



## INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY REDUX

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Strategic culture is said to have a significant impact on national security and state behaviour. In 1992, RAND Corporation analyst, George Tanham had pronounced that a combination of “lofty Hindu philosophy and a fatalistic outlook” had prevented the development of a strategic culture in India, and that “...Indian elites showed little evidence of having systematically thought about national strategy.” Tanham’s contentions were contested by those who asserted that being heirs to the rich philosophy of Vedic literature, epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata; and the wisdom of Chanakya’s Arthashastra, Indians had never lacked a strategic culture. They also, stressed that, right from independence, India had followed a pragmatic grand-strategy, scripted by Nehru. Its elements included, domestically; secular federalism, a Socialist command-economy, pursuit of self-reliance and externally; a policy of non-alignment to avoid military conflicts.

This Nehruvian legacy was accompanied by a utopian proclivity for pacifism and disdain for the armed forces, rooted in phobia about military coups. According to Yale University Professor Wilkinson, the Congress Party evolved “specific ‘coup-proofing’ strategies to balance the power of the military during India’s first decade.” Most of these measures have remained in place ever since; the military continues to be excluded from the government’s policy/decision-making process and the armed forces HQs are still subordinated to a civilian Department of Defence. Wilkinson suggests that the growth of the Central Armed Police Forces from 29,000 in 1961 to 1.1 million in 2017 is another ‘coup proofing’ measure to ‘balance’ the 1.3-million army.

The past five years have seen the last vestiges of the Nehruvian legacy being, progressively, swept away. Conclusive proof of this came when the present

government ordered retaliatory raids, in peacetime, on Pakistani soil. These not only marked a major shift of political focus that brought national security to centre-stage, but also shattered two shibboleths: firstly that India’s timidity, disguised as ‘strategic restraint’, was a chronic affliction; and secondly, that any armed incursion into Pakistan, ran the risk of a nuclear response. The latter, in any case, was an excessively alarmist view, given that the nuclear ‘red lines’ informally signalled by Pakistan are far more stringent.

With the 2019 election-campaign behind us and politics having resumed normal tempo, there has been speculation whether the NDA government’s newfound focus on national security signifies a strategic transformation or merely a vote-garnering election gambit. Such scepticism was not unjustified, given that BJP’s 2014 election manifesto, had promised to “address the issue of organizational reforms” in defence, and to “ensure greater participation of armed forces in the decision-making process of the MoD”. While the ensuing five years saw no change in South Block, some recent ‘straws in the wind’ may indicate growing political interest in national security issues.

The most significant of these and the one that demands our close attention is the long awaited, initiation of national security reforms. One hopes that the April 2018 appointment of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to head the newly constituted Defence Planning Committee and his post-election elevation to cabinet rank were harbingers of this reform-process. A lack of transparency, however, raises larger questions about the roles of the Raksha Mantri (RM), the Chiefs of Staff and the Defence Secretary vis-a-vis the NSA in the new ambit of national security decision-making. While PM Modi’s announcement, on 15th August, about creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), received widespread welcome, it adds a new and complex dimension to India’s national security paradigm.

A CDS must not be created in isolation because, normatively, it carries, with it, a whole eco-system that

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.

could transform India's national security, if correctly implemented. In theory, as the senior-most armed forces officer and Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, the CDS would be the military adviser to the PM and RM. Apart from his key role in the nuclear command chain, he would evolve a prioritised tri-service perspective plan for force modernisation and enable fiscal support. This task would be immeasurably facilitated by the issuance of a national security doctrine/strategy which highlights national aims, objectives and interests and clearly defines the military wherewithal required to achieve them.

The CDS would oversee the integration of the armed forces HQs with the civilian MoD and implement 'jointness' amongst the three armed forces; progressively ushering-in the theatre command concept. In reality, however, if not empowered adequately or if found in conflict with the NSA, the CDS could easily be reduced to an inconsequential 'paper-tiger.'

Another topic that two RMs, in succession, have dwelt upon – albeit in passing – is the principle of 'no first use' (NFU) of nuclear weapons embedded in India's 2003 Nuclear Doctrine. NFU was adopted, not merely as a token of nuclear restraint and responsible conduct, on India's part, but also because it is, by far, the least burdensome and inexpensive form of nuclear-deterrence. While ambiguity and doctrinal un-predictability may be useful to keep one's adversary off-balance, nuclear deterrence is far too serious a matter to be the subject of off-the-cuff public utterances by senior politicians. On the other hand, a formal review of the nuclear doctrine (including the NFU undertaking) is long overdue and must be undertaken.

In similar vein is casual, bellicose talk about "re-taking" of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir – presumably by military means. Let us remember that a major part of J&K's territory has been in our physical possession since the state legally acceded to India in 1947. Whether the hearts and minds of the people of the Valley are with us, remains a question unanswered. Once peace and prosperity prevail in our J&K, it is more than likely that

the people of PoK would clamour to join their Indian brethren.

Finally, a word of advice for our military leadership. It is most heartening for the citizen to hear, from them, that our troops are in fine-fettle and combat-ready. However, one's confidence evaporates when they are heard to parrot political rhetoric or indulge in bombast. We are not Pakistan, and dignified reticence on the part of our soldiery would be far more reassuring.

*(The Indian Express – e-paper, 17 October 2019)*

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### **India's Ayodhya verdict: Can Modi harness religion for healing and reconciliation, not bitterness and bloodshed?**

**Cmde. (Retd.) C.Uday Bhaskar**

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- The Supreme Court ruling on the dispute over a mosque Hindus claim was built on the birthplace of a deity brings judicial closure but leaves Muslims feeling abandoned
- The Kartarpur corridor, allowing Indian Sikhs to visit a shrine in Pakistan, is a model of tolerance that should be replicated

On November 9, a five-member bench of the Indian Supreme Court arrived at a unanimous verdict over a seven-decade old case relating to a disputed plot of land in the town of Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Hindus believe a temple marking the birthplace of Lord Rama, a much revered deity, on the disputed site was razed to build a mosque there in the 16th century during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Babur.

In the mid-19th century, the British colonial rulers divided the site into separate areas for Hindu and Muslim devotees. However, accusations of mutual encroachment led to acrimony and discord.

The real significance of culture lies in giving up bad thoughts and bad actions, cultivating sacred thoughts, and performing noble deeds.

The current legal dispute dates back to 1885 when a Hindu petitioner wanted to build a temple on the site.

The case has defied resolution even after India gained independence from the British and acquired corrosive political overtones.

Building a temple on the site was taken up by the Hindu right wing as an electoral issue. In 1992, Lal Krishna Advani, a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is currently in power in India, led a group of “devotees” to Ayodhya, where they began demolishing the mosque. Communal riots erupted across India, resulting in the death of around 2,000 people.

Since then, the BJP has remained committed to building a temple on the site but has also deferred to the courts, which have moved slowly on the matter. In 2010, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court ruled that the disputed 2.77 acre site be awarded to three claimants – two Hindu and one Muslim – as joint owners of the land.

Predictably, the matter was elevated to the Supreme Court and, in the run-up to the 2014 national election; the BJP made the construction of the temple a central campaign issue. The message to the electorate – Hindus comprise 80 per cent of India’s population and Muslims 15 per cent – was simple: vote for the BJP and the Ram temple will be built.

The BJP’s assertive foregrounding of religion during the 2014 election campaign contributed to its landslide victory, with Narendra Modi becoming India’s prime minister. During the 2019 campaign, the restoration of Hindu pride and redress of historical wrongs was stitched into a larger, more nationalistic narrative, bringing Modi and the BJP to power again.

While more militant voices in the Hindu right-wing wanted quick action on the Ram temple, the Modi government advised patience and waited for the Supreme Court to arrive at its decision. It was left to the courts to work through the tangle of religion, faith, history and politics.

