

Lessons from a crisis

Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.)

Former Chief of Naval Staff

Ex-Chairman, National Maritime Foundation

We must face up to intelligence failures, lack of civil military coordination, poor statecraft of the past.

THE UNTHINKABLE HAS happened. For the first time ever, the air forces of two nuclear-armed neighbours, India and Pakistan have crossed national boundaries and carried out kinetic attacks on each other's soil. Aerial combat has also resulted in casualties and losses on both sides.

Although an inevitable sequel to the February 14 Pulwama car-bomb attack by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e Mohammad (JeM), India's air-strike inside Pakistan did carry the risk of tit-for-tat hostilities spiraling into a full-scale war with nuclear connotations. This is not an alarmist view because the current environment, on both sides of the India-Pakistan border, remains fraught for two reasons.

Pakistan has been turned into a neurotic theological state by the military and its cohort of jihadi proxies. Pakistan's shadowy "deep state" comprising the army and its Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) directorate, has also kept alive the myth of an ever present "existential threat" from "Hindu India". This mythology is vital for the survival of the "deep state" and its jihadi allies. The Pakistan Prime Minister, beholden to the army for his survival, has been blowing hot and cold in the past few days and his "peace overtures" must be treated with caution.

On our side, the Pulwama attack was the last straw for the long-suffering Indian public. The loss of 40CRPF jawans served to focus the deep anguish and humiliation that Indians have endured over the decades from Pakistan-inspired insurgencies and Pakistan-initiated terror strikes. There was unanimity across India that a strong message needed to be sent to the Pakistani instigators and abettors of jihadi terror.

The Pulwama car-bombing, occurring in the run-up to India's 17th general election, has added a bitter edge of xenophobia and religious bigotry to

an already acrimonious election campaign. Extreme caution is called for to ensure that India's vital national interests are not subsumed by politically-motivated and competitive machismo masquerading as patriotism. Hyper-nationalism at the hustings and war-mongering in TV studios could not only damage India's delicate social fabric but also drive the nation into an unwanted conflict.

Here it must be pointed out that phrases such as "revenge", "retribution" and "martyrdom" are not part of our military's lexicon and must not be foisted on the armed forces. At the same time, there is a dire need for India's national security establishment to learn how to employ India's military as an instrument of state policy by acquiring an understanding of concepts like "deterrence", "compellence" and "coercion" for attaining political aims.

In this context, we must face up to the intelligence failures, lack of civil-military coordination and poor state-craft on India's part that have allowed the ISI to torment this nation for many decades. The litany of assaults on India's sovereignty and citizenry is long but in every case, we have been caught unprepared and wanting in terms of a consistent policy and coherent response. Three instances in our recent past demand introspection because they point to a lack of resolve and even pusillanimity on the part of the Indian state.

In December 1999, Indian Airlines flight IC-814 was hijacked to Kandahar where the hijackers demanded the release of JeM terrorists. Most democracies have a declared policy of "no negotiations with terrorists" for the simple reason that negotiations give legitimacy to terrorists and are perceived as condoning violence. In the absence of such a policy, this hijacking saw the government caving in to public pressure and capitulating abjectly to the hijackers' demands. India has paid a dear price in lives for the release of Masood Azhar in Kandahar.

Following the December 2001 JeM attack on India's Parliament, the public was encouraged to see the government ordering an unprecedented general mobilisation, presumably for inflicting suitable punishment on Pakistan. However, when the then

Elections remind us not only of the rights but the responsibilities of citizenship in a

democracy.

Robert Kennedy

army chief sought orders regarding the political objectives for “Operation Parakram”, he was told by the then prime minister, “Baad mein batayengey” (we will tell you later). Ten months later, the chief was no wiser as he demobilised a million men after a dangerous but futile face-off with Pakistan resulting in 900 army casualties.

In 2008, within hours of the seaborne terror assault on Mumbai, the nation was uplifted when a cabinet minister signaled the government’s intentions: “All options are open to us.” A day later, morale plummeted when after a cabinet meeting, the minister announced, “War is not an option.” India had, once again, exercised ‘strategic restraint’ gaining universal applause but allowing the instigators of the 26/11 outrage to go unpunished.

Against this backdrop, we must consider if India’s timorous past postures and conduct have served to embolden its adversaries. From our unilateral undertaking of “no first use” of nuclear weapons (post-Pokhran II) to declarations that “war is not an option”, have we conveyed an unintentional guarantee of immunity to those contemplating inimical actions against us? However, two resolute actions - the launching of cross-border commando raids in September 2016 and Wednesday’s air-strikes on Pakistan-based terror hubs have, at long last, demolished such delusions. Simultaneously, they have also shattered the myth of a “nuclear overhang”, crafted by Pakistan, to deter a robust Indian response to cross-border terrorism.

No sane South Asian wants war and if Kashmir continues to remain a *casus belli*, we must undertake an agonising policy reappraisal. While the army continues to guard J&K against external intrusions, India needs to evolve a long-term strategy, “civilian” in nature, to restore peace.

There are also other measures available to discourage neighbours from interfering. At the strategic level, we need to urgently revise and introduce a degree of ambiguity in India’s nuclear doctrine. At the operational level, India must convey clarity and resolve

by openly declaring: One, a “no negotiations” policy vis-a-vis terrorists and hijackers; two, its right to respond suitably to cross-border terrorist attacks at their source and three, that while the response may not be instant it will be certain.

In order to implement this policy, military units with suitable capabilities should be earmarked and kept in the requisite state of readiness at all times.

(Courtesy: *The Indian Express*, March 4, 2019)

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A battle for plural, secular India as 900 million people gear up to vote

Cmde. (Retd.) C. Uday Bhaskar

Director of the Society for Policy Studies and
Former Director IDSA & NMF

India goes to the polls in a seven-phase national election that will commence on April 11 and conclude on May 19, with the results declared on May 23. As the world’s largest democracy, the current voter base is 900 million, more than the 814 million of 2014. The election will vote in 543 members to the 17th Lok Sabha (lower house). The current BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm, hopes to be sworn in for a second five-year term.

By way of numbers, this is the biggest electoral exercise in the world and ballot papers and officials will be spread across one million polling booths installed with electronic voting machines and a “voter verifiable paper audit trail” to minimise fraudulent practices – a charge often made in earlier elections. In addition, the Election Commission of India will deploy intrepid officials who travel on elephant, camel or yak – or just walk – to the most remote hamlets across the length and breadth of the country to ensure that every eligible voter can exercise his or her franchise.

At stake, this time is a battle for the very idea of India, which has been held up as a democracy committed to a plural, secular and liberal ethos. In India, there should be no citizen discrimination on the basis of religion. The constitution adopted in

Self-confidence is the foundation for a human being. Self-satisfaction represents the walls; self-sacrifice is the root; and self-realization is the life.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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January 1950 enshrined these principles and values and, barring a brief period when then prime minister Indira Gandhi imposed an emergency (1975-1977), there was an implicit acceptance that freedom, unity and equality were inherent in India's vast diversity.

In this nation of 1.35 billion people, the diversity is bewildering. While Hindus constitute the majority religion (almost 80 per cent), the Muslim population, at about 180 million, is under 15 per cent and is the largest "minority". Only in India could a demography of this order be referred to as a minority.

Concurrently, the constitution also sought to address centuries-old caste identity that was a major determinant in establishing indefensible social hierarchies.

For decades, the Congress party, led by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-64) and later his daughter Indira Gandhi (assassinated in 1984) and subsequently his grandson Rajiv Gandhi (assassinated in 1991), steered the ship of state with visible adherence to the principles of liberty, citizen equality and keeping the majoritarian Hindu sentiment within the ambit of the constitutional framework.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, founded in 1980 through the merging of Hindu nationalist parties, slowly consolidated its position in the Hindi-speaking swathe of India and from winning just two seats in the 1984 election. It romped home to victory in the 2014 election with a record 282 seats.

Unexpressed fear can be discerned among those citizens who do not support the Modi trajectory with uncritical adulation.

This spectacular victory was enabled by projecting Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat, as the resolute PM-candidate, born to electioneering. The Modi profile was favourably burnished to disparage incumbent prime minister Manmohan Singh, an economist of global repute but an uncharismatic politician when it came to the hustings.

In the current election, Modi as the sitting prime minister, is in a very strong electoral position – one that has been further enhanced by the recent air strike that India carried out against terrorist camps in Pakistan. This led to a similar response from Pakistan

and the potential for military escalation between two nuclear-weapon-capable neighbours lingered – and then receded.

The air strike has been seen by large sections of India as being reflective of a "new India" – a resolute nation that will no longer be constrained by its own self-imposed red lines – and that the resolute Modi deserves a second term to complete the various tasks he has embarked upon to restore Indian pride.

However, the track record of the Modi government over the past five years is uneven. Many earnest promises have been made but implementation has been spotty. For example, the radical demonetisation of the currency did not lead to the desired results and job growth remains elusive.

More troubling still, the Modi victory of 2014 and the consolidation of the Hindu nationalist constituency and Hindutva (an ideology that seeks to establish Hindu primacy socio-culturally) in the past five years has led to a disturbing domestic environment. The Hindutva forces and their militant cadres have donned a mantle of shrill hyper-nationalist vigilantism and the hapless Muslim citizen is often targeted mercilessly. Regrettably, Modi and his core team have chosen to ignore this trend, thereby allowing the perpetrators to act with even greater impunity. Unexpressed fear can be discerned among those citizens and groups who do not support the Modi trajectory with uncritical adulation.

The opposition to the BJP electoral machinery is divided. The much-weakened Congress has Rahul Gandhi, great-grandson of Nehru, to lead it but he has not been able to inspire that degree of confidence in the voter. Thus, for most Indians, the cynical question is: who is the viable alternative to Modi?

