

SOUTH ASIAN STRATEGIC STABILITY – A VIEW FROM ISLAMABAD

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Even as thorny issues of force-modernization, budget-prioritization, and joint command structures, engage the attention of our newly anointed Chief of Defence Staff, he will, sooner than later, in his capacity as the first ever, Military Advisor to the National Command Authority (NCA), have to address India's nuclear deterrent. When he does so, he might ponder over US strategist Bernard Brodie's prescription for preventing a nuclear conflict: "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them."

Just as 'beauty' is said to lie in the 'eye of the beholder', the credibility of nuclear deterrence lies in the 'adversary's mind'; he must never be permitted to entertain an iota of doubt, that a nuclear first strike will invite a devastating nuclear response. The establishment of credible mutual deterrence between two nuclear rivals, by diminishing the possibility of a surprise nuclear attack, forms the basis of what is termed, 'strategic stability'. So, when retired Pakistani Lt Gen Khalid Kidwai, blames India for South Asia's endemic strategic instability, we must take note.

Speaking at a recent workshop organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Kidwai claimed that the onus of maintaining strategic stability in South Asia fell on Pakistan's shoulders, since "India's insatiable drive for regional domination, especially given its current irrational, unstable and belligerent internal and external policies" could lead to catastrophic consequences. Kidwai, as the Director-General of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD) for 14 years, was at the heart of Pakistan's NCA; overseeing the operationalization of its nuclear deterrent and evolution of its doctrines and strategies. Although his pronouncements are for public consumption, given the historic absence of a formal Indo-Pak nuclear dialogue, they should provide some food for thought.

Kidwai's discourse, attempts to up-end conventional wisdom, in an effort to show that it is India, not Pakistan, which is a revisionist power; bent on destabilizing the sub-continent. His description, of "major destabilizing strategic steps" initiated by India, provides an interesting glimpse of the Pakistani capacity for self-delusion and the visceral hostility, underpinning its paranoia about an 'existential threat' from India.

The start point of Kidwai's arguments is India's 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE), which, according to him, was the trigger for Pakistan's nuclear-weapon programme as the only way of redressing the "India-induced strategic instability." However, Pakistani nuclear expert, Feroze Hassan Khan, writes that Pakistan's 'bomb decision' had come, much earlier, in January 1972, when PM Bhutto spoke to a gathering of scientists in Multan, about waging a "thousand-year war" against India and boasted that "...we will make an atomic bomb even if we have to eat grass." US analyst George Perkovich, writing about India's post-PNE posture, mentions, "Moral doubts, domestic priorities and international considerations" that prevented Indira Gandhi and successor PMs from authorizing weaponization, till Pakistan's stealthy pursuit of an 'Islamic bomb' forced India's hand.

Kidwai then refers to the massing of Indian forces, for Exercise 'Brasstacks', in end-1986, which caused serious alarm in Pakistan. According to him, Pakistan not only counter-mobilized its forces, but also dropped hints of a nuclear capability, due to which, "India blinked and strategic stability was restored." In actual fact, the military crisis had wound down on its own by February 1987, and it was only in March that journalist Kuldip Nayar 'broke' rogue nuclear scientist AQ Khan's boast about using the bomb if Pakistan's existence was threatened.

During the 1990s, alleges Kidwai, "India upped the ante" by introduction of longer range ballistic missiles and eventually, by conducting nuclear tests in 1998. The resultant instability, according to him, compelled Pakistan to induct a new family of ballistic missiles and respond by conducting its own nuclear tests; thus restoring strategic balance. He fails to mention that, with the clandestine transfer of missile

Non-violence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer,
but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant.

Mahatma Gandhi

technology from North Korea and receipt of nuclear-weapon designs and material from China, Pakistan, throughout the 1980s and 90s, had remained ahead of India, as the latter persevered with indigenous technology.

Pakistan, apart from reserving the right to first-use of nuclear weapons, has refrained from declaring an official nuclear doctrine, since 1998. The timeline of Pakistan's transition from 'minimum credible deterrence' to 'full spectrum deterrence' (FSD) is, therefore, not clear. Kidwai presents the FSD regime as a counter to the Indian army's Cold Start doctrine, meant to be a remedial for India's lethargic general mobilization of 2001-02.

Kidwai claims that FSD focuses on a capability to bring "every Indian target into Pakistan's striking range" and provides options to select amongst counter-value, battlefield, and counterforce targets. Consequently, he believes that the "Cold Start doctrine has been neutralized, nuclear deterrence holds" and Pakistan is assured that its FSD will bring "the international-community rushing into South Asia to prevent a wider conflagration."

Coming to India's February 2019 air-strike on Balakot, Kidwai vehemently denies that, Pakistan's 'nuclear bluff' was called, notwithstanding the IAF having crossed the international border to launch kinetic attacks. It was the presence of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, he says, that "deterred India from expanding operations beyond a single unsuccessful air strike." The robust PAF response, according to him, restored strategic stability and "no new normal" was established.

Finally, Kidwai is not above muddying the waters, through disinformation, and questions India's nuclear command and control system. Referring to the deployment of India's nuclear submarine, Arihant, during the Balakot crisis, he poses an obscure question that would interest our strategists: "...one wonders whether India contemplated the use of nuclear weapons from a second strike platform even before its first strike options?"