In a departure from the normal practice, the Supreme Court bench, led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, announced its verdict on a Saturday. The court awarded the title over the site in its entirety to the deity of the infant Lord Rama, who is considered a “juridical person”, with the central government directed to set up a trust to build a temple. While the court, based on an Archaeological Survey of India report, acknowledged that a “non-Islamic structure” lay beneath the disputed land and added that it is “suggestive of Hindu origin”, it did not confirm that the structure is actually Hindu in nature. Note: Full judgment

The court also said the 1992 destruction of the Babri mosque was an “egregious violation of the rule of law” and directed the government to allocate 5 acres elsewhere to the Muslim petitioners to construct a mosque.

Before the bench was slated to deliver its verdict, there were fears of communal violence and stringent security precautions were put in place. However, the verdict has been so far accepted relatively calmly.

The fact that the verdict was a unanimous one by a five-member bench of the Supreme Court accords it finality. The Ayodhya case cannot now be reopened legally in a substantive manner. Any review petition would be on narrow judicial issues.

However, the unanimity among the judges is a bit incongruous; legal observers in India had expected one of the five wise men to have expressed a different view on some matters – even if it was not dissenting. This did not happen and raises some speculative questions.

India has moved to the right politically under the BJP. From 1998 to 2004, under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who led a coalition government headed by the BJP, the party pursued its ideological objectives in a relatively mild manner. The current government, with Prime Minister Modi in his second term, came to power by stoking Hindu nationalism and casting the Muslim as the “other” who had to be monitored and, if required, dealt with “firmly” to prevent any tendencies towards terrorism.

Great saints have performed miracles; greater saints have railed at them; the greatest have both railed at them and performed them.

Sri Aurobindo

## INVOKING THE CELESTIAL POWER OF HEALING

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The Ayodhya verdict is a massive document of 1,045 pages, 805 paragraphs and 303,000 words. Given the complexity and significance of the case, the judgment will be debated for years. At this stage, it appears that the Supreme Court placed greater weight on “faith” – that of the majority Hindu community as recorded over the centuries – and deferred collectively to the “balance of probabilities” to arrive at the determination that they did. The evidence appears to have been sifted through accordingly.

Whether judicial closure will also lead to political closure of this issue in the highly polarised Indian polity of 2019 is moot. Many Muslims feel abandoned by the verdict and how it seems to uphold different standards for their community.

This will be the challenge for Modi 2.0 – to lead all of India forward and away from the discord, bitterness and bloodshed that Ayodhya and the Ram temple issue has triggered over the years.

It is fortuitous that November 9 also witnessed an important breakthrough between India and Pakistan under the umbrella of religious diplomacy. The Kartarpur corridor for Sikh pilgrims was inaugurated, enabling them to visit the shrine of Guru Nanak, the founder of their faith, in Pakistan. Can this healing and reconciliatory potential of religion be nurtured in post Ayodhya-verdict India?

(Courtesy : *South China Morning Post*, 14 November 2019)

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In July 2019, the Centre for Music Therapy, a unit of the university known as Sri BalajiVidyapith, Puducherry, hosted the International Health Research Convention, 2019, in collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, and IMC University of Applied Sciences, Austria, to discuss the healing effect of music in the process of the medical care of patients. This author understands that significant research findings were discussed and the convention resolved to explore the ground further and also apply methodically the results already proven beneficent.

During the past one and half century numerous experiments have been carried out on this subject in several countries and practically each endeavour had presented positive messages asserting almost magically beneficent therapeutic role of music on a vast range of illnesses – from Alzheimer’s to cancer. The concept can no longer be considered a mere hypothesis. One wonders why no concrete steps are taken by health services all over the world for applying the findings in a planned manner. We hope the WHO will take some purposeful steps. But the hoary and spiritual tradition of music in India should inspire the medical world of this land to give relatively more seriousness to this great promise awaiting fruition.

Hundreds of reports on the subject are published in journals and books and one interested can find them without much difficulty. This author’s purpose is to alert the champions of the cause about the adverse conditions they must fight out to ensure the success of this semi-occult aid to the process of recovery. It is semi-occult because it is based on the subtle law of harmony that governs the creation and our life. From the rhythms of our heartbeat to the cycle of day and night and the phenomena that are the universe, time and space, all are attuned to rhythmic patterns of various magnitudes. All sorts of disharmony and discordance, individual, global or universal, are transient disorientations which the fundamental and irresistible law of rhythm strives to set right sooner or later.

It was not without good cause that a friend described me as a combination of sacred cow and fierce tiger.

Mahatma Gandhi

According to occult knowledge the aforesaid reorientation is achieved by the release of a fresh wave from the inexhaustible source of supreme harmony. One of the most ancient myths on the divine role of music in healing runs like this: Once while the god-sage Narada, after one of his trips to the earth was returning to his heaven-abode through the Himalayas, he came across a tribe of radiant Gundharvas, demi-gods, the presiding spirits of different Ragas (the mystic modes of music). He found that each one of those charming beings looked rather deformed or even mutilated. On inquiry they revealed to the sage that every now and then when a musician distorted a Raga, its presiding spirit received a blow. Innumerable blows over the centuries had reduced them to that pitiable state.

An embarrassed Narada – himself a musician – wished to know what could heal them. “Only if we could listen to the perfect singer, Lord Siva,” they informed. Narada went and persuaded the great God for a demonstration, but He could sing only if there was at least one perfect listener in His audience. And there were only two perfect listeners, Vishnu and Brahma. But most happily both came over for the rare feast along with the Gundharvas.

Siva sang out of his celestial silence and the vibrations of his voice achieved the result expected. (The later part of the myth says that identified with that flowing music, a layer of the entranced Vishnu’s aura melted and Brahma captured the flow in His Kamandalu. That was the origin of Ganga, later to become a river and descend to earth as a result of Prince Bhagiratha’s Yoga and flowing over the ashes of a generation of the prince’s ancestors, resurrected them.)

Back to our theme: today the formidable dangers to this subtle power of harmony that is music are three. First, humanity playing havoc with Nature, the most conspicuous example of the subtle harmony, faithfully depicting the transition of seasons, the spring, the monsoon *et al* and their felt or unfelt influence on both psychological and biological conditions of men. The cycle is in disarray today and the consequences are varied and deplorable. Our classical Ragas which are deeply

linked to the liveliness of seasons and which alone could penetrate the deeper layers of our consciousness lose much of their effect in a milieu when we have practically thrown Nature out of our area of interest.

But that is a vast topic. I will rather remind ourselves only about two of the gross enemies of music in our normal life. Of the two, the first one is quite familiar to us: the bizarre noise surpassing the absorbing-capacity of our senses. I do not know if in India we have made any tangible estimate of the damage it causes, but according to a report by a French NGO, extracts from which I have read, residents of Paris lose three healthy life-years “to some combination of ailments caused by the din of cars, trucks, airplanes and trains”. In India where we have people who even love to drive bikes consciously trying to produce the loudest possible sound, the situation, needless to say, is terribly worse.

The other menace is the anti-music passing as music. It has been trying to invade the Indian milieu for years now, though sporadically. Beware of the invasion nevertheless, because of what it had done somewhere else. I quote only a little from “Closing of the American Mind” by Allan Bloom:

“The rock music has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire undeveloped and untutored. It acknowledges the first emanation of children’s emerging sensuality and addresses them seriously, eliciting them and legitimatising them, not as little sprouts that must be carefully tended in order to grow into gorgeous flowers, but as the real thing. Rock gives children, on a silver platter, with all the public authority of the entertainment industry, everything their parents used to tell them they had to wait for until they grew up and would understand later...

“Ministering to and according with the arousing and cathartic music, the lyrics celebrate puppy love and fortify them against traditional ridicule and shame... This has a much more powerful effect than pornography.”

Success of music therapy will depend to a great extent on the society realising the do’s and don’ts about it. That could be possible through education at the primary stage, among other cautions.

We should take care not to make the intellect our god; it has of course powerful muscles, but no personality.