Modi's personal vendetta against the Nehru-Gandhi family is part of the current Indian political slugfest and it is ugly. The great Indian democratic churning process is under way through cyberspace, social media and hitting the road. What is at stake is the idea of India. Will fidelity to the liberal order and equal citizenship as enshrined in the constitution be respected? The outlook is murky.

(Courtesy : *SCMP*, March 18, 2019)

Gandhi is unique in political history. We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary – a beacon to the generations to come.

Albert Einstein

THE DAY AFTER

Prof. Manoj Das

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

The day after the General Elections are over, India should be hailed as successfully crossing yet another milestone on its uninterrupted democratic march ahead, unlike several former colonies as well as some newly formed nations. India deserves this accolade.

The day after this lofty exercise, the winners and losers will review their strategy and try to find where they went right and where wrong. That is but natural.

But the day after the event we the people should wonder if the nation's social, moral and intellectual visage had not turned paler by one more shade. If, barring the first time, each of the fifteen general elections had not been marked by this syndrome.

I was in my late teens when the first general elections based on adult franchise were executed spread over four months from 5 October 1951 to 21 February 1952. I bicycled down and around my small town and pedalled into the neighbouring villages and bazars to observe the people's reaction to it. Several rural voters, 85% of which were then illiterate, felt stumped at some familiar faces proposing to operate as formidable a contraption as the "Sarkar" so long run from beyond the seven seas. However, many saw a reflection of that enigmatic capacity in Nehru and, more informed ones, in Sardar Patel. Most of the candidates had been freedom-fighters, their credentials well known. Problem of choice hardly existed. Religion, caste and community played a negligible role. Provision of emoluments for an M.P. or M.L.A. was ideally little and the candidates spent little in campaigns.

Though there were 53 parties on the arena, contestants in any constituency were few and each one had a ballot box with his/her name and symbol boldly visible on it. No wonder that some good-natured voters cut their ballot paper into equal pieces and dropped them into all the boxes.

Change became glaring by the 2nd general elections in 1957 – a process of change that had since continued unchecked. At first playing their

disruptive role in a subdued manner – corrupt use of money, communalism, casteism, threat, blackmail, exaggerations, lies, and character-assassination – by and by became unabashed principles of propaganda. Way back in the first decade of the 20th century, Mark Twain said, "If we would learn what the human race really is at bottom, we need only observe it at election times." (Twain's Autobiography edited by A.B. Paine) How true it is today!

First and foremost among the lasting mischiefs each pre-election period made was the damage to the atmosphere in the campus. Each major party had a students' wing, but in the fifties of the last century they did not openly proclaim their affiliation, for all the public leaders were against dragging students into active politics. But by the sixties there were no qualms in that regard. Even that could be partly justified. But what is shameful is the phoney impact the elections left on the culture of the student community. Here is an extract from a major newspaper, omitting the name of the prominent university concerned: "Candidates for the University Students' Union may be parroting the expected lines at the hustling, but on ground there is just mascara... Lots of it as the ideal 'hamara neta aisaho' look to woo student voters is all about looking zany. That is where the Prem Studio in Kamala Market comes in. A veteran in the business of giving the aspirants that dream look since 1978, this time the only brief had been, says Umesh Sabharwal, managing director of the studio, 'glamour, glamour and more glamour'."

This author happened to travel across a rural chunk of the country during the first fortnight of January this year. The repeated complaints he heard from several village elders was about the proliferation of liquor shops where till the other day the stuff was synonymous with sin and scandal. According to the Global status report on alcohol and health, 2018, just released by the WHO, alcohol consumption by Indians had increased more than two fold between 2005 and 2016. Social workers say that the new recruits to the habit are mostly villagers; the younger lot is rivalled by middle-aged ones and the phenomenon is closely linked to the elections – a time when politicians or their agents use it as a bribe and prevent administrative

Non-violent opposition to the arbitrary use of state power is one manifestation of the legacy of Gandhi today; social work among the poor and disadvantaged is another.

Ramachandra Guha

interference in growth of its illegal outlets.

The irresponsible and abusive vocabulary of leading political figures probably satisfy their followers, but they fail to realise that it lowers the image of politicians as a tribe and, like inflation decreasing the worth of money their hyperboles diminish the value of words. That is a blow to the sanctity of language and literature.

Even though we the chivalrous Indians could elect a 'bandit queen' to our Lok Sabha, a man proved to be criminally corrupt or blatantly criminal was shunned. Not so any longer. We have adapted ourselves to them, in the process blunting our sensibility.

During the earliest experiment in democracy in Rome over two thousand years ago, there was nothing bizarre in the candidate galloping through the city throwing gifts at their patrician voters. The practice seems to have lately returned in the form of promising doles and even cash.

The day after the elections we should ask ourselves: did politicians have an absolute right to the public purse? Did they have the vision to foresee the economic and, more importantly, the socio-psychological consequences of their weird generosity?

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Ring In The Bad Times

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan
Indian Postal Service (Retd)
Former Member Postal Service Board and
Chairman Investment Board

The meltdown of the government led by Modi is now well underway. The losses the party has suffered in the Hindi belt are clear pointers of bad times to come for the party which, unlike in 2014, will be participating in the general elections without incumbent BJP led governments in key north India states.

The bureaucracy is battening down the hatches to wait out a government that is on its last legs and which no longer needs to be taken seriously. It is also preparing itself for a long spell of uncertainty when no party will command a majority throwing the

government wide open to the exploitation and abuse of the kind that small but critical coalition partners inflicted on the nation under UPA-2.

No one in officialdom will now be foolhardy enough to stick his or her neck out to for the present government only to be thrown under the bus by the next. Let's then settle down for a longish spell of non-governance.

There is a weary sense of having seen it all before – déjà vu is a better term. The implosion of the Congress Party in the 2014 general elections was long in the making; Modi only administered the *coup de grace*. By early 2010, over four years before the election that brought Modi to power, it was clear to most of us in the various civil services that we were serving a government that was a prisoner of coalition politics and not quite in charge of things. Everything had the stink of corruption and nepotism on an unprecedented scale.

The preparation for the Commonwealth games, then in full swing, reeked of intentional chaos masking much malfeasance. Ministries like Communication & IT, the Railways and Surface Transport saw grim businessmen walk in and out of the corridors of power, cartoonish figures in suits with slim brief cases in their hands and anxiety writ on their faces, each expecting to be winner in a patently unfair spoils system that had no rules.

Then as now, a perception that it was too dangerous to act pervaded the civil services compelling most of its members to hunker down in the trenches and wait it out. My colleagues in ministries and departments far more important than the one I was in, were clear that they would keep the files in interminable motion, buying time while pretending to act - a classic feint that most civil servants become adept at early in their careers.

Most of us knew it would be suicidal to to be eagerly proactive. A few who did - under pressure undoubtedly - like the then coal secretary H.C. Gupta, paid dearly for the decisions they took, very possibly under coercion from their political masters whose names have all but disappeared from the news and who are unlikely to ever be brought to justice.

Politicians often involve themselves in petty matters and consequently they cannot do much when faced with bigger problems.

Far from having a democracy, this country is a kleptocracy with a once in five-year sham of elections that's all theatre. Regardless of who we vote for we will in all probability be voting for knaves being driven around in Land Cruisers and Fortuners or heli-dropped to public meetings filled with people would have been paid to attend and later will be paid to vote. This is a time of promises- of caste-quotas and money and freebies of all kinds. When the dust settles we'll be victims of another round of a 5-year long madness that will bleed us all.

We thoughtlessly parrot the view that our vote counts – but for what one might ask and for whose benefit? Democracy in India will neither allow one to live nor permit one to die.

Caught in a never, never land of utter chaos, the best we can do is to attempt to survive. This is something embedded in the human gene i.e. to get out of the way and stay inconspicuous and silent, preparing for the worst while hoping for the best. Despair is too mild a word to describe the present scenario in our country but there aren't stronger ones around. Let's just exclaim 'Alas and retreat into our shells and hope for better times which may never come.'

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RESERVATIONS FOR THE POOR – A TIMELY INTERVENTION

Shri C. Anjaneya Reddy I.P.S. (Retd.)

Formerly Director-General (Vigilance and Enforcement and Ex-Chairman, A.P. Tourism Corporation

The decision of the Government to amend the Constitution to make provision for reservations for the poor among the so-called 'forward' castes both in Higher Education and in Public Services couldn't have come at a more opportune time. All over the country, there is an undercurrent of frustration among the students of the 'OC or Open Competition' category particularly those belonging to the farming communities, many of whom are first-generation high-school or college-goers. The dominant feeling seems to be that they were deprived of their rightful opportunities before Independence by better-educated communities like Brahmins, Rajputs,

Kayasthas etc and now by OBCs/SCs/STs. The well-intended 'compensatory justice' to deprived sections, has come to be perceived as injustice to them. The Pattedar agitation of Gujarat, the Maratha agitation of Maharashtra and the Kapu agitation of Andhra Pradesh are symptomatic of the brewing trouble. While the Government acted in time and remarkably fast to amend the Constitution perhaps keeping the general elections in mind, it would be good for all concerned to appreciate this as only a 'make-shift' arrangement and the whole issue of 'compensatory justice' needs to be addressed for a meaningful resolution keeping in mind the principle of equal opportunity for all as the Constitution promises!

To start from the very beginning, the reservations were to be enforced only for ten years after the Constitution came into force; sixty years later, they are being continued with no end in sight, creating a situation where the beneficiary families now have now developed a vested interest in them! There are many families who have benefitted from reservations in all-India and Class-I services for three generations and innumerable number who have benefitted for two generations! Consequently, those who have started within these communities a generation late, can never catch up with their own already advanced brethren. A cursory study in any state would make it clear that in the last twenty years or so, first-generation SC/ ST candidates could not make it to Class-I services as the quota was cornered by the second-generation beneficiaries of reservations. Theoretical ideas like identifying and keeping out the 'creamy layer' among them read well on paper but difficult to work!