Pakistan's nuclear posture involving warhead accretion, battlefield nuclear weapons and a sea-based

second-strike capability is divergent from India's. Arrival of ballistic-missile defence and multiple re-entry warheads on the scene will render the Indo-Pak equation far more complex and instability-prone. Since there is no common understanding of issues like nuclear-thresholds, deterrence-breakdown and escalation-control; it is in the mutual interest of New Delhi and Islamabad to initiate a sustained confidence-building dialogue – isolated from all other issues – between nuclear experts.

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THE LOCKDOWN HAS A STRONG INTERNAL SECURITY COMPONENT. MANAGE IT

The police must enforce it, while retaining empathy for the vulnerable. It must work with competence, integrity.

Cmdr. (Retd.) C. Uday Bhaskar

Director of the Society for Policy Studies and
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To deal with the health crisis created by the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his televised address on March 24, instructed over a billion Indian citizens to "stay home, stay safe" and used a creative poster with corona written in Hindi to reiterate: "Koi road par na nikle" (no one to come on the road).

It has been almost a week since this diktat was announced, and enforcing this directive has had a tumultuous impact on law and order across the country. Ordering 1.3 billion people to stay indoors with little or no notice, and where many do not even have a roof over their heads, will have a catastrophic effect on human security among the more vulnerable.

Hunger can arouse the most intense survival responses, and the non-linear linkages with India's internal security challenges will prove daunting. This exigency, which is already discernible, must be addressed and calls for very swift policy responses, both by the Centre and state governments. Citizen transgressions of this lockdown will occur and one chief minister, K Chandrashekar Rao (Telangana), threatened to "impose a round-the-clock curfew,

Pleasure lies between two pains. Without pain there can be no pleasure.

You will experience real happiness only after you undergo difficulties.

Sri Sathy Sai Baba

bring in the army and issue shoot-at-sight orders,” if there was no strict compliance.

The police are the first line of governance in enforcing law and order and in these challenging times, the khaki force across the country has been under severe stress. While some police officials have acted with commendable empathy and compassion in certain cases of citizen distress, the larger pattern of policing since the Covid-19 curfew has been reprehensible. In many instances, the police lathi has been wielded ferociously and news reports that have since emerged are distressing.

In one case in West Bengal, a man stepping out for milk was allegedly beaten so badly that he later died. In Telangana, a female doctor was physically assaulted by a police officer and verbally abused when returning from work. Video clips show a cop in civvies in Delhi overturning vegetable carts and an Uttar Pradesh policeman forcing daily wagers to squat for daring to walk back to their villages. These are perhaps the tip of the iceberg.

Policing in India remains colonial in its orientation and the force is more feared than respected. This is a deeper structural problem and many well-meaning attempts at instituting reforms have floundered due to political chicanery and the nexus with organised crime.

However India’s societal stability over the next few months will depend to a large extent on the competence and integrity of the police as they deal with an unprecedented scale of human dislocation and deprivation. Mass hunger has to be prevented and the State machinery is evolving policy responses daily and firefighting to the best of its limited ability.

Yet, it merits recall at this bleak moment that with objective political oversight, professionals in India can rise to the challenge. This has been demonstrated periodically quietly and unobtrusively — be it the Kumbh Mela where almost 150 million pilgrims are managed over a 100-day period quite smoothly, or similar large congregations that punctuate the Indian calendar.

But the current Covid-19 curfew is sui generis

and national capacity will have to be mobilised on a war-footing to protect the rudimentary envelope of human security in India with its myriad distortions. Distribution of food stocks from the national granary and enabling this to reach the poor, evolving food-for-work programmes while respecting social distancing norms, catering to the elderly/sick/children on priority, providing public toilets with appropriate disposal of waste to avoid further health problems — the immediate list of must-do activities is daunting.

Human security and a certain modicum of survival and dignity in India are maintained through a complex and fragile web of informal networks — many of which are outside the State. They include the rural, semi-urban and densely-populated cities that are serviced by the daily-wage earner, the ragpicker, the dhabas and the neighbourhood kirana shops and chemist to list a few. We are now waiting for day 21 to pass — hopefully with Covid-19 contained. But which exigency will unfold is moot for now.

The worst-case scenario may call for temporary hospitals to house hundreds of thousands of sick citizens while social anxiety spreads. Staying indoors may not be an option for many in India. The situation in European nations, currently struggling to ensure enough coffins for a surge in burials, is a tragic reminder of what may lie ahead in the world’s largest democracy.

India’s internal security is heavily affected by the external stimulus and, with the recent Islamic State terror attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, the imperative of tracking jihadi modules remains a 24*7 task. Furthermore, the Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh on March 23 that killed 17 security personnel points to the spectrum of national security challenges that have to be kept on the policy radar. Mobilising volunteers from every institution to manage the 21-day national curfew and containing mass social disorder is imperative. It may be prudent to direct the armed forces to step in and provide aid to civil power as mandated by the Constitution.

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A man’s value to the community depends primarily on how far his feelings, thoughts and actions are directed towards promoting the good of his fellows.

Albert Einstein

THE HOUR OF DESTINY FOR THE PRINT MEDIA

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The role played by the visual media during the terrorist attack in Mumbai around the Taj Hotel in 2008 was dubious.

This article is written with that backdrop.