Einstein

## LEARNING TO UNLEARN

**Prof. R.V.R.Chandrasekhara Rao**

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1. Nastika stands for knower that a thing is  
non-existing  
Not a denier of a thing Existing  
In a sense, a thing not perceived doesn't exist  
As old as Bradleys college quadrangle
2. Irish images range from a Newman's to Joyce's  
From a robust believer to a teasing atheist  
Oddly both strange to English tongue and taste  
One to faith wed the other more a wizard  
to be wary
3. Wisdom's problem is its links to  
Knowledge and Information  
At once its bases as also its rivals  
The test is of whether one sails above  
mind on matter
4. A Mephisto tempts us in various shapes  
To choose between serious sins in  
On sail clean of the Sirens' calls  
The body yielding, mind more mindful  
like Faust's
5. From Duns Scotus to Bertrand Russell  
Descent into ignorant fool at best  
Time seeker to an innocent fool at best  
From a theologian to a Molvolio's of  
pretentious knowing
6. Scepticism leads to a sceptic mind  
Useful not to test mindfulness  
In truth what is 'test' but 'mind'  
Custom checked by its abode a zone called senses
7. Enough, I shall unshackle myself  
From verbiage of vibes unending  
Take refuge in Wittgenstin of  
Vienna, Cambridge and St. Thomas Hospital
8. A brain sold to epistemology  
Still concluded that questions not  
Yielding not answers best left in limbo  
Travelling toward black-holes in firmament high
9. The quantity-quality duo belongs  
To a sphere that revolves round itself  
The heir to the esoteric has liberties  
Leveried from anarchy of our affections
10. Love dustbin of serious and silly  
If only a 'garbager' saves the tender shoots  
Beauty will win the wars of love's wards  
Truth is a 'win' word for beauty in innocence
11. Only a lover of Innocence dare inspire  
The chaste response to Sakuntala  
Dushyanta the debonair lover  
Subdued to amour tender
12. A romantic with roaming eyes  
And raving mind losing his cool  
Sees still an un-smelt flower to inhale  
Son of God's lust shut by her maiden-shield
13. Flames lit in curtailed fury  
Hermitages not taboo hands as Greens for lovers  
The peace of Paradise is not pasture pure  
and serene  
Frequent flashes of blushes for sin common here
14. The Gods on High are not exempt  
They trip time and time again  
Immortality readers loss of responsibility  
Humans are wary more because of their  
frailty known

The State, does not create, but recognizes rights, and its character will be apparent from the rights that, any given period, secure recognition.

Harold Laski

15. Nirguna Brahma, an empty cosmos  
Sankara's Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma  
Apparent void but blooming fulfilment  
Despair denied by Heaven's delivering plenty
16. Man's Estate with Heavenly gates  
Portions with hope of the Good and the Bad  
Receivers revolving on destiny Due  
Good never recedes, a chance for recovery  
we have
17. Man's Estate or Eminent Domain  
Possession or holding as owner  
Logic special, hidden with deduction special – not  
Plain Deduction non induction
18. This is Existence given unsought, felt a necessity  
by rationale  
Suffering adjusted as if deserved at least for later  
dessert  
Our bending and bowing brokered by strangers  
good or bad  
Unconsented yet craves contentment with  
concessions  
prayed for and eager to imagine rewarded
19. Company kept is a company's balance sheet  
What is red is warning dire  
Walking straight is walking all alert  
No anya pathasia but Dharma's desire
20. The secular temper is craftily bent  
Temptress that allows you lots of leeway  
'Autonomy unlimited' is to Mephosto  
Crafty to Faustus his false Gratchen
21. In German Epic a tale told  
As warning to unreigned learning and power  
The amiable Goethe crossing the knowledge  
barrier  
God Bound in coils of lust needed learning's  
liberation.
22. The Muses and – shower as they will  
Their gratis as ones deeds sow  
Harvest abundant as Dharma's due shows  
Miracles momentoes are only fleeting flows.
23. Caught at cross roads of doubt and faith  
Yearn for a footing on quick sands  
What if wrong belief is comforting and harmless  
Can't hedonism and lofty height thought coexist
24. Once given Russell's Scepticism to read  
I mused as Scepticism to the laugh of my teacher  
He charmingly suited it to the need  
Saying scepticism is but a disease of scepticism
25. Like lessons learnt while not very prudent  
Thereafter held off from boast as prudent for  
student  
Modesty a warm withal always for novices to  
wear  
To cover follies not learnt to unlearn

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### **Politics of Memory : Hyderabad-400 – II**

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By happenstance, in my early years of service – in late 1960s and early 1970s, I served in Telangana, and in the rural areas there were still vestiges of the Old Order. My first encounter with the vestiges of the Old Order was in 1967 when, as a trainee, I visited along with my fellow trainees Narsampet in Warangal district, a densely forested area, to be acquainted with the tribal way of life. Sometime after our arrival in the Inspection Bungalow, the Tahsildar turned up to greet the IAS trainees who came to his *ilaqa* (jurisdiction); to my surprise, I found that he was a different species altogether from the Tahsildars I came across in Krishna district where I was being trained. He greeted us matter-of-factly sans the obsequious deference

Today's young adults seem to arrive at college with less resiliency and a lower appetite for risk and failure.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell

to which I was by now accustomed to and took for granted. In contrast, when I visited the villages I was surprised to note the utter servility of the villagers who greeted me humbly bowing and mumbling *Dora, Banchan Kal Mokkutha* (Lord, Your slave prostrates before you and touches your feet). Over a course of time, I understood the reason for the difference in the attitudes and manners of the subordinate officials in Andhra and Telangana regions. Coastal Andhra was part of Madras Presidency, and during the Raj the subordinate revenue officials and their ICS superiors were breeds apart and could not mix socially, and this official divide was not erased even quarter a century after Independence. In stark contrast, in Telangana Tahsildars were correct in their relationship with official superiors but not deferential, a legacy of the fact that in the Old Hyderabad State Tahsildars were generally of the same social class as their superiors- *Dom Taluqdars* (Deputy Collectors) and *AvvalTaluqdars* (Collectors). An anecdote that I heard had it that a venerable noble presented himself in the Nizam's court, and after offering *nazrana* (gift) sought a favour from *Ala Hazrat* ( His Exalted Highness), a job for his son. The Nizam was pleased to grant his son a post of Tahsildar; the noble bowed profusely and hesitantly told the Nizam that his son was a little dull witted and might not do justice to the job of a Tahsildar. Thereupon, the Nizam granted him the higher post of a *taluqdar*. Unlike in Nizam's Dominions, in Coastal Andhra, British rule was not based on feudal relations but on modern capitalist relations; therefore, while common people were very deferential to officers, and addressed officers as *doragaru* (Venerable Lord) they would not debase themselves like those in Telangana. All in all, Old Hyderabad was a highly feudal society, and the culture of the elite was vastly different from that of the common people.

Unlike progressive Native States like, Baroda, Mysore, and Travancore Nizam's Dominions did little to provide basic education to its citizens. Urdu speaking population constituted only about a tenth of the population, the rest being speakers of Kannada, Marathi and Telugu. As a matter of State policy, the

medium of instruction even in schools was Urdu which was also the official language of the State. Even when private individuals or groups wanted to set up schools imparting instruction in languages other than Urdu, the State set up innumerable hurdles to frustrate them. A case in point was the first Telugu medium school for girls set up in 1928 by Madapati Hanumantha Rao and Kotwal Raja Bahadur Venkatarami Reddy. As Osmania University refused to accord recognition to the school, the students of the school had to travel to Pune to write the matriculation examination conducted by the Pune University. It was only after the Nizam's Dominion acceded to the Indian Union did the State Government accord recognition to that school. Rather strange arguments were adduced in support of the Government language policy, and among those who justified the policy was the contrarian C. Rajagopalachari. In his Convocation Address to the Osmania University (1944), he hailed the Osmania University for being the only Indian university which imparted higher education in an Indian language. Hindustani was an Indian language which was 'the rich joint product of Muslim and Hindu contact' and was 'the only language that can claim to be an all-India language'. He complimented Hyderabad for rendering 'signal service to the *lingua franca* of India by her bold and successful experiment in Urdu'. The Government could not be expected to extend the experiment straightaway to the other three languages of the State, and that being so if school education were imparted in languages other than Urdu, the students of non-Urdu medium schools would not have the proficiency required for pursuing higher education, and consequently would have a lesser opportunity to avail higher education offered by Osmania University than those who studied in the Urdu medium. It was no doubt an ingenious defence of an indefensible State policy which prevented students from receiving their school education in their mother tongue. Language policy is not an issue of logic but of emotions; it is a matter of identity, a question of who one is. Consequently, the suppression of mother tongue in schools and offices spawned strong movements for the

You can be erudite with the knowledge of others; you can be wise only with your own wisdom

Montaigne

promotion of the languages which were suppressed by the State; gradually these movements soon acquired a political character, and generated demand for a representative government.

