with its directions, by using its financial powers. These things happen while most of the people are in dark. Unless the States become aware of the consequences and rise to the occasion the legislative entries 14, 17 and 18 of List II [State List] will get obliterated.

DR. JUSTICE A. K. RAJAN is a retired Judge of the Madras High Court and former Chairman of the Aquaculture Authority of India, Former Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu and an International Arbitrator; Email: justiceakrajan@yahoo.com.

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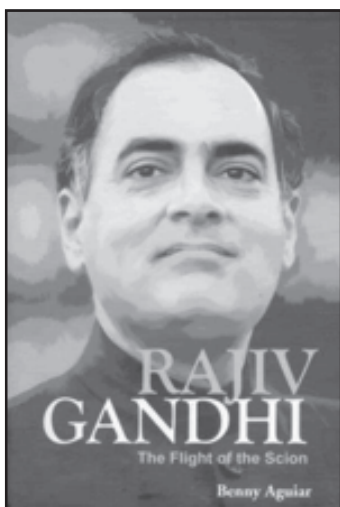
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BOOK REVIEW



RAJIV GANDHI – THE FLIGHT OF THE SCION by Fr. Benny Aguiar ● Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Limited, New Delhi ● 2011 ● Pages 163 ● Rs.395

Reviewed by Kashinath Divecha, retired trade unionist and social activist, Mumbai.
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At the outset, an expression of appreciation as well as bemusement would be in order. For, the description of Rajiv Gandhi as 'scion' in the title of the book was appropriate in both the sense and meaning of

the word. He was of course a descendent of a notable family. But he also happened to be picked up and planted, if not dumped, in the big chair of Prime Ministership. For, it is common knowledge that inspite of being a Prime Minister's son, Rajiv Gandhi chose to be a working man, and he was a pilot, a non-executive staff member with one of our national airlines. He became a reluctant politician to "help" his mother, owing to the unfortunate circumstance of his younger brother's tragic death.

He was pushed into the chair of Prime Minister not by babes in the wood, but by gutless and spineless, and yet cunning sycophants, who dared not and could not, think in terms of independently taking over the responsibility of leading either the Congress or the nation from the front. The fact that Rajiv was an absolutely novice, if not naïve, and was probably overwhelmed on being thrust with the high office is corroborated when the author, Fr. Benny Aguiar in his introduction to the book states, "It was only on the third day that Rajiv went to see for himself the scale of violence" as he was mourning his mother. The author wisely has omitted to refer to the unwise crack of Rajiv about falling of a big tree and the shaking of the earth.

Having said this, it has to be acknowledged and admitted that once out of the shock and tragedy, Rajiv started in right earnest. Further, as the author says, he had promised a clean and efficient administration. As a well-groomed individual and responsible citizen of India, he applied his mind to the job thrust upon him. After his landslide victory in the elections with 401 Lok Sabha seats, Rajiv "reaffirmed his pledge that no quarter would be given

to the lazy, the inefficient and the corrupt, and results would take precedence over procedures...He vowed to cut the power brokers down to size, hold organisational elections in the party...He talked of taking India into the twenty-first century, liberalizing the economy...He was like a new broom sweeping clean and soon came to be known as 'Mr. Clean'. (Page 10)

The author has noted that Rajiv was pragmatic and dynamic and he also believed that responsibility must be delegated. He also took his own decisions, independently of any coterie of advisers. One of the important steps taken by him was the dropping of the office of deputy ministers, which was more ornamental than functional. He placed scientific and technological development high on his scale of priorities. All these efforts, however, did not bring the desired results when the assembly elections were held in 11 states and one union territory. For, there was total rout in 3 states, and considerably reduced majority in 4 states, though in the other 4 states the Congress secured three-fourth majority. Thus, Rajiv's thesis of one party in power both at the centre and in states was simply rejected.

Leaving aside the overall political scenario, it must be stressed that Rajiv's constant endeavours in reaching out to the estranged segments of population were praiseworthy. One has to count the accords he signed in order to secure peace and apply the healing touch to bring relief from the festering problems in the Punjab, Mizoram, Kashmir and Assam which were tearing asunder the fabric of national unity.

He reached an accord with Sant Harchand Singh Longowal on Punjab, and both agreed that, "The settlement brings to an end a period of confrontation and ushers in an era of amity, goodwill and co-operation, which will promote and strengthen the unity and integrity of India".