Post-Mandal Commission, an unusually large number of communities came to be categorized as OBCs or Other Backward Classes; these include many land-owning and even trading communities! Over the years the OBCs have come to occupy twenty seven percent of the jobs and slots in professional education and are clamoring for more. To cut the long story short, the OBCs and SCs/STs these days not only occupy fifty percent of slots in professional education and public services, the meritorious among them have come to occupy a sizable part of the 'OC ' category forcing the so-called forward castes into an ever-narrowing corner. The problem has been aggravated by the insignificant difference in social

Let no one look upon work as a burden. Good work is the secret that keeps life going.

Rajaji

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and economic status between the upper-crust OBCs and 'open category' candidates. As long as reservations were confined to SCs/STs, there was not much heart-burning among others; perhaps a sense of guilt operated on their psyche. With the advent of OBCs on the scene, there seems to be a perceptible change in the attitude of the farming communities who see no great difference between them and OBCs.

In the Southern States, there has been a race among communities to seek the 'backward' status, a kind of de-sanskritisation phenomenon! The lists of backward communities goes on swelling with BC Commissions appointed from time to time in these States adding to the lists more and more communities. In the Telugu States of AP and Telangana, the long lists have more than a hundred communities! These include land-owning communities like Toorpu Kapus, KoppulaVelamas and Kalingas and relatively well-off communities like Gouds, Yadavs and Padmasalees (weavers) etc. This has created a situation where the truly backward communities like the nomadic tribes, fishermen, washermen, shepherds etc who are way behind the other BC communities in social development find themselves in a disadvantageous situation resulting in no improvement in their opportunities. This situation is now sought to be resolved in States like Bihar by creating a new category called the MBCs or 'Most Backward Classes' adding to the already existing maze of 'reservation' categories.

When the new Government takes over in Delhi, there is need to comprehensively re-examine the entire issue of reservations, instead of making piece-meal changes. Some of the core issues may be identified as follows.

1. The time has now come to make both social and economic criteria, not merely the social criterion, the basis for reservations. This would help protecting the poor among both the OBC and OC communities who often suffer substandard school education and consequently unfair competition.

2. The lists of OBCs and SCs/STs need to be revisited with a view to pruning them after making a socio-economic study of the communities who have benefitted from affirmative policies post-Independence. In the Telugu States, though there are more than a hundred communities listed as Backward Classes, about

ten of them have cornered the benefits meant for all!

3. While affirmative action for jobs at the entry level is acceptable, unwarranted privileges like reservation in promotions make for one-time subordinates becoming superiors in the same department or office leading to bitterness and bad blood among colleagues. This abominable practice has already taken its toll of discipline and merit in many government offices and institutions.

4. Yet another anomaly is lowering the qualifying merit levels to secure admissions into professional colleges which would only make for mediocre professionals like our engineering graduates in the recent years. Isn't it shameful that less than ten percent of them are employable? Medical education in government sector is most likely to go the same way in the days to come!

One viable solution for the benefit of all seems to lie in limiting the reservations in jobs and higher education to one generation in each family. That is, if an OBC or SC/ST candidate avails himself of the facility of reservation, his children should be classified as OCs. Such a step would ensure the first generation among the disadvantaged sections should benefit from affirmative policies, not the second and third generations as is the practice now. This would give space to those families which are still to benefit from them. Otherwise, we would end up creating a privileged group within each community without ever reaching out to the many at the bottom. Such a radical step would also provide for upward mobility of people relieving them of the unenduring caste identity! For a harmonious society, it is necessary that reservations shouldn't perpetuate caste identities.

We would do well to evolve affirmative policies that would harmonize merit with social justice. The present system of discounting merit in the name of 'compensatory justice' will only promote mediocrity. It has already created an impression that talented Indians flourish outside the country and not within! Exporting talent and retaining mediocrity is surely not the best way to run our governments and institutions in a world that is increasingly becoming competitive!

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Our first loyalty should be to the human race. All other loyalties should be subordinated to it. That is the lesson of Greece.

A SEASON OF BIOPICS : ARTIST AS LEADER - I

Dr.R.V. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, I.A.S.(Retd)
Former Secretary, HRD, Govt of India &
Prof. IIM, Bengaluru

With the exception of the Government headed by P.V.Narasimha Rao (1971-72), all the other Governments which I served in Andhra Pradesh were chief ministerial governments in which the Chief Minister was not just primus inter pares (the first among equals) but was supreme. It was a fascinating experience to work closely with Chief Ministers N.T.Rama Rao and M.Channa Reddy both of whom took enormous interest in education. A living legend of Telugu cinema Rama Rao was an artist in politics while Channa Reddy was an artist in the use of power. Even for Andhra Pradesh, NTR was exceptional; he was as close to Louis XVI, the famous Absolute Monarch of France, as democracy would permit. All other Chief Ministers had to manage the Congress High Command as well as the dissidence within the Congress Party which was an integral element of the Congress Party culture and often encouraged by the High Command to keep the Chief Minister under leash. Many ministers had long political careers and could recall the not so distant past when the Chief Minister was just one of them. Even while being seemingly loyal they were on look out for any opportunity to discomfit and displace the Chief Minister. But NTR was the Party as well as the Government. The 1982 election which catapulted NTR to power, and the 1985 election which revalidated his popular mandate were plebiscitary elections, and he had every reason to believe that the electorate vested power in him as an individual and not as leader of the party. Few of his ministers had any previous ministerial experience, and most of the party legislators were political novices who rode on the coattails of NTR to the State Assembly. Very much like Louis XIV who nonchalantly declared, after me the deluge, NTR could assert *party naatho vacchindi, naatho pothunde* (the Party came with me, and would end with me); of course, history proved him wrong but his assertion seemed to be the truth

during the forty months I worked with him, the first half in the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan as ‘ambassador’ of the State to the Delhi durbar and the second half in Hyderabad. As if to prove his supremacy, in February 1989, NTR sacked all his 31 ministers holding them responsible for the leakage of the Budget; though he constituted a new Council of Ministers a week later, most of the 23 ministers he inducted were not even second-tier leaders in the Party, and throughout that Budget Session, NTR singlehandedly answered all the questions in the Legislative Assembly, an unprecedented feat which was never again repeated by any other Chief Minister.

The main task of an Ambassador to Delhi durbar was to ensure that the State Government’s interests in the Central Government, Parliament, and the Supreme Court were safeguarded. However, every Chief Minister expected the Special Commissioner’s office to provide him political intelligence, and to keep him apprised of political developments in the Nation’s Capital. In those days when 24/7 news channels, cell phones and Internet were unknown, inputs by confidants were more valuable than now. Tamil Nadu was more transparent in this regard, and the Government used to appoint a political personality as Special Representative of the State Government in Delhi. My deputy Kishan Rao, an extraordinary officer, spared me of the political functions. He liaised wonderfully with P.Upendra who was NTR’s plenipotentiary in Delhi. Whatever, almost everyone right from the Chief Minister dealt with Kishan Rao directly on any matter, substantive or trivial, so much so that I could limit himself to ceremonial duties such as presiding over an event or chaperoning the Chief Minister and Governor during their visits to Delhi. I used to joke that my position was like a General in the Soviet Army and that Kishan Rao was the more important political commissar, the difference being that Kishan Rao spared me the bother of fighting the battle also. He was also an outstanding events manager, and that skill came in handy to ably fulfil NTR’s objective of the Bhavan functioning as a beacon house of Telugu culture and identity in the Nation’s

One cannot propagate *dharma* by travelling in trains or cars, nor in bullock carts. That can be done only on foot.

Mahatma Gandhi

Capital. NTR rode to power on the slogan of Telugu *Atma Gauravam* (Self-respect of the Telugu people). He was a passionate champion of Telugu identity and culture; he named his party Telugu Desam Party (party of the Telugu land), and every scheme and project his Government that launched, invariably started with the word 'Telugu', for example *Telugu Lalitha Kala Pranganam* (Courtyard for Telugu Fine Arts) and *Telugu Ganga* (the project for supplying Chennai city with Krishna water). Telugu people owe him an immense debt of gratitude for instilling in the individual and collective psyche of the people of North India the recognition that Telugu people were not Madrasis, people from Madras (as Chennai used to be called), a catch-all, voguish expression North Indians used to connote anyone from South India, being oblivious of the diversity of languages and sub-national identities. NTR's high profile participation in national politics, the high profile meetings of opposition parties he organised as Chairman of the National Front in the Andhra Bhavan and in the State, his garb, and his theatrical performance as a politician ensured high name recognition for him, the Bhavan and the Telugu people. I witnessed for myself his extraordinary ability to grab attention. I often used to travel along with NTR from the Andhra Bhavan to the Delhi airport in the midst of evening rush hour traffic; as the convoy was about to reach a busy intersection, NTR would ask the driver to put on the siren, and as the startled drivers of cars and pedestrians nearby gaped at the VVIP passing by, NTR would put on a beatific smile, wave from the window of the car, and rejoice as flashes of recognition beamed across the faces of the drivers and pedestrians. The name recognition of Andhra Bhavan was enhanced when NTR privatised the departmental canteen and opened the canteen to outsiders; the authentic Andhra cuisine which Saibaba, the new caterer, introduced was the talk of the town and drew large number of Delhites to the dining hall. The auditorium in the Bhavan became a beehive of cultural activities with a continual stream of film shows, dance and music programmes which drew large audiences. All in all, the Bhavan came to be perceived as a happening place for political

developments and cultural events. The high point of the cultural diplomacy was the weeklong celebration of the Andhra Pradesh Formation Day on November 1st. NTR himself would arrive on the concluding day of the celebrations and preside over a gala evening of cultural performances followed by a sumptuous Andhra dinner. Kishan Rao's good work reflected on me, and NTR came to have a high opinion of my commitment and administrative abilities, an opinion he continued to hold all through the period I worked with him, in spite of many occasions when he was upset with me over some issue or other. And he was gracious to openly express his opinion on occasions like the Teacher's Day celebrations in 1988 and 1989. He even went to the extent of advising Y.Sita Devi whom he appointed as education minister after he reconstituted the Council of Ministers in February 1989 that she should follow my advice as I was a dedicated and experienced officer. All in all, I owe NTR an immense debt of gratitude for being so considerate to me.