Even those who extol the old Hyderabadi culture hold divergent views on the events of 1930s and 1940s which disrupted communal harmony, led to the Police Action (1948) and the integration of Nizam's Dominions with the Indian Union.. One group was inclined to lay the blame for the disruption of communal harmony on the agitations by *Arya Samaj* which brought volunteers from all over the country to protest against the State discriminating against Hindus. This group was inclined to consider that the desire of the Nizam to carve out his Dominions as an independent country in the aftermath of Independence and the lapse of British paramountcy was a natural aspiration; it condemned the Police Action as ushering an era of victimisation of Muslims. The other group is inclined to view the disruption of communal harmony and the events of 1930s and 1940s as an aberration arising from the Nizam being led astray by his ministers and advisers, and from the misguided activities of *Majlis-i-Ittehad-ul-Mussalmeen*, and its militia Razakars. Groups which do not extol the Old Order hold the view that Ittehad and the Razakars which unleashed a reign of terror had the blessings of the Nizam himself, and that they were instruments designed to advance the strategic objective of Nizam, namely perpetuating his absolute monarchy and Muslim domination over the majority Hindu population. The predominant view about the Police Action is that it was an act of liberation because it liberated the Hindu majority who constituted ninety percent of the population from an oppressive regime which sought to obliterate their identity, and reduce them to second class status if not chattels; it was a swift, bold and determined operation which lasted just four days and inflicted few battle casualties and no collateral damage. In recent years, a contrary view articulated by Hyderabad Muslim diaspora and human rights activists came to the fore; it is contended that

Police Action was followed by pogroms in which tens of thousands of Muslims lost their lives, and that being so the day on which Nizam's forces surrendered was a dark day. Suffice to say, Hyderabad-400 was not just about celebrating the birthday of a city; it was more a contest over the city's Past, its history and culture with each of the contestants attempting to selectively and purposively reconstruct- or to draw upon the jargon of photography airbrush- the Past so as to project and perpetuate a particular image of the Past by magnifying what it cherished and blotting out what was embarrassing. What was attempted by different groups with Hyderabad-400 is not unique; the same attempt was at work in quite a few commemorations I organised as Secretary, Department of Culture, Government of India, a very good example being the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the founding of Khalsa with a section of the Sikh community wishing to highlight the distinctiveness, if not the separateness, of Sikhs on the one hand and the NDA Government keen to promote the perception that Hindus and Sikhs were bound together by family relationships and oppression by the Mughal rulers. With Hyderabad-400, the reconstruction of Hyderabad's Past was driven either by nostalgia only bitterness, and so deep were the contrasting perceptions of the Past that the very idea of commemorating the founding of Hyderabad was abandoned.

A carefully crafted narrative of past events and personalities comes in handy in contemporaneous political battles and culture wars to buttress one's position and assail the opponents. A good example is the controversy in Telengana State over commemorating September 17 as the Liberation Day. While inaugurating the Platinum Jubilee of the Exhibition Society in 2015, K.Chandrasekhara Rao, Chief Minister of Telangana State and supreme leader of the Telengana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) which spearheaded the latest agitation which culminated in the formation of that State, heaped praise on the last ruler of Nizam's Dominions hailing him as a great and secular leader, and recalled his contributions to

When India's government abuses power, the media don't roll over. They cheer.

The Economist, August 24, 2019

the development of Telangana and Hyderabad such as the Nizamsagar irrigation project, the Nizam Sugar Project, Secunderabad and Nampally railway stations, Osmania, Gandhi, Niloufer, and Nizam Orthopaedic hospitals. He declared that ‘Nizam is our king. It is our history but in the united Andhra Pradesh they made every attempt to wipe out our history’, and went on to rhetorically ask ‘Have they added any railway station or Government hospital in Hyderabad other than those built by Nizam?’ He conceded that some small mistakes might have happened only to offer the rationalisation that mistakes ‘happen in any kingdom’. KCR’s visualization was politically expedient. That visualization helped buttress the central argument of the nearly six-decade long Telangana movement that notwithstanding a language and many elements of culture they share with their Andhra kinsmen the Telangana people have a distinct identity, and that the Telangana region and people were culturally, economically and politically dominated by those who migrated from Andhra after the formation of the Andhra Pradesh State. It was also useful in rebutting the demand for Hyderabad city being made a Union Territory on the ground that it was the people of Andhra and the Chandrababu Naidu’s Government who developed Hyderabad into a modern city. No less importantly it would come in handy to forge an alliance with Majlis-e Ittihad al-Muslimin which has a strong hold on the Old City and thereby consolidate TRS’s hold on Hyderabad city and repulse the challenge of political parties having a hold on large number of people from Andhra who live in the city. Naturally, the eulogy of Nizam and his rule did not go well with political parties such as the BJP and the Communist Parties which also supported the formation of the Telangana State. In fact, for long the BJP had been demanding that like its counterparts in Karnataka and Maharashtra the Andhra Pradesh Government should celebrate September 17, the day on which Nizam’s army surrendered to the Indian army in 1948, as Liberation Day to mark freedom from the despotic rule of Nizam, and honour all those who participated in the struggle against that rule. The Liberation Day

was not celebrated in Andhra Pradesh as successive Governments considered the celebration to be politically inexpedient as the large Muslim population concentrated in the Old City considered the Police Action not as liberation but as a tragic event that led to the collapse of Nizam’s rule, and end of their special status as the ruling class. The BJP expected that with the formation of Telangana, and the NDA coming to power at the Centre the Liberation Day would be celebrated but it was not to be as the new Government of Telangana was not in favour. For the Communists, eulogy of the feudal order of Nizam was an abomination; however, they were not in favour of celebrating the Liberation Day because the Indian Army went on to put down the Telangana armed struggle which was as much a revolt against the Indian Government and Yeh Azadi Jhoor hai (this freedom is a sham) as against the oppressive Nizam’s rule. The Past, like beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder, and that adds spice to commemorations.

(Concluded)

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### **THE NEED FOR AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES**

**Prof. R. Venkata Rao.**

Chairperson, VSLLS

Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies(VIPS)

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In a democracy, which aims at reliability, performance and transparency, the institutions must have credibility. Our institutions must be permanent and transparent, they must be impersonal, allowing and integrating the best of individual practices and shaping the same. They must have an element of continuance and from continuance, coherence. The individual failings and limitations of human are allayed by their functioning under institutions which may be to function without undue change or irrespective of the individuals at their helm.

If we are careful and considerate, we will be protected. My life is not a bad example of the value of faith and kindness.

S. Radhakrishnan

With respect to investigative agencies, the role of autonomy and accountability in their functioning assumes a much greater importance. This is so, given the nature of their functions, which require a high level of neutrality and objectiveness. They must also be modelled in such a manner that their susceptibility to external influence and bias is kept at a minimum. However, this simplistic formulation may leave much of the details waiting, with the degree of autonomy to be provided undetermined. What must be the level of independence granted? What, if any, should be the amount of oversight and control which is exercised? We know for a fact that absolute power cannot exist in a democracy in any institution. Therefore, some form of oversight and accountability is also desired.

### **What must be that level?**

The efficiency of criminal justice system in any country to a great extent depends on the efficacy of the legal regime pertaining to combating corruption. The role of investigative agencies in this regard is of paramount significance. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the premier investigating agency of India. Established in 1941 with the motto “Industry, Impartiality, Integrity”, it operates under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India. The agency has been known to investigate several economic crimes, special crimes, cases of corruption and other high profile cases.