Similarly, in Assam, there was turmoil arising out of years of infiltration from the eastern border, East Pakistan first, and then Bangladesh, which created an obnoxious

situation of Assamese becoming a minority in their own land. In fact, in February 1983, in one appalling massacre a thousand people were killed near Nellie town. Against this backdrop, Rajiv decided in April 1985 to resume talks with the All Assam Students Union (AASU). The author records that during negotiations a stage was reached in August when the AASU requested the draft of the accord to be taken to Assam for approval of executive members of AASU. But it was decided instead to fly the entire executive body of 60 members to Delhi. The accord was approved at 2.30 a.m. on 15th August to be announced on Independence Day.

In Mizoram too, after 20 years of tension and bloodshed, insurgency and counter-offensive, guerilla attacks and midnight arrests, economic hardships and tight government controls, peace finally came to the Mizo hills with the signing of an accord on the night of 2nd June 1986 between the leader of the Mizos, Laldenga, and the Central government. The guerillas of the Mizo National Front (MNF) left their hideouts and came to Parva to lay down their arms and surrender to the Indian authorities to return to civilian life. In fact, Laldenga attributed the signing of the accord to the zest for peace, to the disarming directness and an infectious stamina to overcome all obstacles of Rajiv Gandhi.

In the hardcore political scheme of things anywhere, it is very difficult to retain the “blue eyed boy” tag for a long time. No wonder, after the aforesaid success stories, as the author states, the political scene was gradually changing adversely against Rajiv, starting with the summary dismissal of the Foreign Secretary – of all places – at a Press Conference, confrontation with President Zail Singh, defence scandals relating to HDW submarine deals coming to light and, the Bofors gun scandal, which rocked parliament, caused political upheaval and stirred the entire nation.

Fr. Aguiar quotes the writer Hari Jaisingh, who while analyzing Rajiv Gandhi’s style of functioning in ‘India between Dream and Reality’, states that Rajiv reposed faith in the computer and let his Doon School classroom friends fiddle with the system to find instant solutions for the age-old problems of the country. It is also quoted that, what really hurt Rajiv slowly but surely was his distancing himself from the people as he had practically created a fortress around himself. Lastly, it is mentioned, it was his reputation for incorruptibility that was undermined by a series of alleged scandals like Bofors and HDW submarine deal.

The author puts the political life of Rajiv Gandhi in a nutshell by stating that he attempted to heal the

wounds of divisions, caused by the targeting of a particular community as in the Punjab accord; sought to bring about reconciliation between people of a state and foreigners that had encroached upon their land as in the Assam accord; brought tribal groups with their own ethnicity and culture into the national mainstream and unity as in the Mizoram accord and also began the process of taking India into the twenty-first century through the use of the latest scientific technology of computerization and of opening the country to the global market economy.

However, there is no mention in the book of the frank admission of Rajiv during the AICC session in Bombay in December 1985 where he stated that only 15 paise out of one rupee reached the intended beneficiaries of governmental schemes. It is a glaring omission because subsequent events proved that it was all nothing but gas inasmuch as no concrete steps were even attempted to set right the malaise.

The Sri Lankan story has not been referred to so far deliberately. In Sri Lanka, Tamils and Sinhalese have lived together from times immemorial. However, Tamils felt discriminated against by their government policy, particularly after independence in 1948. It was this feeling of discrimination over the years that created a strain between Tamils and Sinhalese giving rise to riots, pogroms and guerilla tactics like suicide bombing. With the objective of bringing peace in such a hostile environment, an accord was signed in July 1987 between India and Sri Lanka for a complete ceasefire to be maintained by an Indian Army Peace Keeping Force.

Though the author says the accord did have some success, it was probably not acceptable to certain elements in Sri Lanka as evidenced by the attack on Rajiv himself by one of the soldiers during the Guard of Honour when he visited Sri Lanka. This episode in which Rajiv escaped unhurt has not been referred to by the author.

Nonetheless, it was probably the prelude, foreboding his assassination on 21st May 1991. A young woman, a Tamil extremist who got past the security cordon, came close, offered Rajiv a garland and bent low to touch his feet. Suddenly, a bomb exploded tearing Rajiv beyond recognition, and claiming 16 lives apart from the woman herself. The most unfortunate tragedy that struck India that day.

Indian education at all levels is characterised by a few shining campuses of excellence surrounded by a host of ill-administered, outdated and often downright fraudulent business enterprises, disguised as teaching-learning institutions

Dilip Thakore, *Education World*, July 2013.

The Right to Education Act (15)

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

Midday-Meal Scheme

Suresh C. Sharma

Why is the Indian State so bad at performing the tasks it sets for itself?

- Meghnad Desai

Providing midday meals to primary school children was first introduced by the Madras Municipal Corporation in 1925. It was started in Gujarat in 1985 and was extended as a national programme to cover all Government and aided primary schools in 1995. The aim was to improve health and education of children from poor families. It envisaged distribution of cooked nutritious food to the kids with safeguards for check of quality and hygiene. Some children started going to the school due to free meals. The number of dropouts also declined.