Serious concerns have currently been voiced all over India about the mission of the media in a critical situation or while enquiring into some vital matters. The electronic media's conduct, practically unchallenged during the first phase of its much-awaited advent in our country, had come under suspicion before long, thanks to its gross amour for questionable commerce. But the suspicion matured into various degrees of displeasure at its gradual descent into sensationalism. Particularly its action - that was obviously a kind of reflex action - during the Mumbai terrorist attack - practically rang an alarm about the effect of the mechanical spontaneity with which it could function while setting out to cover the scene of a crisis that had far reaching consequences.

This should be an opportune moment for we the people for whom the media exists and by whom it thrives, to also reflect on the role of media as a whole in our life vis-a-vis our role in patronising it. I focus on the print-media. It seems we the people have developed a gargantuan appetite for news. This writer, before he could find any publisher for his creative exercises, had been presented to the readers by journals and magazines like *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Imprint*, among others. Where are they now? Where are the Sunday literary pages in most of the prominent English newspapers? Barring one or two, how many of them carry short stories, poems and belles-lettres? Who will bring a creative writer to the notice of the public today? A plethora of news magazines had swallowed up all the literary journals. Luckily it is still different with papers in non-English languages in India.

Primarily we the readers are to blame, though it may be argued, following the age-old chicken-

first-or-egg-first enigma, whether the print media slowly soiled the readers' taste or it only pampered the readers by dishing out to them the stuff of their choice. The blame obviously must be shared by both. But a vital difference cannot be ignored. It is the Press that is the active party in this relationship; the readers are the passive party.

What is it that altered the posture of the Press? A very serious observation has been made by a veteran member of the fraternity, Hiranmay Karlekar, a former editor of *The Hindustan Times*: "What is happening can only be described as the colonisation of the print media by television. The latter is imposing its culture on the former in the same way colonial powers imposed theirs on the colonised. Even when they do not have supplements, pull-outs and special and regular features relating to television, they are acquiring the latter's orientation towards entertainment in a competitive market whose ethos are increasingly influenced by television. The more serious publications still involve themselves in serious discourse. They too however are changing and, in an environment in which people demand to be continuously entertained and want to avoid thinking, their role as media of critical discourse is liable to be overshadowed by their role as media of entertainment. The minority of readers who are interested in the more serious parts of newspapers like editorials, reflective editorial-page articles, book-reviews and in-depth articles in Sunday magazines, are rapidly becoming fewer in relation to the total readership..... The trend is destined to gain further momentum. As the market economy has society more completely in its grip, people drained by the effort to hold their own in an increasingly competitive environment, are increasingly inclined to seek nothing but entertainment outside working hours." ("The Media Evolution, Role and Responsibilities" in *Looking Back: India in the Twentieth Century* edited by N.N. Vohra and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya)

If this contemptuous situation is true even potentially if not literally, it is crucial that the print media makes a thorough introspection of itself and liberates itself from the witch-hold of the glitzy and illegitimate colonisers.

Education is about how to love, how to live simply, how to free our mind from prejudice superstition and fear.

J. Krishnamurti

What is the character of the latter? Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar defines television viewing as “the Indian drug of choice” and whoever is not addicted to it will find no exaggeration in the definition. It is in vain that we can hope for this upstart prodigal of the media-world to change its approach towards its viewers who are to it nothing more than a gold mine to be exploited. But the readers’ relationship with the print-media, going back to more than a century, had certain sanctity about it. For the masses of the vast Indian readership the printed word is still trustworthy. It can and should continue to be so if the Press takes the state of affairs created by its electronic counterpart as a challenge and stick to its Swadharma, its commitment to sanity and objectivity. It will be cynical to believe that the majority of readers and viewers have lost their taste for matters serious; often they tolerate the superficial, the cheap and even the vulgar, because they cannot do away with their interest in the items that are news - and views they cannot do without knowing.

This is also the moment when a regenerated Press can courageously correct its past errors to become the true alternative to the clout that had usurped much of its territory. No doubt the power of the print media is no longer what it was once upon a time. But it should remember that in the heyday of its undiluted authority it did not always promote the cause of truth. While it performed the role of a great unifier of people in regard to information, once in a while it also unified them in exercising a fatal prejudice championed by it. Take for example the role Joseph Pulitzer’s New York World and William Randolph Hearst’s New York Journal played in 1898 when the US interest in Cuba was greatly hampered by the Spanish rulers of that land. The two papers did their best to excel each other in sensationalising Spanish brutality against both the natives and the Americans settled in Cuba to a degree when a reluctant President, McKinley, was obliged to despatch the battleship Maine to Havana. As an explosion destroyed the ship killing all 266 of its crew, the two papers vied with each other in ‘proving’ that it was the handiwork of a Spanish submarine. It was primarily their assertion which very much suited the mass sentiments of the time that made US declare war with Spain. Hearst sent correspondents and a gifted artist Frederick Remington to report the valiant

war fought by the Cuban patriots against the Spanish. But by the time the team arrived on the spot, there were no visible conflicts to be sketched. Remington wired Hearst, “No war seen. Request to be recalled.” Pat went Hearst’s all-time classic response: “Please remain. You furnish the pictures. I will furnish the war.”

And that is what Hearst did. He even produced a sketch of the submarine showing how it sabotaged the Maine. It was only in 1976 that the US Navy’s research indicated the explosion to have been caused not by any enemy action but by an accident in its magazine store. (The outcome of the uneven war of course was a bonanza for the US. It took over Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.)