In the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan, I had an opportunity to observe the extraordinary ability of NTR to bring to bear on electioneering his exceptional stagecraft. In February 1987, NTR decided to campaign for Devi Lal's Lok Dal Party in the elections to the Haryana State Assembly; this was very first time he campaigned outside Andhra Pradesh. He got his trademark *Chaitanya Ratham* (Chariot of Consciousness), a custom-built vehicle which also served as a home cum moving stage, driven all the way from Hyderabad, along with huge buntings and banners, giant flags and motorcycles, and colossal cut-outs of himself. He stormed Haryana with his Ratham; the Congress party was routed losing all but five of the 90 seats of the State Assembly. The spectacular election results confirmed NTR's belief that he was a leader of national importance who could repeat at the national level his miraculous performance in Andhra Pradesh in the 1982 and 1985 elections, and oust *dushta Congi* (evil Congress) from power at the Centre once and for all. Over the next two years, I noticed that NTR's belief grew deeper and deeper. Within a few months of my moving to Hyderabad,

Judicial activism must not be confused with judicial showmanship or judicial adventurism.
PIL is not a pill for every ill.

Bordia, Education Secretary, Government of India came to Hyderabad and reviewed the implementation of educational programmes; so impressed was he with my performance that he straightaway offered a position in his Department. I did what all was possible to persuade NTR to relieve me. However, NTR would not agree, and finally in September 1989, a few months before the elections which saw him lose power in the State and the Congress Party at the Centre, he put paid to my hope of moving to Delhi by announcing, 'Brother, do not be in a hurry. Soon, we would all move together to Delhi'. I can still vividly recall his dramatic departure from the Andhra Pradesh Bhavan to the electoral battlefields of Haryana. He stood on the roof-cum-stage of the Ratham bedecked with colourful buntings and banners, striking the pose of a heroic general of yore leading his troops to the battleground, and waving to a huge crowd of admirers who came from all over Delhi; one either side of the Ratham were motorcycle outriders holding tall poles from which giant yellow flags of the Telugu Desam Party fluttered; following him was a large convoy of cars with giant party flags on their bonnets, and huge cut-outs of NTR on their roofs. My mind wandered to the scenes of the Nuremberg rallies I saw in Leni Riefenstahl's classic film *Triumph of Will*. My mind also wandered to similar scenes of the 1952 General Elections which I saw as a boy: a mammoth rally of drummers playing on *dappus* (a traditional form of percussion instrument), and of yoked bulls (the election symbol of the Congress Party), and a Lone Ranger show of *Prativadi Bhayankarachari*, a daredevil freedom fighter who was drawn to terrorism during the struggle for Independence. *Bhayankarachari* never stood a chance against the formidable Congress Party candidate, a local notable who joined the Congress party after Independence. However, never one to be cowed down by an opponent, *Bhayankarachari* defiantly went from street to street leading a horse (his election symbol) and carrying a gong which he rang to collect a crowd, and eloquently appealed for votes. As I reflected on these scenes again and again in later years, the thought struck me that there was much that is common to politics and performing art. Politics and administration, it is often said, are the art of the

possible; leadership, particularly political leadership, is the art of stretching the limits of the possible and accomplishing what is generally considered to be impossible. Common to the art forms of politics and drama is the intrinsic value of representation and portrayal, donning masks which present a persona different from one's self, the embellishing of facts, background and perspective, and creative use of imagery, symbols and figures of speech. There is an element of truth in President Reagan's assertion that there had been times in office when he wondered how could have done his job as President without being an actor. Statecraft is thus more stagecraft than political science. Salt Satyagraha is stagecraft par excellence; the historic victory of Indira Gandhi in the 1971 Elections, and of NTR in the 1982 elections are other good examples. By invoking evocative slogan *garibihatao* (remove poverty) to counter the Grand Alliance's campaign slogan of Indira *hatao* (remove Indira), Indira Gandhi could successfully portray her opponents as bunch of self-serving political honchos, while she was an indefatigable champion of the poor. Similarly, within eight months of forming a political party, NTR achieved the impossible feat of vanquishing a time-tested political machine of the Congress Party through his rhetoric, and successful representation of frequent changes of Chief Ministers by Rajiv Gandhi as an affront to the dignity of the Telugu people. But then, while politics and performing arts have much in common they are not identical. Artistic performance alone is not adequate to hold a spell on the electorate for ever. Once an artist joins politics, he is generally not exempt from the famous maxim of Enoch Powell that 'all political careers, unless they are cut off at some happy juncture, end in failure'; NTR's political career itself is a good example.

(to be continued)

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Two cheers for democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism.

E.M. Forster

Politics, Populism and Need for Evidence- Based Policy Studies

Prof. I. Ramabrahmam,
Dept. of Political Science,
University of Hyderabad

Introduction

Traditional approaches to public policy studies are undergoing rapid changes; what used to be institutional, rational- choice, elite theories are now being supplemented by new concepts.

The Finnish government undertook a two- year long experiment in 2017, which intended to introduce a basic income policy as a new initiative in the social security system to make it more inclusive and further increase the labour supply. This clearly is a variant of a Universal Basic Income (UBI), which countries like India are trying to introduce. UBI is “an income paid by a government, at a uniform level and at regular intervals, to each adult member of a society” (Van Parijs, 2004). The Finnish experiment, thus, attempted to study the effects of basic income on employment and income. The government gave monthly stipends of €560each (tax- exempt) to a random sample of 2,000 unemployed citizens in the age group of 25- 58 years. The preliminary findings of the study (consisting of employment effects and well- being effects) released in February 2019, provided interesting insights (Kangas, Jauhiainen, Simanainen, & Ylikanno, 2019). According to the analysis presented in “The basic income experiment 2017- 18 in Finland- Preliminary Results,” highlights that the universal income did not help the individuals get into jobs. It did not improve the employment although the well- being of the basic income recipients improved. Drawing from the preliminary findings of the report, it appears it is not a rational policy as it did not achieve all the objectives. Thus, the randomized trial of a social welfare policy carried out in Finland has valuable lessons for policy analysts across the world.

If we critically look at the policy- makers’ anxiety to introduce UBI Scheme (UBIS) in India, an analyst mentioned that it can be introduced in India if major changes are made in our subsidy regime. Calling for scrapping of all welfare schemes and examining the possibility of a tax on petroleum, GST and Income

Tax (to be called as UBIS Tax) is perhaps a rational policy alternative. It is estimated by the critical commentator that we can mobilise enough resources to fund the initiative with no additional burden on the Central government. According to his estimates, this happens because the huge administrative expenditures in running the welfare schemes will be saved and transferred in cash to the people of the country. Interestingly, he mentions it, The UBIS is not an issue of scarcity of funds, as he mentions that it is an issue of bureaucracy versus the people” (Jhunjhunwala, 2019).

Drawing from the Finnish example, it emerges that an experiment was carried out and the inputs or evidences, as they can be called, are being used to make policy decisions. In the Indian example, however, data is being used as evidence to chalk out possible means to provide UBI to the citizens.

Policy making is an evolving process. Right from the stage of planning to evaluation, a public policy transforms itself in every stage. With the public policy development emerging as the agenda of the states in post- colonial societies after World War II, there have been new trends in policy making and policy initiatives. One such trend in the domain of public policy is the Evidence- Based Policy Making (EBPM).

In this context, this Paper attempts to understand the evidence- based public policy and how it can facilitate effective output and outcome- oriented public policies. It also argues that there is a need for a shift in public policy studies to adopting the evidence- based public policy model.

What is Evidence- Based Policy Making (EBPM)?

The concept of Evidence- Based Policy Making (EBPM) heavily relies on evidences for decision- making in policies. In other words, the evidences inform the policy- making process. Evidences are used in multiple fields to guide the policy decisions. For instance, evidence- based medicine mandates that new information, gleaned from randomised controlled trials and consolidated into clinical practice guidelines, can and must be used to improve the quality of care that patients receive (Worsham, C., and Jena B., A., 2019).

Democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people.

Oscar Wilde

EBP is defined as “an approach that helps people make well- informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation” (Davies, 2004). In terms of the genesis, the new Labour Government in United Kingdom first introduced the aspect of evidence- based policy as one of the agenda of modernisation. It included better use of evidence and research in policy making” (Pawson 2006: 2). Ray Pawson (2006), while bringing out the perspective of United States on evidence- based policy making, quoted Donald T Campbell as:

“The United States and other modern nations should be ready for an experimental approach to social reform, an approach in which we try out new programs designed to cure specific problems” by including provisions for “program evaluation” (2006: 2).