The Right to Food Campaign filed a PIL in 1991 in the Supreme Court regarding midday meals. It observed that 60 million tonnes of rice and wheat was rotting in Government warehouses while people were dying due to starvation. The Supreme Court issued an order on 28 November 2001 directing all State Governments and Union territories to implement the midday meals [MDS] scheme in all Government and aided primary schools. The court order specified that the kids should be given cooked meals and not dry items. The Food Corporation of India [FCI] was to ensure supply of good quality grains to the schools. The court order stipulated that the meal should have 300 calories and 8 to 10 grams of protein each day of 200 days in a year. The Ministry of Human Resources [HRD] norms are 700 calories and 20 grams of protein per meal. The scheme was to be financed by the Education Cess. In addition to free supply of food grains, the revised scheme provided for cooking cost, transport subsidy and provision of mid day meal during summer vacation in drought affected areas.

Mismanagement of MDS

Presently, 12 crore children are being served midday meals. Besides improving attendance and health of children, it provides employment to women and breaks caste barriers. Like many other schemes, appropriate rules have been framed. The tragedy of 27 children dying in Chapra in Bihar has revealed that rules for hygienic food and environment were being violated. Even the cook who prepared the meals lost two kids and the third one is in the hospital. Parents of the children had been shouting and complaining about quality of food but no action was taken. There has been negligence and apathy at all levels. The incident has created a furore across the nation. It was a clear case of food poisoning. Autopsy reports of the children who died have revealed presence of insecticide in the cooking oil. Exact details of the poison will be known after forensic examination of the viscera. Small amounts of the toxin may be left in the tissues which may have after effects. The medical authorities are in no hurry to discharge the kids and want to ensure that there are no after effects.

Enquiry by a senior officer of the HRD Ministry blames the school principal. The cook had complained that the cooking oil was black in colour and smelt foul. The principal insisted that the oil could not be bad as it had come from her husband's shop. Not only that, she compelled the students to eat the lunch. Instead of rushing the kids to a hospital, the principal fled in panic. Precious hours were lost. The principal was arrested on 24 July. We wait to see how many skeletons fall out of the



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cupboard.

There were alerts. A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences, Patna, had given a report to the Ministry of HRD who sent it to the State Government. No action was taken. The tragedy was waiting to happen. In Bihar too old aluminium cooking vessels are in use. Bihar received a grant of Rs.500 crores in 2007-08 to buy new vessels and arrange for kitchens. The Bihar government returned the money. Rs.612 crore was idle in various accounts till 2012. Non-utilization of these funds shows apathy and lack of competence. It is alleged that the State Government keeps the money in fixed deposits which was objected to by the audit authorities.

Incidence of consumption of unhygienic food has not been limited only to Bihar. Reports of kids getting ill after midday meal have been pouring in from various cities. A couple of days after the Bihar tragedy, 147 girl students of Neyveli Lignite Corporation School complained of nausea and giddiness after consuming the meals. All the sick students were provided medical treatment promptly. The chief education officer commented that the eggs served to the students may have been contaminated. No explanation has been offered about the accountability.

On 19 July, 23 kids fell sick after midday meals in Goa. The health officer commented that sickness may be due to indigestion or improperly cooked meals and not due to food poisoning. A disgruntled Panchayat member put poison in the meals. Luckily, he was observed by a kid and food thrown away. The culprit is missing.

In Chhattisgarh, a student noticed part of a dead lizard in food. He reported it to the teacher who told him to finish his meal. 35 kids were taken ill. The condition of one child is serious. The parents complained of shortage of doctors and nurses. The Chief Minister has ordered an enquiry. 50 children took ill in Madhubani where a dead lizard had been found in the food. The school was running in a 20x10 feet room which also served as community hall and the meals were cooked in a veranda. The stories of dead snake and frog in the food are endless. In Haryana, a teacher, charged with stealing midday meals paid a fine of Rs.2.75 lacs.

Lack of accountability

Is the project too big to be managed by our administration known for poor governance?

Report by the Planning Commission pointed out

that except for Kerala and Tamilnadu, schools do not have proper kitchens. The teachers spend one to two hours in distributing lunch, thus limiting the time for teaching. In some States children are employed to clean the utensils. They sit in crowded and dirty sites. Insects are crawling over cooked food. In a nursery school, the scared children insisted that the principal eat first.

There were complaints of adulteration and short supply in food grains obtained from the PDS system. Rice supplied by FCI to 2000 primary schools in Kolkata was found to be rotten and had to be sold as fodder. Those responsible for this fault generally escape any punishment or even censure. There have been instances when grains from FCI were found to be unsuitable even for fodder and were sold off to fertilizer factory.