If the impact of newspapers had been diluted today, it is not simply because of their rapid proliferation and the emergence of the electronic media, but because of an impression being formed, gradually but steadily, that they do not care for the sense of dignity of their readers and the very fundamental values, not necessarily moralistic ones, that identify a harmony of ideas governing the collective relationship in the society. Here is an illustration of this unfortunate trend in journalism. In September 2006 the administration of a women’s college in Chandigarh prohibited the use of mobile phones during the class hours. This infuriated the young ladies and they at once went on a spree of destruction, smashing flower pots, glass windows and sundry properties of the institution. A TV channel covered their bravado elaborately and focused prominently on the most militant one among them. We wonder how the guardians of the heroine took it. We should expect them to have felt at least embarrassed. But then strikes the irony. The young lady had hardly entered home when telephone from an upcoming Mumbai director informed her that he had chosen her to play the heroine in his large-budget film in the offing!

A big newspaper that had printed the picture of the chaos at the college excitedly informed the readers of this marvellous development. It ‘did so several times under different pretexts, claiming credit for being the first to highlight the event and hurried to inform us that the lady had requested them to thank the TV channel concerned.

Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. Knowledge is inherent in man.

Swami Vivekananda

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY IN ELECTIONS (PRAJA MANIFESTO CAMPAIGN)

(National Election Forum)

Dr. E.A.S. Sarma

Former Secretary to Government of India
Founder-Convener, Better Visakha

Nobody would feel surprised at a film director's strategy to gain a million-rupee publicity complimentary. We are rather pleasantly surprised whenever a sense of social accountability is marked in them, but we are surely disappointed at the newspaper abdicating its unwritten commitment not to glorify rowdiness.

This sort of gross and unabashed credit-hunting is a big loss to the people and the newspapers. The people need a credible media and the TV channels, however alluring or apparently influential, cannot qualify for that honour. The Press needs a readership that trusts it for fulfilling its social responsibility. Indeed, it will be sad if we view this statement of relationship as a truism or platitude. Certain truths do not change. What Henry Wickham Steed, a distinguished editor of *The Times* wrote in 1938 in his classic work on the discipline of journalism entitled *The Press*, and what Lindsay Ross, Director of Commonwealth Press Union said while visiting *The Hindu* office in May 2008, are separated by eventful seven decades, but united in their warning that is of prime importance. Wrote the former, "The underlying principle that governs, or should govern, the Press is that the gathering and selling of news and views is essentially a public trust The same kind of trust is implied in the relationship between a doctor and his patients ... But the dishonest doctor can harm, at worst, only a few dozen or a few score patients, while a dishonest journalist may poison the minds of hundreds or thousands or millions of his fellow men."

And said Ross, "It is absolutely imperative for every journalist to self-analyze and self-reflect on a regular basis ... When you have relative freedom for a long time, it is very easy to fall into the trap of complacency. The most important thing for a journalist is responsibility. Without that we are nothing."

Now is the moment of destiny for the print-media to reassert trust.

Courtesy: *The Indian Express and Uday India.*

(From '*Of Mystics and Miracles and other Essays*')

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This is an experiment we started in 2014. The idea behind this is to change the narrative on elections in a paradigm manner.

We started by setting up the National Election Forum (NEF) at Visakhapatnam a few months prior to the 2014 General Elections. NEF comprises a few concerned NGOs and individuals interested in bringing in basic electoral reform at the grass-root level.

NEF's objective is to enhance accountability of the legislators to their respective constituencies by generating a discussion within each constituency on the problems faced by the people and the kind of assurances that need to be secured in writing from the candidates for resolving those problems. No doubt that a written commitment such as this one may not have any legal value but it can be used to name and shame a candidate, in case he/ she fails to deliver.

Pre-2014 effort:

Our experiment started largely with the residents of the low-income colonies who deliver essential services for the city but are deprived of the basic amenities that a citizen is entitled to.

As a city, Visakhapatnam has grown rapidly over the decades in terms of its population and building activity. Lakhs of workers migrated during the successive decades from the neighbouring districts to build the city and provide its more affluent residents, the auxiliary services they needed. Today, more than 40% of the city's population comprise migrant workers living in sub-saharan conditions, mostly on government lands abutting the railway track, the hill slopes and the other comparatively more inhospitable areas. Their colonies are usually referred to contemptuously as "slums", a euphemism for the low-income colonies that the urban planners of the city had largely ignored in their expensive, undemocratic city planning exercises.

We chase fame, money and position because we feel a lack of power inside,
but without soul knowledge real power will always elude us.

Gary Zukav

To start with, during 2014, NEF visited many of these low-income colonies in and around the city, a few villages in the semi-urban rural areas and a few adivasi regions near AP-Odisha border to mobilise their support for the electoral reform campaign in the following manner.

We started by asking the people whether the legislator elected from the local constituency in the previous election in 2009 had visited the ward/ village at all, if so, how many times. The usual answer to this was in the negative. We asked them whether they had tried meeting the legislator in person for getting their respective problems redressed. Their usual answer was that it was difficult to meet the legislator, surrounded by his/her henchmen and the security personnel. Many said that the legislator's personal staff sometimes visited their locality but they rarely had time to discuss their problems and find solutions. The so-called "people's representatives" with a few exceptions led expensive lifestyles. Many of them were more interested in appropriating land and other public resources wherever they could, as long as they were in a position of authority.

We explained to the people that the government's revenue came from the indirect taxes the people paid on the purchases made by them to meet their daily needs. The legislators' salaries come from the State's revenue. They usually lived in government housing. Their transport is paid from the tax-payers' money. The least that the legislators should do, therefore, is to remain fully accountable to the voters who elected them to the public offices.