A number of happenings in the recent past have caused severe dent to the reputation of CBI and to use Shakespeare’s felicitous expression, it has become “more sinned against than sinned”. It has been derisively referred to as “a caged Parrot”.

The present paper aims to indicate the need for independence and accountability and the issues which have been raised in connection thereto.

### **Lack of Independence:**

It has been observed and judicially noted that the functioning of investigative and quasi-judicial bodies in India has suffered due to interference from

extraneous sources. These have been varying and could range from the political to pecuniary. However, there seems to be acquiescence over the fact that the same does exist and needs to be tackled effectively.

In the case of *Ram Jethmalani v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court, passing adverse observations on the nature of the Union Government’s attitude to the investigation into overseas bank accounts maintained by Indians, stated, “The major problem, in the matters before us, has been the inaction of the State. This is so, both with regard to the specific instances...and also with respect to the issues regarding parallel economy, generation of black money etc. The failure is not of the Constitutional values or the powers available to the State; the failure has been of human agency. The response has to necessarily be a more emphatic assertion of these values, both in terms of protection of an individual’s right to privacy and also the protection of individual’s right to petition this Court, under Clause (1) of Article 32, to protect fundamental rights from evisceration of content because of failures of the State. The balancing leads only to one conclusion: strengthening of the machinery of investigations, and vigil by broader citizenry in ensuring that the agents of State do not weaken such machinery”.

Political interference into the working of investigative agencies may take different forms. To illustrate, in a case pertaining to the allegations of corruption in the allotment of coal blocks, it was alleged that the report of the Central Bureau of Investigation was altered under pressure as it was disclosed to the political executive before being filed in Court. The agency contended before the Supreme Court that day to day scrutiny by the Department of Personnel and Training hampered that autonomy and functioning of the agency.

Further, the Central Bureau of Investigation also put forward proposals in front of the Supreme Court to ensure that it could function outside the realm of control of the government. The main contention of the agency seems to have been to secure functional autonomy for itself. It stated that it did not desire

Democracy has many virtues, but one of its concomitants is wastage of time and energy.

Jawaharlal Nehru

complete autonomy in the sense that it should be above scrutiny by the government. However, the shift must be from a position where the government can wantonly interfere with its day to day functioning to one where only structured and planned oversight mechanisms can function.

The first demand of the Central Bureau of Investigation was that the scheme for seeking government approvals prior to investigation be done away with and instead, approvals be granted or denied by a committee headed by the Central Vigilance Commissioner and the Cabinet Secretary and CBI Director as members. The CBI also demanded that the Director of Prosecution be placed under the CBI's director and that the former be given a minimum three-year term. They also sought to do away with approval from the Law Ministry prior to engaging their own lawyers to prosecute cases. It was also demanded that the CBI Director's authority to directly appoint officers of the inspector level be raised to that of the Deputy Superintendent of Police or the Superintendent of Police. The CBI also stated that the powers of removal of CBI Director must only be exercisable if the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and the Chief Justice of India or his nominated judge concur on the same. These and other similar demands were made in order to achieve independence of functioning for the CBI.

The demands made by the Central Bureau of Investigation are also the recurrent themes in investigative independence in India. These can be abstracted and broadly categorized as the following:

- Functional autonomy and independence in regular functioning.
- Autonomy of selection of cases for prosecution.
- Lack of dependence of politically controlled bodies for sanction, personnel and support.
- Autonomy of status for the decision-making component of the investigative agency.

### **The Case for Accountability**

More often than not, the argument of

accountability is used to argue against the grant of autonomy to the respective investigate agency. After surveying how this is employed, it will be argued that this is not necessarily so and both accountability and independence can co-exist and be promoted simultaneously.

The most appropriate example would be to take the same litigation at the Supreme Court, which was alluded to in the previous section. In affidavits filed before the Supreme Court, the Centre seems to have responded against the demands made by the Central Bureau of Investigation. More often than not, the same has been based on a greater demand for accountability which would be ostensibly eroded if additional accountability would be draconian for a body such as the CBI which already exercised powers of arrest and investigation. What was alluded to importantly by the government was that there must exist a system of checks and balances which would control the CBI and ensure that no organisation is all powerful and without oversight.

Against the proposal to do away with Ministry sanction before prosecution of public servants, the government contended that the creation of a clearing committee would merely add to the delay in declaring sanction, as the committee would have to ultimately seek government inputs. Further, the suggestion that the Director of Prosecution be placed under the supervision of the CBI Director was rejected on the grounds that the function of a prosecution agency must be neutral and should have fidelity only to the concerned court and rule of law, and this would compromise the said neutrality.

Interestingly, the Centre also contended that there must be an Accountability Commission comprising former Supreme Court and High Court judges to look into complaints against officers of the CBI. This, it is said would ensure accountability in a situation where there is no current mechanism to look into complaints against officers of the CBI and would help to instil discipline in the agency.

Basic liberties are those rights that are essential for humans to exercise their unique power of moral reasoning.

John Rawls

## Finding of the Middle Ground

It is true that the balance between autonomy and accountability might be delicate one which needs to be found with constant trial and experience. Further, in case of investigative agencies exercising great powers of arrest, search, seizure and prosecution, such oversight may ensure fairness and equality in situations where the investigative body might be working under intense pressure. However, it should be noted that functional autonomy and accountability may stand on two different footings. What is meant through this is that there may be mechanisms for accountability put in place and enforced in order to keep the powers of investigation agencies under check and supervision. However, this may be achieved without compromising on functional autonomy granted to the institutions. For example, the provision of allowing an investigative agency to appoint its prosecutors would not compromise its accountability if the initial sanction to prosecute is granted by the government, nor would it infringe the autonomy of prosecutors, given that they would be trained lawyers, conversant with the duties of prosecutors. It would, however, helpfully curtail delays and unnecessary red-tape in getting prosecutorial staff.

It can, therefore, be suggested that the balance between independence and autonomy has to be achieved keeping in mind the functional aspect of investigative agencies. Further, one of the pertinent demands of the CBI was that the Director may directly report to the Minister concerned, thereby ensuring that the rank of the Director would be raised to that of Secretary. The government's opposition to the suggestion was stated as, "If the CBI Director reports directly to the Minister, the superintendence of the Minister would stand compromised and an independent layer of scrutiny would no longer be available, this would go against not only the legislative intent of the Delhi Special Police Establishment act but also the democratic constitutional principle that the police or investigating agencies function under the administrative supervision of the executive".

However, the fact remains that the same mechanism, which is being denied to the CBI has been provided to several other agencies, such as the Research and Analysis Wing, and the Secretary, Security. It has been argued that the system of checks and balances which are the cornerstone of good governance would be compromised by granting unbridled power to investigative agencies. It has also been argued that the criminal justice system itself would be brought into serious peril by the grant of autonomy to investigative agencies. However, it may be remembered that the efficacy of a criminal justice system also depends on the ability of investigative agencies to function without political interference or manipulation, without undue delays and without constant need to take permissions for the conduct of their regular activities. Without these, the criminal justice system may also fall into peril.

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## Towards a Responsive Institutional Administration

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### A. INTRODUCTION

When I was, rather unexpectedly, called upon to share a PPT of a talk I had delivered on 15th February 2019 as part of the LEAP Programme organized by ISER Kolkata, I was hard put to comply, unable to recollect my extempore interactive session. Professor Debyendu Nandi of ISER Kolkata, who was present at my talk, much to my relief had captured its essence in a fine summary, best shared in his own words:

He wrote that I had stressed upon 'the complete synergy necessary between the Director and the Registrar, the importance of choosing the right person for the Registrar post, and the harmony required between the academic community and staff personnel

Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that is two thirds water?

Martin Luther King Jr.

in order to build an institution where each individual feels that he/she is a stakeholder in the vision and betterment of the organization.’ He particularly liked the ideas proposed to disseminate important science and research highlights among administrative staff to make them feel they are part of the bigger story and investing in staff and faculty welfare schemes that go beyond academics to create a communitywide sense of happiness and well being.’