The media has brought out many shortcomings in the administration of MDS. An NGO carried out evaluation of the MDS in Gujarat. 538 out of 563 schools visited by the NGO were supplied meals by a central kitchen and 25 had food prepared in the school premises. 477 schools were served by NGO Stree Shakti. In the schools where meals were prepared in situ, the floor was dirty and plates were washed by students with mud from the playground. Leftover food from the previous day was lying on the floor and the aluminium vessels used for cooking were old and in poor condition.

In the schools served by the NGO Stree Shakti, clean kitchen staff use steel utensils, grains are cleaned and there were separate areas for cleaning the utensils. However, inspection of ingredients revealed that except for wheat in Sabarmati School and tur dal in Stree Shakti kitchens, uric acid was observed to be at higher levels than the rules prescribed by the Prevention of Food Adulteration [PFA] authority. This may be due to presence of rodents in FCI warehouses or in stores of schools. There were worms and animal droppings in grains. Traces of aflatoxin were observed which could cause cancer.

The NGO recommended packaged grains and partly dry items of food. Cooked food was carried in tempo where the employees were placing their feet over the containers with half open lids. This lapse brings out the basic lack of hygiene amongst people. We cannot change it in a short period. We must inculcate it amongst the school kids. Once they become conscious of it, they will usher in a clean environment in their homes.

In a school in Amritsar, vegetables were kept in

toilet. It beats all sense of aesthetics besides hygiene. 70% schools in Haryana do not have proper kitchen. In a town near Lucknow, the correspondent watched how meals for kids of twenty schools were prepared in open with flies and insects hovering around. 400 students are taught in one room in a Government school in Samastipur, Bihar. The kids sit on stools and under the stools. We have used double-decker buses and double-decker beds. This school takes the cake for inventing double-decker seats in school. Students complained of pain in the neck at the end of the day. The principal expressed helplessness as no one listens to her woes.

Contamination of Iron Folic Acid

A day after the death of kids in Bihar, 200 children were taken ill in Delhi after consuming iron and folic acid tablets during a government drive against anaemia. 21 of the kids had to be rushed to the hospital. All the children are out of danger. The police have registered a case of “an act endangering lives” A similar incident of 60 children getting sick after iron and folic acid tablets has been reported from Solapur which was the first school to get such pills

Another example of this neglect of hygiene is patronizing of food vendors on pavements by educated and well employed staff. Schools are not merely places of transfer of knowledge. They learn to be good citizens and improve their living conditions.

Blame Game

Reaction of political leaders lacks realism. The ruling party blames it on conspiracy by the opposition parties.

The opposition parties have only one standard solution for all mishaps – resignation by the government of the day. They have chosen to ignore unhygienic conditions of food preparation and distribution in most of the States. Immediate steps taken are to issue instructions that 2 or 3 teachers must taste the food before distributing it to children. These instructions have been issued earlier too. Compliance is the problem. This simple and quick method does not provide adequate protection. A question may arise whether a teacher or any individual can be forced to eat against his or her will. Tasting one spoon of adulterated food may not do any harm while the complete meal may cause stomach upset and headache. The teachers union in Bihar had instructed members not to comply with this order. They have relented to agree to taste food till an alternative arrangement is put in place. Allahabad High Court in UP has declared that teachers job is to teach and not to supervise cooking of meals. Quality control must be at all level – grains, cooking medium, water, proper kitchen and cleanliness of staff. Above all, there must be accountability. A vendor selling rotten grains is liable to punishment while FCI can get away with gross negligence. If a teacher finds food to be unfit for the children, he has no resources to provide substitute meals. The cardinal principle is that authority and responsibility should be collocated. To ensure cooking and distribution of hygienic food all over the country requires competence of organization. If it is not available in a short time, the Government should opt for dry or packaged food.

Is poverty a crime? – Father of a deceased child

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‘Unequal’ Under the Law

While appearing in the Supreme Court on January 10, 2013, constitutional expert Fali Nariman argued that the Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) was discriminatory because it allows sitting Members of Parliament (MPs) or members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) convicted of heinous crimes to be treated differently from common citizens held guilty by courts on similar grounds. Nariman pointed out that Parliament could not act on its own as a majority of the members of the Lok Sabha - 274 out of 547 MPs – were facing legal action for serious offences.

The RPA debars persons convicted of any of the serious offences listed under Section 8 and sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more from contesting elections, with the disqualification remaining in force from the date of conviction and until six years after their release

from prison. However Section 8(4) exempt MPs and MLAs from disqualification for three months and not until the final disposal of their appeals filed within the 90-day window, mentions TOI. This conflicts with the principle of equality under the law guaranteed under the Constitution of India.