We then posed the question: "Don't you think that the elected legislator should report to you frequently to explain what he/ she has done to get your day-to-day problems resolved?" The idea was to trigger a discussion on each colony's specific problems and the need for accountability of the elected representatives to the voters in making efforts to solve those problems.

In the din of any election campaign by the political parties, the voters feel befuddled by the "manifestos" of individual political parties which had no relevance to the voters' day-to-day problems. What the residents of the low-income colonies wanted was to secure ownership rights over the government lands on which their kutcha houses stood, a decent shelter for living, availability of potable water, sanitation,

public health facilities within reach, schooling for their children etc. We posed the question to the residents of each colony: "Who knows your day-to-day problems better- is it you or a contesting candidate coming from outside?" This question usually drew resonance from the low-income communities, who were directly at the receiving end of the problems. The problems (sanitation, drinking water, ownership rights to house sites etc.) faced by the residents of each ward are best known to those living there, not to any outsider.

Usually, the candidates seeking votes at the time of the elections approached them, offering money/ liquor/ saris etc. We encouraged the people to work out how much a payment of, say, one thousand rupees per vote (for election to the State assembly) would imply in terms of its daily equivalent. It works out to less than a rupee per day. Should the voter give away his/ her precious vote without demanding a written assurance on solving his/ her problems? The purpose of raising such a question is to generate a discussion and a debate on the need for the legislator's accountability among the voters in each colony.

Usually, the communities in these colonies are split in terms of their affiliations to one political party or the other. More often than not, the political parties make use of their large numbers to give visibility to their rallies and dharnas, rather than visiting them frequently and solving their problems. When the colony residents held several rounds of discussion on the questions posed to them, they tended to rise above their narrow political affiliations and become better organised to demand from the candidates assurances on specific problems. After all, the concept of a democracy should derive its strength from dissent, discussion and debate. We found that more frequent the rounds of discussion on the above lines was, the greater was the unity evolving among the voters in each colony.

Against this background, we got the residents of the different colonies to gather at one place, interact closely on their problems and make a list of them, along with the possible redressal measures, essentially in the form of a "Manifesto" for that colony. NEF acted as the facilitator in getting them together and helping them prepare their colony manifestos. NEF held several rounds of discussion to familiarise the people with the preparation of workable manifestos.

Both religion and science are expressions of truth that go toward
a fully integrated understanding of the universe.

Ken Wilber

This exercise called for elaborate guidance and effort, as it was comparatively a new ground that we as well as the colony residents were covering.

The process of discussion among the residents of a colony/ village had several advantages. First, it gave them an opportunity to think of the real problems faced by them collectively and consider the kind of practical help they would require. Secondly, the fact that all the colony members/ village residents gathered at one place and interacted, irrespective of the political party to which they were affiliated and irrespective of their caste groupings, helped them to come together and think as an integrated community.

While the manifestos usually differed from colony to colony and village to village, one common requirement would be that, whosoever would seek votes from that colony/ village should give a written undertaking that he/ she would meet them once every three months and report to them on the efforts made in solving their problems. This is, in fact, the most crucial component of the Manifesto. Since it is a manifesto prepared by the people, we called it a “Praja Manifesto”.

Based on our experience, movements such as this one would succeed if the women were at the forefront. The Praja Manifesto campaign therefore emphasised the necessity of involving the women members of each colony.

Ambedkar Nagar: A case study

The residents of a colony, Ambedkar Nagar, mostly women, achieved some success in preparing their Manifesto and demanding that the candidates affix their signatures to it.

One candidate, a former legislator whose electioneering approach was usually anything but civilised, tried to offer the voters in the colony money/ liquor as usual and thought that it would be a cakewalk in securing their support. However, he was upset when the women demanded that he should sign the Manifesto. He said that he never gave anyone in his constituency a written undertaking and expressed anger at the idea of a manifesto. He went to the extent of threatening them by using intimidating language and saying that he would make them pay a price for their arrogance, once he comes back to power. The

women who were prepared for it recorded his threats on their mobiles and re-played the same to the District Collector who responded quickly and requested the senior officers to visit the colony and reassure the residents that no one could threaten them. Criminal cases were filed against the candidate who eventually lost the election.

One important tool that was used by the colony residents was to tell the contesting candidates that, if they failed to sign the Praja Manifesto, the voters would not hesitate to exercise the option of Nota (“None of the Above” option to reject all candidates), a golden opportunity provided by the apex court in one of its landmark judgements on electoral reform.

The women leaders of Ambedkar Nagar have since become a mascot for our Praja Manifesto campaign, as they tasted some success and are in a position to help the voters in the other constituencies. Subsequent to 2014 elections, we witnessed a healthy growth of leadership among the women of this colony who, on their own, have been able to secure solutions to many of their problems. In several other colonies too, where this Praja Manifesto idea had been tried out, many women leaders have emerged, who are not interested in contesting elections but are more anxious to secure accountability from the contesting candidates.

Electoral reform, in our view, should start at the foundational level like this.

2019 Elections:

The idea of a Praja Manifesto has taken a firm root among the low-income colonies in the city. The contesting candidates are not usually prepared to affix their signatures to any written commitment, as they have always thrived on false promises and electoral corruption. But, when they visited the colonies of the kind discussed here, they faced considerable pressure from the residents to sign the colony-wise Praja Manifestos. In several cases, as a result of the reluctance on the part of the contesting candidates to sign the Manifestos, the voters per force exercised the NOTA option. This should not discourage us, as this concept of securing accountability from the candidates will surely evolve into something much more long lasting.