This ‘note’ expands on Professor Debyendu’s summary and it is almost entirely based on my experiences spread over 6 years as the Registrar of the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore from 2000 to 2006. In this period a deep overhaul of institutional administration was attempted, with the total support of two extraordinary and large-hearted individuals I reported to-Professor Goverdhan Mehta and Professor M.Vijayan, Director and Associate Director of IISc respectively for much of the period I was in IISc.

### **THE GREAT DIVIDE**

CP Snow in his famous talk on ‘Two Cultures,’ highlighted the almost unbridgeable gap existing between science and the humanities in the West. While this may well be true of India as well, a more worrying chasm exists between the faculty, including the director/head of many of our elite institutions of science and technology on the one hand and their administrative establishments - including Finance - on the other.

That this situation is widely prevalent in our country was once again brought home to me in my interactions at the recent LEAP meet conducted by ISER in Kolkata, with representatives of institutions across India several of whom complained, often bitterly, that dysfunctional administrative systems came in the way of achieving institutional excellence.

As I explained in my talk there is much that the faculty and the head of such institutions can do to improve the ground situation. Rather than see

administration as a necessary evil, I had suggested that it be coopted as a partner towards achieving institutional excellence and I build on this in this paper touching upon the following:

- A. Why the selection and empowerment of the Registrar is critical for the institution.
  - B. The reasons why some of our best institutions have less than ideal administrative support systems.
  - C. Some recommendations on how to restructure existing administrative systems in such institutions to make them perform much better.
  - D. An Annexure to this note will briefly dwell on what, in my case, qualified me for the job and the initiatives that I tried out with some success at the Indian Institute of Science as its longest serving Registrar (6 years) in its history.
- B. Criticality of the Registrar for Administration

The ideal administrative system is one that is tuned to be responsive to faculty needs while keeping the larger institutional community contented. For this it must have a well-selected and fully empowered Registrar who ensures that the administrative personnel constitute a well-trained and satisfied workforce pulling together as an efficient, team to consistently deliver a great administrative experience, to the community it serves – the faculty and students of the institution but also the large institutional community too.

For this the primary requirement is to ensure that the position of Registrar is a selection not a promotional post to be filled in only on a deputation basis, by a person with considerable experience in institutional administration and HR. So what are the qualities that one should look for in selecting a Registrar? Here is a short list to identify and select such a person.

1. Look for a diversity of experience and strong HR skills.

◆ A careful scrutiny of the career profile of the individual shortlisted for selection must be made. What has the individual done in his previous assignments? Usually for officers from India's Group 'A' civil services the past record of the officer, which can be obtained, will be very revealing. As a rule of thumb avoid:

- Someone who has shifted jobs frequently without the need to.
- A person who hasn't seen a variety in assignments
- Not handled large workforces
- Has a poor performance rating by more than one superior.

The institute must specifically satisfy itself that the person proposed has:

- A sound understanding of finance and financial management.
- Immense patience and understanding
- Has a proven record as an able negotiator

2. Once an individual has been shortlisted and selected, it is in the institution's interest that the individual is allowed/ encouraged to quickly gain a deep understanding of the institution, its history and its ethos. This starts with a full and detailed briefing by the head of the institution followed by interactions with faculty, students and staff. Ideally this should be scheduled before the selected person joins as Registrar.

3. The Registrar should display a proactive willingness to understand the concerns of faculty members and the larger institutional community, and a willingness and capability to find optimal solutions to problems they face without breaking rules but interpreting them in ways that will stand the strongest scrutiny.

4. The Registrar must have a clear appreciation of the core concerns of the faculty (including visiting faculty) and students e.g. on administrative

matters like sabbaticals, issue of permissions and authorizations, promotions etc. and also of issues concerning their lives on the campus such as housing, hostel management, catering and even schooling of children etc.)

5. Developing the administrative wing of the institution to be responsive in a timely and efficient way to those it is intended to service. Here the Registrar should be able to:

- Identify gaps in performance of individual administrative staff as well as different categories of employees and take corrective action through periodic training sessions designed to address specific shortcomings.
- Develop a feedback system that should alert on any emerging problems to be able to resolve them at an early manageable stage.

6. The Registrar must have significant experience in running organizations with large number of employees from diverse backgrounds -of caste/religion/regional divides/ varying economic levels. Very often, too simplistic a view of such diversity leads to unexpected administrative difficulties capable of bringing an institution to its knees.

7. The Registrar must have a thorough knowledge of conduct and financial rules and their application (enquiry/investigation/ interpretation of rules and regulations governing the institution and its personnel). At the end of the day, like all bureaucracies those of institutions too need operate within a framework of rules and regulations. To be effective, the Registrar has necessarily to be very knowledgeable in these areas and should have practical experience in interpreting and enforcing them. It is important for an institution selecting a person as Registrar, to satisfy itself fully on all this.

8. The Registrar must have experience in managing career aspirations of administrative personnel, especially those who are most disadvantaged. This calls for a 360-degree view of the environment the Registrar operates with enough sources to check out hunches and informal feedbacks he/she will be getting.

In India our private enterprise is more private than enterprising.

Indira Gandhi

9. The Registrar must have a proven record of developing and sustaining accessible networks in government at local and national levels to many things done at (for institutions like ISER) the central as well as state and local levels (police, civic authorities etc.).

10. The Registrar must be scrupulously committed to fair play. This quality is necessary to ensure the integrity of decision-making even when unpopular. When it comes to disadvantaged groups in administration (the reserved categories, minorities, physically handicapped etc.) the Registrar must be one who will go the extra mile to reach out and redress their concerns.

11. Institutions are far easier to be corrupt in, with more daring, and also nepotism is widely prevalent in many of them. In the selection of a Registrar for an institution, a background check of the person's integrity is therefore essential.

12. 'Management By Walking Around,' is critical to the functioning of an organization and woe it is to a Registrar who stays deskbound. A deskbound Registrar is an ineffective one. The principle of management by walking around is essential for effective discharge of his duties by the Registrar.

13. Last but not the least, the Registrar must keep an open door and be prepared to meet and discuss any issue with the staff, the students and most importantly with the faculty, at any time. Being officious and bureaucratic is a big NO! NO!

C. An analysis of some of the causes leading to our best institutions having less than ideal administrative support systems are listed below:

- Lack of investment in creating dedicated efficient administrative systems that will meet present and future needs.
- Lax in determining the kind of staffing the administrative wing (including finance) requires.
- Collectively (since all institutions suffer from very similar shortcomings in administration) institutions have not come together, brainstormed on what kind of administrative systems they need, and forced a change.

- Institutions spend very little on training/retraining their employees to work in a result oriented manner.
- Institutions do not exercise the same care in selection of their administrative head (the Registrars) as they would in selection of their Directors.
- A lot of administrative work can be efficiently outsourced but institutions have done very little in that direction.
- Institutions have failed to be ones where each individual feels that he/she is a stakeholder in the vision and betterment of the organization.'
- Failed to 'disseminate important science and research highlights among administrative staff to make them feel they are part of the bigger story and investing in staff and faculty welfare schemes that go beyond academics to create a community wide sense of happiness and well being.'

D. Recommendations on how to restructure existing administrative systems in such institutions to make them perform much better.

- New institutions that have come up in the last 10 years or so (e.g. ISERs) must be differentiated from older ones (IISc. for instance) that suffer from more difficult to fix legacy problems.
- It is suggested that the newer institutions go in for a complete change of their administration that will emphasize on having a higher number of highly skilled, young, well-paid contract workers and a core permanent administrative staff.
- For the older institutions an attractive VRS scheme should aim at reducing the workforce significantly to make modernization of administration feasible and faster. Legacy practices need time to resolve and cannot be rushed.

Restructuring is a complex task and one needs to start the process with great care and taking the employees into confidence, as they will be the most concerned about how such restructuring will affect

them. The Registrar will have to prepare the ground for this.

I will stop with this observation: there is much that the Director of an institution like IISc, ISER and their faculty can do to build bridges and make those in administration feel wanted. Informally it is happening everywhere but a conscious institutional approach will immensely help.