If one attempts to locate EBP in the conceptual framework, it is an extension of the scientific method. The approaches or models in public policy tell us that policy making happens from the perspective of policies, which can be explained through institutional optics, rational choice etc. But, how research in this domain shows results in a different way called Evidence- Based Public Policy Making new crop of public policy experts are documenting studies showing limitations to the application of standalone approaches. For example, the Government of India’s Government Studies Report of the 1990s classified all subsidies into primary, merit and non- merit. In this scheme of classification, higher education was categorised as a non- merit good and primary education as merit good. Studies done subsequently show that non- merit categorization of higher- education actually affected the quality of teaching and learning in large number of schools across the country. This is evidenced by the Annual Education Survey, which revealed that large number of school children’s performance is sub- optimally low. Hence, evidences like these serve as critical inputs for policy revision which is yet to take place. Meanwhile, large numbers of low quality teachers’ training institutes are continuing training. Governments are increasingly withdrawing from the

higher education sector and are indirectly encouraging the private. The level- playing field expected is almost absent.

If one examines the nature of the evidences, evidence can be across a wide range of spectrum. The evidence may be categorized in the perspective of social sciences as either ‘hard’ or ‘soft’, implying objective versus subjective. The hard evidence includes primary quantitative data collected by researchers from experiments, secondary quantitative social and epidemiological data collected by government agencies, clinical trials, and interview or questionnaire-based social surveys. Qualitative data such as ethnographic accounts and autobiographical materials constitute the soft evidence (Marston & Watts, 2003).

Gary Banks highlighted that ‘good evidence can ameliorate or ‘neutralise’ political obstacles, thereby making reforms more feasible.’ It enables the ‘wider community to be better informed about what is at stake in interest groups’ proposals, and enfranchising those who would bear the costs of implementing them’ (Banks G. , 2009).

Many countries, world over, have been implementing evidence- based public policy- making. Many instances exist wherein UK has used evidences to inform its policy- making. These include the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) Demonstration project, literacy strategy in Britain in 1996 etc. The United Nations established a Commission on Evidence- Based Policy- making in 2016 by the bipartisan Evidence- Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016. The Commission “envisions a future in which rigorous evidence is created efficiently, as a routine part of government operations, and used to construct effective public policy”(Commission on Evidence- Based Policymaking, 2017). Similarly, Australia too has been carrying out work in the area of EBPM through the Evidence Based Policy Analysis Project, which has been initiated to analyse public policies (Institute of Public Affairs, 2018).

Evidence- Based Policy Making in India

India, along with many nations across the world, committed to achieve the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In this scenario, effective policy-making forms the cornerstone. Moreover, in a country as diverse as India, in terms of demography, topography, socio-economic and political dimensions, a “one-size fits all” approach may not be the way forward. It is here that EBP emerges as a critical policy intervention.

India’s attempts for EBPM have already begun. For instance, the use of Big Data is growing rapidly in the country with initiatives like Aadhar. The policy think tank, National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Ayog has also been roped in to partner with institutions to promote evidence-based policy making. In April 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and the United Kingdom (UK) for utilising big data and analytics capability for evidence-based policymaking (United New of India, 2018). With the advent of Big Data and other data reports emerging, there is a huge scope for policy-makers to use them as evidences to devise policies in various sectors. The Dalit Human Development Report is a case in point.

The Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi and the Centre for Dalit Studies Hyderabad published the “Dalit Human Development Report, Telangana” in 2018. This 303-page Report is a first-of-its-kind, which brings out an elaborate account of the status of Dalits in Telangana. Drawing from various secondary sources like the Census 2011, National Sample Survey, Economic Census, National Family and Health Survey, All India Survey of Higher Education, District Information Statistics on Education, National Crime Record Bureau, National Achievement Survey, election data of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly, information is presented on the status of Dalits in the state.

With Telangana being the youngest state in India, such a Report comes handy in providing information on the Dalit community. In the point of view of the EBP, the Report replete with rich data, serves as evidence for better-informed decision-making in the formulation of policies.

Another instance of need for evidence-based policy making is the Indian health sector. With the first dedicated health policy in India in 1983, three

and a half decades after independence, the health sector continues to grapple with a lot of challenges in the rural and urban areas. With health being a critical area for human development, it becomes imperative for policy makers to collect evidences from the field to prepare robust and forward-looking policies. Rao, S. (2017) emphasizes the need for evidence-based policy making in the health sector. In her book titled, “Who Cares,” she states that, “there is an urgent need to move away from incrementalism and acknowledge the complexity of rebuilding the existing inefficient health system. The policies and strategies should be evidence-based, embedded within the socio-economic context of the country, and devised on the basis of a close study of the past failures and an uncompromising commitment to equity and fairness”(Rao, 2017).

Way Forward

With data being the critical mass of evidence-based policy-making, it becomes pertinent for countries like India to collect and standardize the data. For instance, Mani and Kamath, in their paper titled “Evidence-based Policymaking What Can We Learn from India’s R&D Statistics?” pointed out that detailed statistics on Research and Development (R&D) are helpful in drawing evidence-based policy making. However, there is a need for improvement of the data (Mani & Kamath, 2014). Thus, new research, especially in social science gets enriched with the new approach. In social sector policy-making, evidence-based research strengthens the quality of policy and facilitates shifting of priorities for optimizing scarce resources.

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“Hygiene Matters”

Dr. G.Raghu Rama Rao, M.D

Former Prof & HoD of Dermatology,
Andhra Medical College,
Visakhapatnam.

“The Body is your temple. Keep it pure and clean for the soul to reside in.” - Sri. B.K.S. Iyengar.

Two years ago, I happened to attend a multi specialty National Conference on “Hygiene Matters”, organized by Community Dermatology Society of

In politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

B.R. Ambedkar

India. For the first time, the entire conference focussed on various aspects of hygiene and its socio-economic impact on the country. The purpose of this unique conference was to promote education, knowledge of good hygienic practices among urban and rural community with a view to preventing the spread of communicable diseases and also to improve the health and reduce the economic burden on the people.

What is hygiene?

The word 'Hygiene' is derived from the name Hygeia, the Greek goddess of healing. An equivalent word in Sanskrit is "*Swachaha*", meaning cleanliness of mind and body. God is essentially '*suchi priya*' and He dwells in such souls which are clean and pure. Here, hygiene refers not merely to body cleansing, but it includes hygiene of all organs of the body such as hand, mouth, menstrual and mental hygiene. It is said that "Hygiene is two – thirds of Health". Health and Hygiene are inseparable and there is an undeniable connection between hygiene and better health and well being.

However, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, where as hygiene refers to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of disease.

The Value of hygiene:

Sanitation with hygiene is a universal human right. This human right "entitles everyone to sanitation services that provide privacy and ensure dignity, and that are physically accessible, affordable, safe, hygienic, secure and socially and culturally acceptable".

As part of the 2030 agenda, the United Nations (UN) set clean water and sanitation facilities as goal 6 of the 17 sustainable development goals. The ambition is to "ensure access to water and sanitation for all" and the target is to "achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to all the needs of women and girls". Sanitation and hygiene are given high priority and are placed alongside goals such as

eliminating poverty and ending hunger. For these goals (SDG) to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and people all around the world.

Consequences of lack of knowledge, hygiene and sanitary facilities:

Many of us take good personal hygiene and access to basic sanitation facilities such as clean water or a toilet for granted. But what happens when the access is limited? What if one cannot have access to clean water or a toilet or cannot afford hygiene products?

The United Nations (UN) estimates that 2.4 billion people worldwide lack access to sanitation facilities . As many as 1.7 million people die every year from diarrheal diseases and of these, 90% are children under the age of 5. Diseases associated with poor sanitation and unsafe water accounted for about 10% of the global burdens of disease, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Educating children in hygiene is a good investment in their health. One joint project of good hand hygiene habits can reduce the risk of childhood diseases such as hand, foot and mouth disease by up to 60% in China. The value of good hygiene is not restricted to basic facilities in developing countries. Several scientific studies show the value of good hand hygiene in reducing the number of hospital acquired infections. Hands are the major pathways of germ transmission during health care.

Simple hand washing with alcohol- based hand sanitizer or at least soap and water, not only in health care settings and even at homes before taking food and after defecation for 20-30 seconds is a good hygienic practice to reduce the spread of various communicable diseases. Knowledge, education about the value of good hand hygiene should be given top priority in all our health projects to reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

Her hygiene:

In addition to small children, the most vulnerable members of society are women. Researchers from

While saints are engaged in introspection, burly sinners run the world.

Water AID, UNICEF and WHO put the number of women that die from child birth complications each year as high as 289,000 globally. They argue that despite improvements in health care, new mothers and new borns are still dying because of the death of a reliable supply of safe water, good hygiene practice and adequate toilets.

About 52% of the female population is of reproductive age and most of them are menstruating every month. The majority of them have no access to clean and safe sanitary products, or to a clean and private space to change their clothes. A recent survey in India found that of 14,724 government schools, only 53% had a separate girl's toilet. At home, the situation is no better as 132 million households do not have a toilet, leaving adolescent girls and women to face the indignity of open defecation. One study revealed that 36% of girls rarely go to school and 96% of economically active women do not regularly go to work during menstruation due to lack of adequate facilities. This has a tremendous negative impact on their right to education, self esteem and economic status. In addition to lack of sanitary facilities, menstruation remains a taboo in most parts of the world and is rarely talked about. Coupled with it is lack of information on the process of menstruation and the required conditions for managing menstruation. The time has come to promote loudly and unashamedly, the role of good Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) for better development of women and girls. It is evident that poor menstrual hygiene, not only causing health damage to women and girls but also results in girls losing interest in education and career. Therefore, Menstrual hygiene management is an integral part of the Swachh Bharat Mission. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation issued guidelines for management of menstrual hygiene to support all adolescent girls and women.

Swachh Bharat Mission:

An average of Rs 6,500 per person was lost in India annually due to lack of cleanliness and hygiene, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). More than 400 million of India's 1.2 billion citizens still live in poverty, and India has the largest number

of people in the world practising open defecation. But situation sounds promising, as Narendra Modi, India's prime minister has made sanitation and hygiene a top priority.