One important aspect of this is that, in the case of an election to an assembly constituency, the margin of a win or a loss may be confined to a few hundreds of votes. If a colony has those numbers, it can leverage the election to their advantage. The colony residents have understood this clearly and therefore they have gained self-confidence in their ability to influence the elections to some extent.

One interesting development during the 2019 election was a Praja Manifesto prepared by the homeless voters in the city's shelters. Such shelters came into existence as a result of yet another landmark judgement of the apex court. The NGO looking after a few shelters in the city strived hard to secure voter identification cards for each resident of these shelters. At the time of the 2019 elections, the number of the shelter voters was around 160. They prepared a Manifesto of their own and demanded that whosoever sought their votes should affix his/her signature on their "Shelter Manifesto" prepared on a stamped paper! To our pleasant surprise, one contesting candidate did come forward and signed on the stamped Shelter Manifesto. Irrespective of the result of the election, this process in itself has generated a belief in the concept of a participative democracy.

GVMC Elections 2020:

We held meetings of the representatives of the low-income colonies at one place during January 2020 as a prelude to the coming GVMC elections. These meetings were not only for the individual colonies coming together but also for specific groups of workers such as construction workers, street vendors and so on, who are entitled to social security benefits under their respective legislations but have been deprived of the same. It was heartening to find that most of these meetings were anchored and conducted by the residents/ workers themselves with minimal support from the NGOs.

During the last week of January, 2020, we held elaborate sessions at each of the three clusters of the colonies, discussed what items their manifestos for the GVMC elections should contain, based on their colony-wise problems and the manner in which they should operationalise those manifestos by asking the corporator-contestants to sign on stamped manifesto

documents. During these meetings, there was unprecedented enthusiasm among those present, with the colony women participating in large numbers. In some cases, we had to personally visit some far-flung colonies to understand their problems first-hand and help them in formulating their respective manifestos.

To our surprise, we came across a colony of Yerukulas, an adivasi community from Nellore, who had migrated to Vizag a decade ago, in search of livelihoods. In a way, in addition to preparing the manifestos, this exercise has also helped us in seeking immediate help from the concerned officers to redress the problems of such colonies independent of the electoral process.

Conclusion:

Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the third President of the United States (1801–1809) rightly observed:

"When the people fear the government, there is tyranny. When the government fears the people, there is liberty."

A time has come when we should no longer settle for an electoral system which subjugates the voter to the elected elite. This narrative should necessarily change. The voter is as important as the elected legislator, who should feel answerable to the voter through out the five-year term during which he/she holds the public office.

The Praja Manifesto idea, in my view, is a humble beginning to bringing about a fundamental attitudinal change among the voters. For more than seven decades, we have witnessed how the electoral processes are becoming more and more expensive, more and more corrupt and more and more driven by the self-interest of the political parties and their mafia cohorts than the interests of the people at large. This is a toxic trend that is progressively eroding the public trust in governance based on a democratic system. We cannot afford to allow this trend to continue unchecked.

Unless the members of the Panchayats, the corporators in the municipalities, the legislators in the State Assemblies and the members of the Parliament

Mahatma Gandhi has raised up three hundred millions of his fellow men, shaken the British Empire and inaugurated in human politics the most powerful movement that the world has seen for nearly two thousand years.

Romain Rolland

feel that they cannot afford to ignore the interests of the voters who have elected them, we cannot call ourselves a democracy.

We sincerely hope that the Praja Manifesto idea will catch up and spread like a wild fire to cleanse the electoral process throughout the country.

* * *

A MODERN MAHARAJA - I

Dr.R.V. Vaidyanatha Ayyar, I.A.S.(Retd)

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Prof. IIM, Bengaluru

[Scindia is much in the news. In this article I narrate my stint with Madhavrao Scindia.]

On X-mas eve 1994, Arjun Singh threw a surprise on the nation by changing his tactics in his duel with the Prime Minister P.V.Narasimha Rao (PV). Ever since the duel began, he practiced calculated brinkmanship discomfiting PV on every possible occasion shooting off censorious letters and releasing them to the press, and voicing spicy comments in the media. He perhaps expected PV to overreact by throwing him out of the Cabinet so that he could openly rally the opposition to PV within the Congress Party. But then he was up against a Great Master in jujutsu who preferred subtly manipulating the opponent's force against himself rather than confronting it with one's own force. So much so, the brilliant manoeuvrings of Arjun Singh came to naught, a fact evocatively captured by a Telugu newspaper which labelled him Uttara Kumara, a play on the word 'Uttara'; he was a past master in hurling 'uttaras' (letters), and was also Uttara Kumara of Mahabharata who boasted of his prowess as a warrior only to panic in the battlefield. On the X-mas eve of 1994, he did not tarry to remain in office after hurling his letter bomb- a long litany of commissions and omissions of PV. With his resignation from the Council of Ministers, his helmsmanship of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) came to a sudden end; he was to return in 2004 but by then I was no longer in Government.