Following Nariman's arguments, the SC put the question to the central government on January 10, 2013, seeking detailed response to the constitutional validity of Section 8(4) of the RPA which allows for special treatment for MPs and MLAs. Nariman maintained that this Section is the first hurdle in the fight against criminalisation of politics and needed to be struck down.

COURTESY: Parsiana, February 21, 2013

Educating Adults

The Uttarakhand Catastrophe - A Result of Our Folly A Pre-Ordained Disaster Waiting to Happen

Jyoti Marwah

Can We Pause Here to Rectify Our Mistakes?

‘The hills are alive with the sound of music’ sounds so good, for without a spoken word they are the best companion to beat loneliness. They bring the sacred message of simplicity to naturally reduce the desire for more and more. Insatiable desires are replaced by the soft divine touch of nature, as the icy cold surroundings brush the cheeks to a chilly sense of alertness and then suddenly the warmth of the sun melts the human body to experience the happiness, with just a little comfort and caress of the sun’s rays. The extravagant lifestyle of a 4BHK or Penthouse is catapulted to a humble bed with a bedroll used by many before, in a dormitory with minimal facilities at high altitudes of pilgrimages in the Himalayas. The lavish layout of cuisines is replaced with probably just hot dal and roti and one can but only thank God for just this and nothing more.

The Himalayas are the nation’s heritage but in a wild chase for gods, goddesses, and entertainment blended with the belief of attaining salvation in the ‘Char Dham Yatra’, we have overstepped the fine discerning line of sense and sensibility. In turn we have failed to respect and understand Nature’s craft. The Himalayas appear to be unassailable for eternity and impregnable to any threat by human depredation. However the Himalayas are extremely fragile with a complex environment which is dependent on nature for its survival. They are relatively young and vulnerable to change.

These mountains ranges are the geographical features resulting from a collision two hundred million years ago, when India, a part of Gondwanaland, broke away and moved northwards to slam into Tibet in Laurasia which caused the upliftment thus obliterating the Tethys Sea. Thus the Himalayas have grown from the earlier Gondwanaland and the treasures of the Tethys Seaⁱ. Thereafter their high altitude impacted the weather the region which resulted in snow, ice, glaciers, and rivers sculpting the hillsides and the valleys where gradually emerged the abode of the Gods.ⁱⁱ

There is a constant slow movement of the tectonic plates beneath the surface of the Himalayas which results

in the rise of the Himalayas by a few millimeters every year. However, it is also true that mountains cannot maintain their heights forever, as earthquakes, mud and rock slides along with avalanches keep knocking them down to size now and then. However when this happens it is an acute disaster negating all development and growth.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Himalayas have a lot to tell to those who have the will to listen, absorb and act on it. Unfortunately disregard for history, heritage and repeated warnings pushed the northern States to an unforeseen and unimaginable catastrophe on the nights of 16th and 17th June 2013. Probably it was the worst of its kind and undoubtedly preordained. History records that civilizations have vanished under such relentless pressures. It is but imperative to stop and think – do we wish to experience such destruction every successive year? As temperatures rise we can only visualize our destruction in the images of the collapse of the Kedarnath dome and overflow of the Chorabari Tal. Today we have destroyed not only our preserve but our very first line of defense by disregarding warnings since the cloudburst phenomenon at Ukhimath in 1998. This was followed by a series of such events in 2002 in Phata in the Mandakini valley, Khedgaon in Kumaon and Agunda in Bhilangar Valley. Tehri in 2003 received abnormally high rainfall and so did Ladakh in 2010 which triggered mudslides leading to hundreds of death.^{iv} The varied ecosystems of the Himalayas are a sanctuary to the world’s most exotic species of fauna and flora. We have no estimate of what and how much we have lost in this and earlier calamities.

The floods in Uttarakhand and drought in Maharashtra are no doubt man-made. Who will take the blame for this? History blames the British for ill-conceived agricultural policy, failure to build canals and commercialization of agriculture. Will history not blame the stakeholders of independent India for the destruction of an inherited nation in a short span of 50-60 years? The right man to respond to the catastrophic situation in Uttarakhand would have been Sunderlal Bahuguna,^v if only he were in good health. Consultants from Russia had advised that the making of the Tehri dam is ill-conceived

and may lead to disaster up to the plains of Uttar Pradesh. Could this eventuality be the backlash of the alert sounded in the past?