“Swachh Bharat Mission” or clean India Campaign, a large scale government initiative focussed on providing sanitation and hygiene facilities to all Indian citizens would make a significant impact on public health and in safeguarding the income of the poor, ultimately contributing to the national economy. The prime goal of the mission is to end open defecation practices in India by 2019, well ahead of UN sustainable development goal target date of 2030. The Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) supported programme in India has been instrumental in establishing methods and practices to enable the realization of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

We need to break the shell of the taboos, give up unhealthy practices and start a movement for better hygiene, optimally utilizing technology to create the much needed awareness.

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THE TAPASVI AS A POET: KAVYAKANTHA VASISHTA GANAPATI MUNI - II

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

While each one of the stotras has a special grace surrounding it, the poems on Goddess Renuka need to be mentioned as an example of the power of the Word. Ganapati Muni had gone to Padaiveedu to revise Umasahasram. Instigated by one Sundara Pandya, the Madras Mail published a news item that Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri was gathering a band of revolutionaries in an isolated place! The police were now on his trail as they had been told that Umasahasram actually incited treason in the guise of praying to Mother Goddess. While they followed him as he went around the parikrama of Goddess Renuka Devi's temple, he began composing a prayer to the presiding deity. Each round blossomed as one sloka and when twenty-eight were over, 'Renuka Geetam' was ready! Soon the police officials realized their

True leadership is the exact opposite of the concentration of all power and decision making authority in one individual.

folly and listened to him as he sat in the mandapa and explained the meaning of the verses on Renuka that he had composed just then.

Surasiracchara charana renukaa
Jagadhadheeswari jayati renukaa

As always, Ganapati Muni's stotras reveal his Vedic inspiration and Pauranic scholarship, making it a joy to learn and chant the verses. Without doubt, they are all encapsulated with spiritual shakti.

A tapasvin who gained vast stretches of adhyatmic knowledge in his visions, sometimes Ganapati Muni rendered his findings as aphorisms.

From Badarayana's Brahma Sutras onwards, aphorisms have played an important part in the ethico-spiritual areas of Indian life. Easy to memorise, these condensed pellets of experiential wisdom have been useful for teachers guiding their flocks as they can comment and explain the Sutras in the manner appropriate to the time and clime, down the ages.

The sutras of Ganapati Muni are the result of intense tapasya. His 'Mahavidya Sutra' (relating to the Dasa Mahavidya Tantra) is said to have been composed in 1917. Ganapati Muni constantly related his personal experiences to achieve perfect authenticity for his writings, and was never tired of revising his works. For instance, he had described the concept of 'Kapalabheda' in the meditation on Prachanda Chandika. He experienced this "cracking of the skull" in 1922 while residing in the Mango Tree Cave in Tiruvannamalai. He was at that time composing a garland of verses on the deity Indrani. According to G. Krishna "The skull of Nayana broke at the top where from two channels connect the two ears on either side. The sound of breaking was clearly heard and a sort of smoke like thing that emanated through the aperture was also seen ... After this experience of Kapalabheda he could clearly feel the flow of a current from Akasa through his Brahmarandhra and spinal column down to the Mooladhara. It was permeating his whole system and he was experiencing a happy release from the bodily bondage."

The 'Mahavidya Sutra' opens with Kali. She

is all-pervading, the string of skulls around her neck speaks to us of the destruction of universes, creation is her dance (kriyaiva tandavamuchyate), and evolution calls for destruction and creation. Worship of Kali assures the enhancement of spiritual power. Indeed Kali is the sword in the hand of yogis.

In this manner Ganapati Muni sets down his meditations fortified by his experiences on the Mother Goddesses Tara, Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Bhairavi, Prachandachandika, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamalatmika. Half a century ago, Sri Sundara Krishna Vasishtan paid glowing tributes to the Mahavidya Sutra, praising the Sundari and Prachanda Chandi chapters in particular:

"These two chapters are masterpieces in as much as they deal with the twin experiences namely the Darsananubhava and Sparsanubhava of Atman obtained by Guru Ramana and Sishya Ganapathy. They are therefore the quintessence of all sadhanas." Other sutras written by him include Rudrakutumbha Sutra and Srishti Sutra. The Indresvarabhedha Sutra seeks to prove Indra and Siva are but one and that Rudra is the concept of Indra. People of earlier times referred to the soul within Prakriti as Indra. In modern times the soul is referred to as Rudra for this is the second creation.

Ganapati Muni has also gifted us with explications (vyakhyana) of commonly used terms like Gayatri, Yoga, Sita and Krishna. These sutras communicate entire areas of experience through crystalline Sanskrit. The Sita Vyakhyana for instance. Who is Sita? She is the All-beautiful, the noble woman (uttamottama naari). She is Lakshmi, her life-story is sweet (charite madhura). Her birth (was she an ayonija or was she born to human parents?) leads the Muni to cogitate on what constitutes an incarnation. An incarnation does not fall into the world as souls concealed in material forms. The incarnation literally steps down (avatarana) illumined by conscious awareness of what is happening. Such is Sita who is the ideal for Pativratas. Her greatness is seen in the elements: Fire (when she prays for the safety of Hanuman who is torching Lanka), Earth (when she enters its womb) and wind (when she remains without

India's diversity is also a source of political resilience, as strong sub-national identities provide a check on ethnic and religious nationalism.

eating food in Lanka). Indeed she became a goddess to her husband Rama who worshipped her as a golden image even when he had given her up (*patyurapi devatevabhutsa bhagavati*).

Of particular significance to contemporary India is 'Panchama Mimamsa' and 'Panchajana Charcha' by Ganapati Muni. The Muni takes us back to ancient Shastras to prove that there is no basis for untouchability. Varna and Jati have been stratified but there has been no identification of a particular untouchable caste. Due to Pratiloma connections we have various groups like Nishadas, Kiratas, Sabaras and Pulindas. A certain distance gets to be formed when a group of people take beef and wine. Indeed even a Brahmin who sells milk falls away from his caste! Taking us to the relevant portions in the Smritis associated with sages like Gautama, Yajnavalkya and Manu, the Muni argues that non-association for certain reasons (criminal? Pratiloma marriages?) does not mean the person becomes an untouchable. It is not a physical rejection but an exile from the community's traditions (*asprusyatvena sarvadharmabahishkaro vyakyatah*).

It is interesting to learn that Ganapati Muni proposed a constitution for free India as aphorisms in 'Samrajya Nibandhanam'. There are suggestions for achieving good administration and maintaining healthy social mores. The work is wrapped up with Saptamahamaryadah (commandments): Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet another's wife, thou shalt not drink intoxicants, thou shalt not speak a lie, thou shalt not speak scandal of others, thou shalt not betray.

As a disciple of Ramana Maharishi, Ganapati Muni was constantly exercised about the principles of existence. What constitutes reality? How does man get attuned to his existence on earth? Ganapati's works on this subject are of deep adhyatmic value. The most well-known among them is Ramana Gita. Three hundred verses divided into eighteen chapters bring to us the questions posed by disciples and the answers given by Ramana Mahaishi at different times. Ganapati Muni has rendered them all into Sanskrit. Fortunately for us, T.V. Kapali Sastri has

written a Sanskrit commentary titled 'Prakasa' which brings out the logical progression of Ramana Gita that enquires into the nature of the Self. As we proceed with the work, we learn of the need for self-inquiry, the importance of meditation and the repetition of the Name, the need and method of mind-control, the significance of rituals, the importance of a fraternal approach towards the rest of mankind and the facets of bhakti. Among other works of Ganapati Muni on metaphysics, mention may be made of 'Viswa Mimamsa' and 'Tantrahridayam'.

It is a pity that despite Ganapati Muni's enormous scholarship and insights about the Vedic world, no standard work on the subject was set down by him. There are some stray notes which are revelatory. According to him, the Vedic mantras are recordings by great rishis whose tapasya had enabled them to receive them in their pristine purity. His approach to the Rig Veda was imbibed well by his disciple, T.V. Kapali Sastri who fortified himself further with the approaches of Sri Aurobindo to the Veda. Later on Kapali Sastri wrote a commentary, 'Siddhanjana' on the first ashtaka of the Rig Veda.

Like the ancients, Ganapati Muni also chose poetry as the vehicle to convey his views on various subjects like ayurveda, astronomy and astrology. 'Chikitsanusasanam' deals with various sicknesses as asthma, tuberculosis and piles. With Bharatacharitra Mimamsa we reach an area which never fails to excite our enquiring mind. The work is an elucidation of certain chosen features from Vyasa's Mahabharata, and was originally delivered as a series of lectures in the Andhra University in 1934. That was the year when Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was the Vice-chancellor of the University and it is thrilling to imagine the philosopher-statesman and the scholar-tapasvin on the same stage, leading the audience back to the days of the Mahabharata.

The question as to the date of the epic's composition has exercised scholars for a long time. When was it written down? One hundred and twenty seven generations before Chandragupta Maurya? The yuga is definitely Kali as the epic statements help us connect. The "yugavichara' chapter says that

Power has only one duty – to secure the social welfare of the people.

Benjamin Disraeli

the Pandavas lived during the middle period of the composition of the Rig Veda mantras. And Vyasa, the author of the history, Jaya belonged to the period prior to the Upanishadic times. Vaisampayana came during the time of the Vedangas, Jyotisha Sastra and the rest. Sauti Ugrasva belonged to Asoka's times. So runs the argument.

But how trace the historical characters to the Vedas? The Muni embarks on a Sherlock Holmesian search for the origins of Karna myth in the Vedic hymns about Surya. The commentator Sayanacharya gives him a helping hand by referring to the human descent of the Sun: 'There was a king Svasva. Desiring a son, he performed upasana addressed to Surya. A son verily like the sun was born to him. It is said that he battled with a rishi called Etasa.'