About a month later, Madhavrao Scindia became the Minister, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Scindia's entry in the Ministry was like a powerful current of fresh air; for

a politician he was young, just fifty years, and had all the élan of youth. He was an exotic blend of feudalism and modernity. He was proud of his royal lineage and wealth, and never allowed others to be oblivious of that fact. I remember him not for his foibles which no human being can be free of but for his sterling qualities such as modernity, a managerial approach, strong result orientation and determination to leave a mark on everything he touched, his generosity of heart, charming manners and social graces. He was cast in the mould of Maharajas who modernised their States. Even while being a Maharaja, he was an archetypal public school boy as well as one of the countless Oxford graduates who distinguished themselves in public life. He would vacation in England every year like Maharajas of yesteryears and the earlier generations of the England-educated in England, including Jyoti Basu about whom wits had it that he would make an annual pilgrimage to the tomb of Marx in the Highgate Cemetery, London. In the very first meeting he had with the officers of the Ministry, it came out that he was extremely self-assured and would be in command exercising power as if to the manner born. Men in power have a demonic energy and wear out their servants, an example being provided by Napoleon's Russian campaign. Despite his ailments Napoleon had in him a fund of energy that never failed him till Moscow burned. He used to say that an appointment to serve him was almost a sentence to slow death. Scindia was no different; he worked long hours and used to joke that the way his aides had to work with him they would grey fast.

Before arriving in MHRD he had been Minister of Railways and Minister of Civil Aviation, acquiring reputation as a great reformer impatient with conventional way of doing things ; in his ministerial career he aimed at a niche, not that of a mass politician but of one who was a result oriented Chief Executive of the Ministry he headed. Being a Railway Minister was a defining experience for him. Not many know that professional management of today is a product of the late 19th century Golden Age of Railways in the United States. The steam engine made possible all-weather transportation at speeds hitherto unimaginable; however, safe, regular, reliable movement of goods and passengers across the length and breadth of a continental nation required the creation of a sizeable administrative

Let there be moderation in speech and writing. Let us face the future not with easy optimism but with confidence and a firm faith in India.

Jawaharlal Nehru

organisation and development of new management techniques. The railroad men who organised the railway enterprises became the first group of modern business administrators in the United States. The cooperation required by the railway managers to integrate the largest network in the world stimulated a sense of professionalism among them. Professional organisations grew up to serve as forums where the middle level managers could meet to discuss common professional problems. As in the United States in India also the railways were seedbeds of professional management; when after Independence many public sector undertakings were set up the Government turned to the Indian Railways for providing the managers needed for those undertakings. The communication system of the Railways was the best in the country and in meetings held in the Cabinet Secretariat to coordinate the movement of coal from the mines to steel industry and other users, the Railway Ministry would always worst its critics as it was equipped with almost real time information on every wagon which was carrying coal while the information of its critics was outdated. No wonder that the current computerised railway reservation system is one of the best service sites in the country.

The managerial approach of Scindia came out in his very first meeting with the officials of the Ministry. He was extremely conscious of time management, not allowing each of the four Departments in his charge to exceed the time he allocated to them, and abruptly cutting off any officer who he thought was waffling. When S.Y. Quereshi of the Department of Sports and Youth – later Chief Election Commissioner- spoke about the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial being built at Sriperumbdur, Scindia wanted him to provide him with a PERT chart so that he could monitor progress the way Railway Board monitored the construction of a railway line or a coach factory. Scindia spoke of quarterly reviews to assess the performance of different Bureaus in each Department; he wanted to spur competition among the Bureaus. He wanted the flow of information to be speeded up by setting up a computerised management information system. As the performance of Department of Education was very much dependent on the performance of States, he wanted to know what could be done to arm-twist the States and compel them to perform better. He fell back on the analogy of railways which used ‘goodies’ such as wagon allotment as incentives; he desired

that plan funds to States should similarly be used as goodies to reward better performing States and punish laggards. He wanted more scope for private initiative, particularly in higher education. MNCs should be encouraged to come in. He wanted synergy between different programmes to be harnessed. We must be clear of what we can do, he asserted. He concluded the meeting by saying ‘Gentlemen, no bureaucratisation please. Notes, if any shouldn’t be bureaucratic’. From the each of the four departments in his charge, he wanted notes on computerised MIS, parameters for the quarterly reviews which he wished to have, and harnessing private initiative, and a Northeast plan. When Arjun Singh was at the helm, it was rare for press briefs being issued when he reviewed the programmes of his Ministry; he harnessed media mainly for advancing his political interests thereby providing a handle to his critics to criticise him for neglecting the business of steering his Ministry and its programmes. In contrast, for Scindia media was a vehicle to project his image as a reformer and moderniser. No wonder the media extensively covered his maiden meeting with his officials and his agenda for change. An editorial in the Times of India highlighted his views such as lower investment on education as compared to East Asian countries and the need to ‘work towards de-bureaucratisation of policy planning and implementation.’ He was quoted as saying that ‘the stranglehold that politicians and civil servants, both the high and mighty of the IAS and the lowly clerks of innumerable institutions at the Central and State levels, have acquired on the education system is stifling creativity’. It also noted that he would have more time for the job at hand than his predecessor. Scindia’s fascination with gadgets came out soon. He managed his appointments on a laptop and got an ultra-modern intercom system and chic ergonomic office furniture be installed in his office. Scindia was overkeen to show off that he was in total command; his senior major-domo, an IAS officer from MP cadre who worked mostly in the Gwalior Division, -worked overtime to project Scindia’s image so much so that while Arjun Singh’s office was a power base from which he expanded his influence, Scindia’s was a theater to show to the world what a smart kid Madhavrao Scindia was.