I recall the evening of November 4, 2003 when en route to Auli and Badrinath aboard the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam's vehicle we descended from New Tehri to a very large vacant land, low down in the midst of huge mountain ranges which surrounded us. The place seemed unrealistic to be true for such open spaces are not natural features of places positioned at an altitude of 8000-10000 feet above sea level. We had to strain our necks to trace the tip of these mountains. It was dusk and the atmosphere was eerie. The mountains seemed to complain of the rampant destruction of several ranges of hills and mountains and the several lives of those who had inhabited the area for millions of years. This was a huge enclosure for the waters of the Bhagirathi. We were further informed that the bus was positioned on the bed of the Tehri dam and high above somewhere the waters of the Bhagirathi have been restrained soon to be poured into this enclosure. When this happened the old Tehri town would be submerged taking with it the palace of the Raja of Tehri and everything else that remains.

Having heard this and more, the first thought was to drive out quickly from the bed of the dam. The area seemed haunted and nerve shattering. A safe exit from there compelled us to ponder over this destruction of our heritage. What is the limit to this exploitation? This loot cannot be relentless, continuous and never-ending. The hills are known for their serenity and compassion for the Himalayan wild life and a biodiversity being unique to not only India but to the world. Earth summits and sustainable

development must take the front seat. We have no one to blame now; we have to take the blame. Ours is a relentless pursuit of a mirage called "development" lopsided though it often is, that chases the stock market in an era of globalization. Dr. Anirudh Uniyal, a scientist at the Remote Sensing Application Centre, Lucknow, attributes the real reason behind the catastrophe to overloading the hill slopes with built structures. Cloud bursts are a natural phenomenon.

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- ⁱ Matt Dickinson
 - ⁱⁱ Gurmeet and Elizabeth Thukral
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Matt Dickenson
 - ^{iv} *Times of India* June 21 p.15 2013)
 - ^v Sunderlal Bahuguna (born 9 January 1927) is a noted Garhwali environmentalist, Chipko movement leader and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Non-violence and Satyagraha. This idea of chipko movement was that of his wife and the action was taken by him. For years he has been fighting for the preservation of forests in the Himalayas, first as a member of the Chipko movement in 1970s, and later spearheaded the Anti-Tehri Dam movement starting 1980s, to early 2004. He was one of the early environmentalists of India, and later he and people associated with the Chipko movement later started taking up environmental issues, like against large dams, mining and deforestation, across the country. India pays him a tribute for his contribution for the trees.

"When Buddhists Go Bad"

In the reckoning of religious extremism – Hindu nationalists, Muslim militants, fundamentalist Christians, ultra Orthodox Jews – Buddhism has largely escaped trial. Too much of the world, it is synonymous with non-violence and loving kindness, concepts propagated by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, 2500 years ago.

When Asia rose up against the empire and oppression, Buddhist monks with their moral command and plentiful numbers, led anticolonial movements. Some starved themselves for their cause, their sunken flesh and protruding ribs underlining their sacrifice for the laity. Perhaps most iconic is the image of Thich

Quang Duc, a Vietnamese monk sitting in the lotus position, wrapped in flames as he burned to death in Saigon while protesting the repressive South Vietnamese regime 50 years ago. In 2007, Buddhist monks led a foiled democratic uprising in Burma: images of columns of clerics bearing upturned alms bowls, marching peacefully in protest against the junta, earned sympathy around the world, if not from the soldiers who slaughtered them. But where does social activism end and political militancy begin? Every religion can be twisted into a destructive force poisoned by ideas that are antithetical to its foundations. Now it's Buddhism's turn.

Excerpted from the article "The face of Buddhist Terror" by Hannah Beech, *TIME*, July 1, 2013.

Himalayan Tsunami: A Lesson for Today and Tomorrow

Durba Das, Khusbu Mishra, Agnes George

Why did this happen is a question that many people are asking? Is it deforestation, human greed, exploitation of the poor, lack of education, mindless projects in the grab of development, lack of accountability for inaction?

Uttarakhand's worst natural disaster began on 15th July 2013. It became critical on the night of 16th and 17th July. The devastation resulted from the heavy rains due to cloud burst. Flooding of the rivers was so acute that it was unbelievable. The rivers Alakhnanda, Mandakini, Bhagirathi and Ganga destroyed roads and washed away houses, temples and people. This natural calamity slowly unfolded and the state government realized that there was no disaster management plan for the fragile ecosystem of the mountains. While the State Disaster Management Authority was set up in October 2007, it had not yet met to make rules, regulations and policies. The Comptroller and Auditor General had submitted a report in April saying that the disaster management plan was still under preparation and communication system was far from inadequate. At the time of writing it is believed that hundreds of people have died and more than 80,000 people included pilgrims stranded in Uttarakhand. The national and state highways have been badly damaged.