The Muni goes on to say that Etasa (also known as Kutsa) was saved from Svasva's son by Indra. The Rig Vedic myth of Indra taking apart the wheel of Surya's chariot connects Karna to Sushna, the son of Svasva who was like the sun himself in brilliance. Again, Ganapati Muni leads us to another trail beginning with Krishna to go back to Indra. The Rig Veda speaks of Indra as the charioteer of Kutsa. (ex. "Indra Kutsa vahamaanaa rathena"), and with the backing of the legends of the charioteer and the critical failure of the wheel in Karna's chariot, one nods in agreement when Ganapati Muni says that Krishna was an incarnation of Indra. We get to know of yet another myth that the heavenly damsel Vikuntee performed tapasya to get a son like Indra. Vikuntee's son is Vaikuntee, Krishna. As we proceed slowly, we get to know of other characters like Devaki and Kamsa who have Vedic origins.

The Five Pandavas and Abhimanyu are also traceable to Vedic myths and the most interesting character in this memorable adventure is Draupadi who is linked with Ghosha, the daughter of Kakshivan, a poetess of Rig Veda. In her long prayer to the Asvins Ghosha sings (and Ganapati Muni quotes the sixth verse):

"You have been wise, Asvins. Bring forth your chariot To the singer's people like Kutsa to his. The bee, Asvins, gathers your honey in her mouth As promptly as the maiden goes to her love-tryst." (Tr. A.C. Bose)

Since Kutsa has already been equated with Arjuna in the earlier chapters, it is understood that Arjuna taking Draupadi to his brothers is indicated here. With his unrivalled mastery of the Vedas (also Harivamsa), Ganapati Muni brings together well known verses from them to posit the origins of Drona, Asvaththama and others.

Thus, the other harmony of prose was also well-tuned by Ganapati Muni. Apart from using prose for his commentaries, he attempted a full-scale novel too and proved that Sanskrit is a living language. The novel Purna confirms that Sanskrit is easily comprehended for it has the simplest word combinations for the writer's desk. The novel which was left incomplete due to the author's sudden passing away in 1936 was completed by his son, Mahadeva Sastry. It may be mentioned here that a Telugu version of the novel was published by the author in the monthly Bharati.

Ganapati Muni's prime inspiration for writing a novel in Sanskrit must have come from Banabhatta's Kadambari. There is plenty of romance and old world colour in Purna. Anga, Magadha and Andhra are three kingdoms. Anga is ruled by the good king Satyasena. Andhra and Magadha have Suchandra and Pradyotana as kings. Both of them are ambitious. Pradyotana, in spite of being a friend of Satyasena, attacks Anga and drives out the king. Satyasena's sister Manimala is the mother of Purna. Satyasena's daughter is Rajasena who wants to destroy Pradyotana and his family to avenge her father.

With both Anga and Magadha coming under Pradyotana's harsh suzerainty, people become restive and some secret organisations take shape. The patriot in Ganapati Muni must have drawn from Ananda Math of Bankim Chandra to create his Udayankarasanga.

Purna, Satyasena's niece is the image of the ideal woman. Oriented to tradition, she is fearless like a classical heroine. In the sixth chapter we see Virasimha stalking her. She enters the temple of Vana Durga. He follows her and asks: "Auspicious one! Who are you?" She replies: "I am a Brahmin girl." He decides to get her for himself but his advances are repelled by her with contumely. When he catches hold

of her, she stabs him and he falls down senseless.

Since Purna wanted only to immobilize him and did not wish to kill him, she places some herbal juices on his wound and binds it with his upper cloth to stop the bleeding. She also utters a mantric prayer for his well being. When he returns to consciousness and his eyes fall upon Purna's face, he exclaims: "You demoness!" Purna says softly.

"The demoness went away after humbling the pride of the demon. This is your sister who wants you to live. Brother! Forget my deed. Turn to good ways and live long!"

Such is the simplicity of style, the easy movement of the story and the idealism that the Muni places before the youth of India. Like Bhavananda of Ananda Math, Purna wishes to be a life-long celibate and work for the weal of her motherland. Getting the women characters together at one stage in the tale, the guru Srinath Bhatta speaks of womanhood as the triumph of Mahashakti:

"My children! It is Parashakti who moves the entire universe. She glows beyond all the worlds. She illumines the world as well. Above the world is Sadashiva. He has four bodies: the space, whose condition is Iswari, the queen of all worlds; the sun, whose condition is the Gayatri, guardian of all lives; the earth, whose condition is Lakshmi who upholds lives; the moon, whose condition is Kali who destroys lives."

His entire speech is a paean to womanhood, underlining the importance Ganapati Muni gave to women. Srinatha Bhatta's advice to the assembled women is memorable. For instance when Bhraamari confesses to him her sorrow on her mother's serious illness, he says: "My child, do not sorrow. All the strength won through years of striving are destroyed by allowing sorrow to seep into you. It destroys your strength of purpose."

Ganapati Muni was a seer, a Mantra-drashta, and there are mantric phrases and verses even in this novel. Mere reading of Purna (with the help of the brief introduction) would itself be a yoga to become an ideal child of Mother India. Indeed this is so with

all the writings of this great seer who triumphantly proclaimed the wealth as also the health of India's Sanatana Dharma which is not only very ancient but is also eternal.

Gandhi and Journalism - II

Prof. D.V.R. Murthy

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Dr. Y.D. Ramdas

Assistant Professor,
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,
Dr. Ambedkar University, Srikakulam

Consequent upon the World War I and the massacre at Jullianwalla bagh, B G Horniman, the English editor of the Bombay Chronicle, was vehemently condemning the British administration for the atrocities and supported the National Movement. As a result, Horniman was deported to Britain. The directors of the Bombay Chronicle who were running the other journal, Young India requested Gandhi to take over the journal. Gandhi agreed on the condition that the editorial office would be shifted to Ahmedabad from Bombay, as he set up an ashram at Ahmedabad, which would require his guidance. As he purchased a printing press, Navajivan Publishing House to publish his monthly, Navajivan, he would bring out Young India from Ahmedabad. He gave a note to the subscribers in the first issue of Young India on October 8, 1919.

The editing of "Navajivan" has been a perfect revelation to me. Whilst "Young India" has a little more than 1200 subscribers, "Navajivan" has 12000. The number would leap to 20000 if we would but get printers to print that number. It shows that a vernacular newspaper is a felt want. I am proud to think that I have numerous readers among farmers and workers. They make India. Their poverty is India's curse and crime. Their prosperity alone can make India a country fit to live in. They represent nearly 80 p.c. of India's population. The English journals touch but the fringe of the ocean of India's population. Whilst therefore I hold it to be the duty of every English knowing Indian

to translate the best of the English thought in the vernacular for the benefit of the masses, I recognize that for a few years to come i.e. until we have accepted Hindustani as the common medium among the cultured classes and until Hindustani becomes compulsory in our schools as a second language, educated India, especially in the Madras Presidency must be addressed in English.

But I will not be party to editing a newspaper that does not pay its way. "Young India" cannot pay its way unless it has at least 2500 paying subscribers. I must appeal to my Tamil friends to see to it that the requisite number of subscribers is found, if they wish to see "Young India" continued. The more so now, because the proprietors of "Young India" have decided to give up all advertisements. I know that they have not been entirely if at all converted to my view that a newspaper ought to be conducted without advertisement. But they are willing to let me make the experiment. I invite those who wish to see "Young India" free from the curse of advertisements to help me to make the venture a success. The Guajrati "Nava Jivan" has already demonstrated the possibility of conducting a newspaper without advertisement soiling its pages. What a financial gain it would be to the country, if there was for each province only one advertisement medium-not a newspaper- containing innocent unvarnished notices of things useful for the public. But for our criminal indifference, we would decline to pay the huge indirect taxation by way of mischievous advertisements. Some readers who are interested in the purity of journalism recently sent me a most indecent advertisement extracted from a well known newspaper. I have refused to soil the pages of "Navajivan" by reproducing it. But anyone turning to the advertisement sheets of even leading journals can verify the aptness of my criticism.

He did not accept advertisements and believed that the newspapers should survive on the revenue from subscribers. The circulation of Young India went up to 45000, and his articles were effective (Krishnamurthy, 1966). However, Young India was closed in 1932, owing to repressive acts of the British administration.

The thought of having another weekly was lingering in Gandhi's mind when he was in prison in Poona on account of Civil Disobedience Movement (Bhattacharya, 2002:94). Though he was in prison, he established Harijan Sevak Sangh and asked the Sangh to publish Harijan.

On February 11, 1933 *Harijan* was published as a weekly, at the request of Gandhi which carried, 'Gandhi's views on untouchability, village sanitation, rural reconstruction through village industries, women's education, women's rehabilitation, basic education, and the upliftment of all (sarvodaya) through employment for every able bodied person' (Vilanilam, 2005: 81).

For instance, Gandhi wrote in Harijan on February 27, 1937: "I believe in the proper education of woman. But I do believe that woman will not make her contribution to the world by mimicking or running a race with man. She can run the race, but she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man. She has to be a complement to the man".

The weekly newspaper priced at one anna (six paise), was devoted to the cause of Harijans and scrupulously excluded politics. The English edition came out first, followed by the Hindi. Edited by RV Sastry, the weekly newspaper carried news items on Harijan welfare, the main editorial was devoted exclusively on untouchability and a column titled, 'To the Reader', which explained the importance of the newly launched movement. It also featured English rendering of poem written by Tagore in Bengali translated by Shri S Datta, entitled 'Scavenger'. Outlining the aims of Harijan, Gandhi said, it would be devoted for the service of Harijan and would highlight all efforts for the removal of untouchability. Through Harijan, Gandhi espoused the cause of Harijan; he demonstrated that service should be a motto of journalism.