Inspired by Professor Vijayan, one of the toughest leaders of the SC Association of IISc completed his PhD in microbiology from Bangalore University. The children of many of those who worked as Deputy and Assistant Registrars and even as clerks and support staff have gone on to do their MS and PhDs in some of the greatest universities of the world.

My driver's two daughters are microbiologists working in the best of companies. My PA's daughter went on to take her PhD in TIFR and was a post doc at Weizmann Institute – Israel. These are a few instances – there are many more many more. I hope this will be kept in view by all those who have the patience to read this 'Note,' and make such support a part of faculty and institutional outreach.

While this is not a comprehensive one it seeks to bring out some of the key things attempted to provide a better administration for a great institution. I make no claim to have sorted all administrative issues out. There are too many legacy issues that need considerable time to resolve. However a willingness to go for change rather than be paralyzed by the magnitude of the task of reform often stymies everything.

(The author now teaches Public Policy and Contemporary History at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.)

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## **Conqueror of Obstacles in Bowne Street**

**Dr. ( Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar**

The temple culture perfected in India has been spreading gradually in the United States during the last fifty years. There is a basic, almost ecumenical approach to the visualization of a consecrated corner for the community by the Indians living here, in tune with the approach of Hinduism from times immemorial. I have always found it a heartening experience to visit the temples built by non-resident Indians with a great aspiration so that the coming generations will be no strangers to the Vedic civilization of India.

The New York area, for instance, is studded with several temples. Among the most flourishing is the Ganapati temple at Bowne Street in Flushing. Way back in 1970 a few devotees came together to form the Hindu Temple Society of North America with inspiration drawn from the message of Sri Satya Sai Baba. The logo of the Society thus drew from the spiritual leader's insignia and has a lamp surrounded by the symbols of world religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Soon a temple was in the making and the Mahavallabha Ganapati Devasthanam was consecrated on 4th July, 1977. Since then, the temple has grown in form and activities and is today a centre for the very best in India's Vedic culture.

As one goes past the Flagstaff, there are appropriate rooms for shedding coats and shoes. The premises are enviably clean despite a constant movement of devotees. The main hall of worship has at the centre a sanctum where the huge granite idol of Vinayaka with gleaming silver armour presides over the religious activities. He is decorated with silver yajnopaveetham and a garland of rudraksha beads. Quite a few niches have been consecrated around this

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is a submerged part of the national consciousness as broad as the nation.

M.Chalapathi Rau

sanctum which does give the sannidhi a crowded look. Among the deities are Venkateswara, Mahalakshmi, Shiva and Kartikeya. There are also alcoves for lovely pancha-loka idols of Rama, Krishna, Ayyappa and other deities. Apart from the huge panels of Nataraja, Gitopadesa, Ananthapadmanabha and Dakshinamoorthy on the walls, our attention is drawn particularly to the figurines of Agasthya and Lopamudra. Apparently the sage is considered the patron saint of the temple. Of the rest, the intriguing icon was that of Khodiar Matha. The priest was not able to place this idol which had a lance. He just explained away that “she seems to be a form of Shakti venerated in North India”.

An air of sincere devotion permeates the air even as a family is having the “anna praasana” ceremony conducted for a little child at the Mahalakshmi niche. Tirumanjanam is being conducted to Venkateswara as about twenty devotees sit watching in deep reverence. An ISKCON member is quietly chanting the Mahamantra in another place. Archana is being conducted constantly for the main deity. Altogether it was a heartening sight as I came out after going round the Navagrahas. I was told that cultural programmes, music and stotra classes as also lectures are a regular affair in the auditorium built at the lower level of the temple.

Apparently, this auditorium has proved to be of tremendous help to the local community for conducting ceremonies and festivals including weddings. A new auditorium has now come up with a seating capacity of 700 along with a kitchen and dining hall to prepare and serve feasts. Speaking of food, I must not forget the tremendously popular Ganesha canteen! Wholesome South Indian food can be purchased here and weekends bring a riot of children and elders in search of oothappam, masal dosai,, mixture and mysore pak. The temple canteen also takes catering

orders. Lest one mistake the canteen to be a mere business proposition, it may be pointed out that during Ganesh Chaturthi 25,000 prasadam packets are distributed free. One can also purchase mementos and books here. The ambitious vision by the trustees for the future includes a five-levelled Rajagopuram with a vestibule raising sixteen pillars to depict the forms of Shodasa Ganapati, an expansion of the present main temple hall (an immediate necessity indeed) and a Speciality Library of books on Vedanta. Having traversed so far with success at every stage, we can be sure that the vision will be realized by the grace of the Conqueror of Obstacles.

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## **Gandhian journalism – II**

**Dr. R. Sampath**

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Visakhapatnam

Here is a quotable quote regarding advertisements and newspapers from the ‘Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VI, 1994’: “It is now an established practice with newspapers to derive their main income from advertisements rather than from subscribers. The result is deplorable. The very newspaper which in its editorial columns strongly denounces the drink evil publishes advertisements in praise of drinks. We read about the ill-effects of tobacco as well as where to buy tobacco or which brand of cigarette to smoke in the same newspapers. Or, it may on the one hand, publish a severe denunciation of a certain play and, on the other, elsewhere in its columns, a long advertisement of it. The largest source of revenue is derived from medical advertisement, which is the cause of much harm to our people. They, almost wholly, nullify the other services

Innovation is the successful exploitation of a new idea.

Joseph Schumpeter

rendered by newspapers. I have seen the harm caused by the advertisements, for many people are lured into buying the medicines – supposed to increase virility, overcome debility, etc. Many of these medicines are those which encourage immorality. It is strange that such advertisements find a place even in religious papers. This custom has been adapted from the West. Whatever the effort, we must either put an end to this undesirable practice or, at least, reform it. It is the duty of every newspaper to exercise care in accepting advertisements for publication in its pages and some restraint in the matter of advertisements.”

Gandhiji also emphasised by his own example that the sole aim of journalism should be service. According to him, “One of the objectives of a newspaper is to understand the popular feelings and to give expression to them; another is to arouse among the people a desirable sentiment; and the third is fearlessly to expose the popular defects”. Going by this definition, we can conclude that Gandhiji had rightly set the agenda for aspiring newspaper editors and publishers. These three tenets cover the ‘service’ motto he had talked about. He was not for bringing out a newspaper or a journal for its own sake. The stakes, as adumbrated by him, are high. Echoing the people’s feelings and aspirations is indeed a service that should delight the reader of such a newspaper. By using the expression, “to arouse among the people a desirable sentiment”, Gandhiji had stressed the need for educating people on certain lofty ideals like overall common good, eradication of untouchability, emancipation of women, self-reliance in the form of encouraging ‘swadeshi’ production of goods, promotion of hand-spun-and-woven cloth (Khadi), prohibition of or abstinence from the drink evil and civil disobedience in a non-violent manner (Satyagraha) against authoritarian tendencies going against the people. The third service assigned by Gandhiji to

newspapers is to function like a mirror truly reflecting the popular foibles and serve as a corrective facility. The Mahatma felt that people must be exposed to their own mistakes and misdemeanour, and this could be done only by a service-oriented newspaper or journal.

At the same time, he would not tolerate newspapers getting incensed over the criticism against their functioning. He explained: “It is often observed that newspapers published any matter that they have, just to fill in space. The reason is that most newspapers have their eyes on profits..... There are newspapers in the West which are so full of trash that it will be a sin even to touch them. At times, they produce bitterness and strife even between different families and communities. Thus, newspapers cannot escape criticism merely because they serve the people.”

Education of the public was an article of faith with Gandhiji. And to achieve this noble task, journalists could not afford to be slipshod, especially when they were expected to tell the truth. He was for thorough verification of the facts before publishing them by means of a report. “Newspapers are meant primarily to educate the people. They make the latter familiar with contemporary history. This is a work of no mean responsibility. It is a fact, however, that readers cannot always trust newspapers. Often facts are found to be quite the opposite of what has been reported. If newspapers realised that it was their duty to educate the people, they could not but wait to check a report before publishing it. It is true that often they have to work under difficult conditions. They have to sift the true from the false in a short time and can only guess at the truth. Even then, I am of the opinion that it is better not to publish a report at all if it has not been found possible to verify it. The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock it with wanted and unwanted impressions.”