The extensive damage caused by heavy rain, landslides and flash floods will affect the pilgrimage to the Char Dham and no pilgrimage will be possible for the next 3 years as the rehabilitation work is of a phenomenal nature. Thus suspension of the Char Dham Yatra this year and its cancellation for the next 3 years will be a huge blow to Uttarakhand's unorganized sector. Religious tourism in the hills, the mainstay for the people of the Himalayan region, is going to suffer resulting in the loss of their livelihood.

It is believed that the cloudburst over the Kedar Dome on June 16th that caused torrential flooding that hammered down the revered 1200 years old Kedarnath Temple, swallowed entire villages and communities in less than 40 hours. Many believe that the disaster was waiting to happen. The illegal constructions on the hills and the exponential growth of rickety structure that served as hotels were shoddily maintained. The figures emerging from the wrecked mountain slopes are scary and unbelievable as over 1,000 roads must be rebuilt from scratch, 96 bridges have collapsed and more than 2,000 villages have been reduced to rubble. It was sad to see that along with trauma and injuries, survivors had returned

with fever, dehydration respiratory and cardiac problems.

According to the bankers in Garhwal and Kumaon this devastation will have a direct impact on banking activities in the region as the Char Dham Yatra is a major source of economic activity. It is reported that Garhwal region collects Rupees 2,100 crores from pilgrimages. "With tourist movement stopping, business will certainly go down" said a local banker and "recovery of loans would also not be possible as many people have lost properties in the deluge. These properties were their main source of income" the banker added. The SBI Branch at Kedarnath used to receive one lakh daily offerings from the shrine. However the branch was washed away with a booty of 5 crores. It is said that rupee notes were floating in the flood waters.

The Himalayan destruction shows that the capacity of Uttarakhand's towns to deal with tourism is extremely insufficient. The projections for domestic and foreign tourist arrivals since 2002 have indicated that the State's fragile ecology and poor infrastructure is not equipped to cope with the load. Rishikesh, Dehradun, Mussoorie and Haridwar have been bursting at the seams since 2010 as here is little planning or investment for the future.

Why did this happen is a question that many people are asking? Is it deforestation, human greed, exploitation of the poor, lack of education, mindless projects in the grab of development, lack of accountability for inaction? Whatever it may be the nation has lost so many lives and infrastructure of immense value without any reason.

India is one of the oldest civilizations and we are proud of our heritage and history. But one wonders whether future generations will be able to say so. The Himalayas are the nation's heritage but what have we really made of this heritage. It gives us security, water, food and much more which is incalculable. This disaster is a reminder to us that we have to take care of our nature and biodiversity, cities and villages, humans and hills.

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Protecting India's Coastline to Prevent a Repeat of Uttarakhand

Rita P. Bhambi

The disaster that beset our heritage in the Himalayan ranges was most unbelievable and unimaginable, yet it merely brushed aside all our display of human might proving that Nature is invincible.

A coastal zone has been described by the US Commission on Marine Science, Engineering & Resource as “that part of the land affected by its proximity to the sea, and that part of the ocean affected by its proximity to the land”.

India has a coastline of about 5,500 km in the mainland and about 2,000 km in its offshore islands with a vast network of back waters, estuaries, creeks, lagoons and specialized ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs. The country is blessed with vast stretches of beaches along its coastline which, along with the adjoining land, are being extensively used for recreation, relaxation and creating attractions such as amusement parks and much more. The biodiversity are significantly high in the coastal waters – Gulf of Mannar and Kutch, in the waters of Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands and in the specialized ecosystems like Chilka Lake and mangroves along east coast. More than 5,000 species of marine flora and fauna have been reordered so far in the coastal and marine waters of the country. There is an urge to preserve, conserve and protect the coastal habitats and the marine environment from all man-made activities. Oil spills that occur during the accidents of ships / tankers, rupture of seabed, onshore oil pipelines, offshore oil production and exploration platforms affect these habitats, beaches and their adjoining land and cause irreversible damage to the biodiversity besides creating an unaesthetic appearance.

The coastal areas are also prone to natural disasters. India has been identified as one of the 27 countries most vulnerable to the impact of global warming related accelerated sea level rise, which threatens coastal habitats as a result of human activity. The coastline of India is both a precious natural resource and an important economic asset. Once the coastline is destroyed, it may be impossible to fully restore either the coastal ecology or the lost livelihoods. Immediate action is needed to protect and restore this irreplaceable national treasure and redirect coastal development for a sustainable future.