With such educative contents, the print order of the weekly was 10000. However, in response to the censorship imposed on the newspapers, Gandhi suspended the publication of Harijan in November 1940 with an article, "good-bye", and within a gap of

Our great democracies still tend to think that a stupid man is more likely to be honest than a clever man, and our politicians take advantage of this prejudice by pretending to be even more stupid than nature made them.

Bertrand Russell (21)

one year, he resumed the publication in January 1942. In eight months of its resumption of publication, Gandhi went to prison on August 8, 1942, and immediately the administration closed down the weekly. But it resumed publication after a lapse of three and half years on February 10, 1946 (Bhattacharya, 2002:200). As Gandhi was upright in his attitude, he wrote in Harijan in July 1947: Perhaps we may have to close the Harijan. My mind rebels against many things that our leaders are doing. Yet I do not feel like actively opposing them. But how can I avoid it if I am running a paper? Further, he wrote: Sardar (reference to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel), I feel that Harijan should now be closed. It does not seem to me to be right to give contrary guidance to the country (Bhattacharya, 2002: 201).

(to be concluded)

* * *

Remembering Professor K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar

A sahridaya, mahasadhu and a rishi

Dr.B.Parvathi.

Former Professor of English,
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

April is a month to remember as the month of his birth as well as his passing. A student of Prof. Iyengar in the 1950s and a long retired Professor K.Srinivasa Sastry in his "Homage" to Prof.Iyengar rightly recalled that his "face lit up with the beauty of his soul", that his teacher was "... culture itself at its highest and most refined!" Professor K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar --a name to remember for generations to come, a pioneer literary historian of a new thriving literature he named Indian Writing in English, critic, poet, biographer - was respected by British and American academia alike. The life size portrait of Prof. Iyengar adorns the historic T.L.N. Sabha Hall of Andhra University looked on by other stalwarts like Sir C.R.Reddy, Dr.S.Radhakrishnan and others from their portraits in the Hall.

Prof. Iyengar joined the Andhra University in 1947 and within a decade had "become a legend

as biographer of Sri Aurobindo." After his tenure as Vice Chancellor, he went to steer the Kendra Sahitya Akademi as its Vice President and Acting President. 'Adhishtata' of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he also was the first Indian to be named as member of the American Modern Language Association. Many universities in India honoured him with D.Litt. degrees. A list of his critical works alone merits to be labeled as a chapter.

It is with great reverence that I recall the contribution of Prof. Iyengar to the field of literary studies and criticism in India. It is not the bulk but the very quality of it which invites attention to his writing. He was a scholar and critic of exceptional abilities who could move with ease in the realm of literatures-classical and contemporary-British, American, Commonwealth, and gauge their depth and significance. He rendered epics from Sanskrit and Tamil into English. He was a poet too. According to the Indian critical tradition, the reader and critic of a work of literature should be an informed reader-a sahridaya and this singular man of letters was a *sahridaya* of the highest order.

Prof.Iyengar liberated literary criticism from the clutches of life smothering cynicism especially of the newborn Indian Writing in English, gave it "a local habitation and a name" and nurtured it to maturity. In its recent issue, the oldest literary journal in English Triveni reprinted Prof. Iyengar's article, published in the 1930s on Samuel Butler. He must have been a young man of twenty two years at that time. One of his earliest critical forages, it had all the signs of a judiciously tempered vigorous mind. The fire that was in full force of the intellect fuelling his spirit, it became a steady glow of light in all his works.

As a literary historian, Prof.Iyengar reflects his humane scholarship and deep understanding of the interconnectedness of the historical, cultural and political facets of life in a fine manner. As a critic, he emphasizes in simple terms the need for humility-an endless one! at that. The least that one can say about Prof. Iyengar is that he was a great devotee of learning -a bhakta. In his critical aurevoir and in him too one sees an elevation of spirit and expansion of thought-in Matthew Arnold's phrase "sweetness and light". Prof. Iyengar wears the cloak of humility and simplicity.

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.

Nikita Khrushchev

A life time of his sadhana bore many a rich fruit.

Prof.Iyengar was steeped in western literature –classical and modern, but upheld the value of Indian literary, critical traditions and philosophy and remained essentially Indian like our national leaders who were not lost to the west. A Professor of English, he remained an unanglicised Indian. Like the nationalistic compatriots of his generation who saw the uses of English as a link language for the new multilingual nation, Prof.Iyengar also foresaw that writings of Indians in English would also serve as a “link literature” for the country. He was a scholar whose devotion to letters was akin to tapas and whose capacity for integration of knowledge and balancing of perspectives is exemplary.

Some types of academic writing and theorizing especially, in an attempt to explain, tend to become abstruse and opaque. Prof.Iyengar is free from the taint of the ‘purple passage’ and rhetoric as teacher, as critic. He has this wonderful gift of integrating things of past and present, literary and historical, in their meaningful and comprehensive way. He was as simple as he was learned and wrote in an easy- to savour as the grape fruit- manner - in *draksha paka* as the Indian classification of style goes. It is a pleasure for me to recall how the famous writer R.K.Narayan and Prof.Iyengar held each other in high esteem. “A mahasadhu” is how Narayan regarded Prof.Iyengar.

Endowed with a wealth of spirit, his contribution to the world of letters is immense. An Aurobindonian Prof.Iyengar believed that human mind will progressively acquire an international sweep and will end “the half real, half mythical East West dichotomy once and for all”. He once made a memorable statement about knowledge. He said:“... all knowledge is one, we have raised barriers in it.”! It is a statement which should be well taken to mitigate academic prejudices and the so called hierarchy of disciplines.

Prof.Iyengar’s wife Smt.Padmasani was a writer in Tamil. Their daughter Dr.Prema Nandakumar-author of two novels is a well known critic and orator; their economist son Prof.Ambirajan’s style in writing had all the elegance of a literary piece. Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar who gave us a glimpse of

their childhood home in ‘Waltair’ wrote how her father in 1947 looking at the huge forest around, quoted “Wordsworth and Shakespeare and assured us that living in the middle of nature is heavenly”! She added: “He conversed with colleagues or students from the University “about Milton and Dryden, Dickens and Thackeray. Father would keep his listeners mesmerized with his impeccable memory, quoting long passages from modern poets like T.S. Eliot, and W.H. Auden as well.” Prof.Iyengar in his walks around the campus used to spend “some meditative minutes beneath the tree where Rabindranath Tagore delivered his special lectures”. (These were published by the University as *Man* in 1933.)

Dr.Prema Nanda Kumar also recollected an interesting incident from her father’s life. Prof. Iyengar was a simple man. By 1960 he had already become renowned as the biographer of Sri Aurobindo. One day the Principal who was on his rounds in the Old Arts (now Law) College was aghast on finding the Professor sweeping the floor of his room! Such was his simplicity and his sense of gentle humour that Prof.Iyengar told the Principal not to worry because he was sweeping his own room and not anyone else’s!!

Prof.Iyengar had a fair complexion, he became frail almost fragile towards the end. His gentle voice grew feeble; his sight was impaired. His poignant words about sight “drishti” and insight come to my mind. He spoke about “insight which is antardrishti”– looking within, looking into the self. His “vision”– he said -“was of a white sky across which shadows of people, pictures and ideas floated!”

He was a bhakta, a sahridaya, a mahasadhu, and a rishi – a modern rishi in an academic garb is how Prof.Iyengar appears to me.

‘reinventing diplomacy’

(Newspaper report on a lecture-meeting on ‘Contemporary Challenges to Diplomacy’ delivered by Shri Amit Dasgupta, former Ambassador of India to Philippines and retired Diplomat, on March 12, 2019 organized by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library)

There is no cure for birth and death save to enjoy the interval.

George Santayana

‘Diplomacy needs to reinvent itself to meet new challenges in this age of awesome technological change in dealing with relations between nations. Diplomacy is based on perception and perception depends on the speed of communication,’ said Amit Dasgupta, former ambassador to Philippines and retired diplomat this evening at a meeting, jointly organized by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library. Speaking on ‘Contemporary Challenges to Diplomacy’ Amit Dasgupta, presently teaching in Australia, brought out the nuances of the new types of diplomacy emerging due to such factors as speed of communication, replacement of human element by gadgetry like the mobile phone and robot. A small message can produce immediate and intense effect in a distant land and it might go viral in quick time. Traditional diplomacy has given way to new methods of communication, since Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power in the early nineties. Terror occupies huge space in public discourse, though no less important are climate change, depletion of natural resources and over utilization of material resources. Dasgupta underscored the need to focus on such important problems like traffic accidents, malnutrition and diabetes which have been increasing alarmingly.

While introducing the speaker and the theme a reference was made to the evolution of modern

diplomacy. If Clausewitz, the most frequently quoted realist on war and diplomacy, was inspired by the ideas of European Enlightenment and the 20th century, devastated by two World Wars, witnessed the emergence of liberal values like freedom, equality, market economy and globalization that dominated international relations for over half-a-century. In disturbing contrast has emerged illiberal populism that has driven democracy into retreat in many countries including the United States of America. Donald Trump who has discarded the liberal order and is accused of ushering in ‘a more unpredictable and treacherous world order’ heads the list of arrogant and authoritarian world leaders like Putin of Russia, Erdogan of Turkey and Kim Jong-un of North Korea. Answering a question about the possibility of improving relations with Pakistan after the horrendous Pulwama attack, Dasgupta quipped: “Possible if India talks to China.” Earlier Secretary of CPS and Public Library Mr D.S. Varma welcomed the gathering and A.Prasanna Kumar presided over the meeting which ended with a vote of thanks by Hamza Mehdi.

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