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel assured our people that India would never subscribe to the idea of a Hindu raj. He described it as a ‘mad idea’. In his memorable words, ‘It would kill the soul of India’.

Nani Palkhivala

Factual reporting is sacred because people by and large believe the printed word to be true. James Bryce, former White House staffer of 20th century, once remarked: “Men who would give little credence to a tale told them by a neighbour, or even written to them by a friend, believe what the newspaper tells them merely because they see it in print.” It is thus essential for the journalist to verify the facts in his or her report before sending it for publication. Gandhiji would not buy the argument that since journalists were chasing deadlines sometimes they would not be having time to verify facts. With newspapers and television channels vying with one another for scoring over their contemporaries these days, fact verification has become a casualty. This has occasionally resulted in piquant situations of admitting lapses and expressing regret on the part of newspapers and channels.

For the journalist in the Mahatma, ‘restraint’ was the ‘mantra’. In his autobiography, ‘My Experiments with Truth’ he wrote: “I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of Satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non-violence and truth... To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write idly, I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise in the choice of topics and vocabulary. Week after week I poured out my soul in its (‘Young India’) columns and expounded the principles and practice of Satyagraha as I understood it. I cannot recall a word in these articles set down without thought or deliberation or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed, the journal became for me a training centre in self-restraint and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts.” His aim was always

to express his feelings or observations and never to impress his reader. For him, the message rather than its purveyor should be important. One would like to exclaim: ‘Modesty, thy name is Gandhi!’

Gandhiji never entertained the idea of journalism as a wage earning proposition. “In my humble opinion, it is wrong to use a newspaper as a means of earning a living. There are certain spheres of work which are of such consequence and have such bearing on public welfare that to undertake them for earning one’s livelihood will defeat the primary aim behind them. When a newspaper is treated as a means of making profits, the result is likely to be serious malpractices. It is not necessary to prove to those who have some experience of journalism that such malpractices do prevail on a large scale.”

Journalist and freedom-fighter Salien Chatterjee, who covered Mahatma Gandhi, his actions and programmes for a number of years, in an article, ‘Reporting Mahatma’ he had written for the special issue (January-March 1998) of ‘Vidura’ (the journal of the Press Institute of India) detailed how Gandhiji functioned as a Journalist. He said: “I joined journalism in 1942. Reporting Mahatma Gandhi and my tours with him were the best and most memorable period of my journalistic career. During my tours with him, he often told me how he worked day and night to produce his journal ‘Indian Opinion’ in Natal, South Africa. He described ‘Indian Opinion’ as the most useful weapon in his struggle in South Africa. He always stressed the importance of newspapers in educating the people. Gandhi believed and always emphasised that the sole aim of journalism should be service, service of the people and the country.

“In ‘Young India’ Gandhi once gave a glimpse of the exacting code he had set up for himself. ‘To be true to my faith, I may not write in anger or malice....

The welfare of the state depends on active foreign policy.

It is training for me. It enables me to peek into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds’.”

As a principled journalist, Gandhiji elaborated that “my writings cannot be poisonous, they must be free from anger, for it is my special religious conviction that we cannot truly attain our goal by promoting ill-will ... There can be no room for untruth in my writings, because it is my unshakable belief that there is no religion other than truth...My writings cannot but be free from hatred towards any individual because it is my firm belief that it is love that sustains the earth”.

Ramachandra Guha, well known political commentator and historian, in an article in ‘The Hindu’, the reputed daily published from Chennai, wrote: “No one knew Gandhi’s prose style better than Krishnaswami Swaminathan, Chief Editor of the ‘Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi’ and himself a retired Professor of English Literature. Now in his school-leaving examination the young Mohandas had obtained a mere 44.5 % in English. But residence in London, wide reading, and diligent practice made him a decent practitioner of written English by the time he had turned thirty. Reading and re-reading his vast output, Professor Swaminathan came to marvel at the transparent simplicity of his literary style. Gandhi’s prose, remarked Swaminathan, ‘is a natural expression of his democratic temper. There is no conscious ornamentation, no obtrusive trick of style calling attention to itself. The style is a blend of the modern manner of an individual sharing his ideas and experiences with his readers, and the impersonal manner of the Indian tradition in which the thought is more important than the person expounding it. The

sense of equality with the common man is the mark of Gandhi’s style and the burden of his teaching. To feel and appreciate this essence of Gandhi the man, in his writings and speeches, is the best education for true democracy’.” In fact, the facility with which Gandhiji wrote and his felicity of expression will always be an envy of any journalist, national or international.

William Shirer of the ‘Chicago Tribune’, who has authored ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’, was one of the foreign news correspondents interacting with Gandhiji in Delhi in March 1926. Five years later Shirer was so drawn to the Mahatma that he authored ‘Gandhi: A Memoir’, in which he records thus: “On Gandhi’s request I typed out a statement dictated by him.” Rajmohan Gandhi quotes in his book, ‘A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire’, thus: “...’The reporter would say: ‘I was moved by some of his words and the simple, sincere way in which he spoke them that at moments I had difficulty in putting them down on my typewriter’...” That was Gandhi’s simple and arresting presentation of his thoughts in lucid English prose.

In the October 2012 issue of the ‘Odisha Review’, Souribandhu Kar wrote that Gandhi was not only a journalist par excellence, but as an editor he used to advise other editors and journalists. He gave this piece of advice to his son Manilal, who was editing the ‘Indian Opinion’: “The editor has to be patient and seek for the truth only.” The Mahatma also understood the constraints of an editor. He wrote in ‘Young India’ in August 1924: “The editor of a daily newspaper when he begins writing his leader does not weigh his words in golden scales. He may be betrayed into a hasty word. Must he pay for it even though he did it in good faith without malice and in the public interest?”

Minoo Masani, one of the eminent parliamentarians and a socialist-turned-liberal, once sought Gandhiji's approval for one of his proposals, and the latter replied thus: "I will give you a touchstone upon which you can rub your proposal with the following questions: 'Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?' If you get an affirmative answer, you can go ahead with your scheme." [From an article published in 'Swarajya Annual' in the 1960s]. Incidentally, this is the four-way test of the service organisation, Rotary International, which was originally mooted by Herbert J. Taylor, an aluminium product distributor of America in the 1930s, to enthuse the workers of his factory which was going bankrupt. Gandhiji felt that newspaper editors also should hold such a touchstone before putting their views in print.

(To be continued)

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### **'Panel discussion on 'Mahatma Gandhi for our Times'**

*(Newspaper report on 'Mahatma Gandhi for our Times' organised on November 13, 2019 by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library)*

"Like Buddha and his teachings Gandhiji and his ideals are more respected and honoured outside

India than in his own country which he led from bondage to freedom," said D.S.Varma, Secretary of both Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library which organized a panel discussion on "Mahatma for our times" on Wednesday last. The speakers were unanimous in their view that the Gandhian path is the only panacea for political, social and economic problems which continue to afflict world's largest democracy. Dr.E.A.S.Sarma explained the multipronged approach of the Mahatma in tackling crises at all levels. Gandhiji was a mass leader, awakener and crusader for the rights of the poorest of the poor. His life long struggle for communal harmony and peace, Dalit emancipation, gender justice and eradication of poverty had no parallel in the history of the world, said a participant. From 1915 to 1947 August 15 was the march he led to freedom. But on that day when the whole of India was celebrating independence, Gandhiji was fasting and praying at Beliaghat in Bengal in a poor Muslim house in his work for communal harmony. On his last birthday October 2, 1947 began the March to Martyrdom. The Father of the Nation was distressed to find free India drifting away from the path of non-violence and adherence to the high ideals of the freedom struggle. He proposed several measures for course correction which Prof.V.Balamohan Das narrated in detail.

(Courtesy: *Deccan Chronicle*, November 17, 2019)

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