Suggestions

We need a National Policy for the conservation and

restoration of the entire coast of India by adopting the following procedures:

- Conduct comprehensive scientific and environmental studies of coastal geomorphology, ecosystem habitation, and effects of development on coastal zones.
- Consult with coastal communities concerning their economic needs and protection of their environmental assets.
- Map the various public policy priorities, such as protection of the coastal ecology, livelihoods of coastal communities, economic development, security etc.
- Incorporate the costs of environmental services and damages (and their repairs) directly into the prices of the goods, services or activities which cause them, thereby contributing to the implementation of the “Polluter Pays” principle.
- Prescribe high penalties by way of fines and imprisonment for violations whether by an individual, a company or the State under the ‘Coastal Protection Act’, in line with the ‘Wildlife Protection Act’.
- Involve the coastal communities to create ownership, similar to the ‘Forest Rights Act’.
- Freeze on State Governments from taking any ad hoc decisions on coastal development.
- Implement the National Policy in letter and spirit in coordination with Centre, State, and Coastal communities.
- Conduct awareness programs for the coastal communities and students on the ecological, social, cultural and economic importance of the coast and the impact on it due to human interventions such as construction, mining, dumping of wastes and effluents.

Dr. RITA P. BHAMBI, Associate Professor and Head Department of History, G. N. Khalsa College, Matunga, Mumbai.

Uttarakhand Disaster: Save the Environment

- The Need of the Hour

Louisa Rodrigues

It is high time that we realize that we belong to one Global Village; realizing that the planet Earth on which we live is only finite in space, capacity and natural resources.

Environmental crisis has become a matter of great concern today in the wake of several natural disasters in the world. The recent ecological crisis in Uttarakhand is an eye opener and should act as a wakeup call for people, planners and decision makers all over the country.

As Uttarakhand grapples with one of the worst natural disasters the State has faced in recent years, questions are being raised on whether a lot of the destruction was man-made. The coastal region of Maharashtra is also under severe threat of ecological disaster. In the post colonial period, trees of commercial importance such as bamboo, teak, eucalyptus, sisam, ain and cashew plantation was undertaken in various regions of Maharashtra as a part of the programme, called 'Vana Mahotsava' which was inaugurated by the Government of India in 1950. The forests of Maharashtra also had to bear the onslaught of all round development in the post independence era. The hydroelectric and irrigation projects took a heavy toll of forest lands for their construction in the initial stage and later on for rehabilitation of village population displaced by each project. For instance, the Koyna power project resulted in submersing forests and the grant of other forest land for rehabilitation of the affected people. Indiscriminate development in the hill towns like Mahabaleshwar and Matheran with guest houses, hotels and illegal encroachment took place along the rivers at the cost of nature.

The present ecological crisis is due to the conflict between need and greed. It was Mahatma Gandhi who said "Earth provided enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not for everyone's greed". Mumbai, the commercial capital of Maharashtra is moving towards a water-stress zone. Our water bodies are polluted by industrial and urban sewage disposal along with negligent attitude of the people. The Mithi River is a glaring example. The choking of the river is considered one of the major causes of the water logging which caused havoc during the deluge in Mumbai in July 2005. The banks of the river were approved for slum redevelopment. The builders took over the slums, along with the portions of the river. The first building –

the much touted, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai's first step towards becoming a booming Shanghai-like business centre – came up on the riverbed itself, thereby, restricting its flow. Kurla was then worst affected by the flooding. This complex was built on mangrove marshes that surround the mouth of the Mithi River near the Mahim bay. In the early 1990s when the MMRDA was developing the Bandra-Kurla complex, environmentalists had warned the Ministry of Environment and Forests of a possible backlash. The development today is not sustainable and based upon squandering our 'biological capital', namely air, forest, animals, plants and species, all so important to human survival.

It is high time that we realize that we belong to one Global Village; realizing that the planet Earth on which we live is only finite in space, capacity and natural resources. This is a necessary awakening; vital for the survival and sustainable development of mankind. At the same time it is essential that environmental tribunals are set up to implement environment safeguards, mere legislation can never be a solution unless it is enforced strictly. If the environment is to be saved from further degradation, there is an urgent need to remove lacunae in the implementation of environment protection laws. The Right to Information Act is a good tool where people can demand information of environmental consequences before a project is started.

The preservation of environment needs an integrated and holistic approach. We need to find a new, sustainable way of development for human society, paying special attention to harmonizing relationship between humankind and nature. Individuals and community initiative needs to be brought into the mainstream. Conserve water, grow more trees, refrain from using plastic bags, separate garbage at source – a few things that an eco-friendly individual can begin with. Ultimately, what have human beings given to nature who has given them in abundance? Therefore the need of the hour is to cry halt to the process of senseless environmental destruction, lest the environmental crisis should overwhelm us.

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