(To be concluded)

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The chief mark of federalism lies in the partition of the legislative and executive authority between the Centre and the Units by the Constitution. This is the principle embodied in our Constitution.

B.R. Ambedkar

CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRACY: 70 YEARS OF INDIA'S EXPERIENCE - I

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(Two day National Conference on the Constitution and Democracy: 70 Years of Indian Experience on 26 and 27 November 2019 at Kasargod, Kerala, organised as the part of the Constitution Day Celebration by the Department of International Relations and Politics, Department of Public Administration and Public Studies, Central University of Kerala)

The famous French general and statesman Napoleon Bonaparte had an argument with his advisor Talleyrand on what a constitution should be like. Napoleon's view was that it should be short and precise. Talleyrand said "No Sir, it should be long and flexible".

The makers of our Constitution seem to have taken the advice of Talleyrand seriously. Our experience in the last seventy years reflects the political correctness of the view.

The constitution of modern democracies like the U.S and France confirm that a constitution is not simply a legal document but also a political manifesto which contains compromises and contradictions. The textual theory and the practical necessities together determine the functioning of the constitution. To cite just one example: both U.S and French Constitutions contemplate a parliamentary/congressional system of government and yet gave way to a presidential model of government because of the historic fact that a great figure happened to be elected the President of the Country, Gen George Washington in the U.S and Gen Charles De Gaulle in France. In India if Pandit Nehru were to be the President and an ordinary politician the Prime Minister, our Constitution, too, would have worked out the Presidential way without a change of any provision in the Constitution!

Coming to the elements of contradictions and compromises one can cite competitive claims in the India Constitution:

- Fundamental rights and restriction on them

- Fundamental rights and state directive principles
- Parliamentary supremacy and judicial supremacy
- President and Prime Minister
- Central and State government

America's federal and judicial characters, and British Parliamentary and unitary characteristics :

It is a tribute to the statesmanship of the past Prime ministers, Presidents, Chief Ministers and Judges of the higher judiciary that our constitution had mostly a smooth run so far. Now and then we have experienced a few hiccups. We have grown wiser with experience, no doubt. Yet, there is room for improvement. Democratic spirit and constitutional morality have to be nurtured continuously if the system has to bear fruit as Sri Pranab Mukherjee a former President, observed a few months ago.

If the twin fundamentals of democratic spirit and constitutional morality have to be put in a nutshell, it may be that all the people of India should have freedom and equality with a sense of justice; political stability and economic development should be achieved along with national unity and security. Democracy and constitution should be able to feed one another. The process is long and complicated. In the light of experience gained so far, one may suggest a host of measures to avoid malevolent developments. A few novel features may also be mooted.

Supreme Court: The present day Supreme Court has come to gather power and significance which it did not have until 1980s. There are multiple reasons for this new development. A doubt arises that in the coming days it may be burdened with even more heavy load of work, and the institution may assume the role of an arbiter in all the spheres of the state activity, be it political, constitutional, economic, environmental, educational, administrative and even religious. The judicial system should not collapse under its own weight. Some urgent reforms apart, a new suggestion may be made to lessen its burden on deciding the constitutionality of an increasing number of legislative and executive decisions. In France the Supreme judicial body there does not have the jurisdiction of examining any parliamentary act and declaring it unconstitutional. This important job is entrusted to 'State Council'. Its views are sought by the French Parliament before an Act is passed or dropped. Thereafter, it cannot be questioned

Our opportunities are great but let me warn you that when power outstrips ability, we will fall on evil days. We should develop competence and ability which would help us to utilize the opportunities which are now open to us.

S. Radhakrishnan

anywhere. If this is followed in India the Supreme Court would be relieved of a huge task. The apex court could concentrate on other issues arising from the original and the appellate jurisdictions.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar when asked what, according to him, was the most important provision of the Constitution, said “Article 14” without hesitation. Though true to a great extent, this provision seems to be at odds with ruling of the judiciary that “bail is a rule where jail is an exception”. This statement almost negates the most valuable promise made by the constitution because tens of lakhs of poor and helpless people are awaiting in jails a fair and prompt trial for their supposed ‘crimes’ for several years – sometimes for 20 or 25 years – while some of the powerful, rich and influential people like former or existing Chief Ministers (Lalu Prasad, Jayalalithaa), ministers (Chidambaram), politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, film actors and others could arrange for quick or delayed trial as per their wish. Important judicial reforms suggested by several committees are yet to be taken up for consideration by the Parliament and the Executive. In the meanwhile ‘equality before law’ is applauded by the Constitutional pundits.

Parliament: There is no common ground between Britain and India in matter of polity, economy, society and national character. In spite of this, the British ‘parliamentary democracy’ seems to have been lifted and planted in India. The calibre of the voters and the capability of the candidates in the electoral fray in the two countries differ vastly. Yet the transplanted system is supposed to work equally well here. Not only this, the ‘Parliamentary procedure’ which guides the working of the legislative system, also appears to be near identical in both the countries. Perhaps in UK the procedure undergoes changes as per the changed circumstances but in India this colonial hangover continues unabated. A few glaring out-of-date practices:

- Stages of consideration of a Bill.
- Speaker’s election, privileges and powers
- Budget- making and presentation (secrecy, date of commencement etc)
- Privileges of the House\ Members
- Discipline in and productivity of the House’s deliberations
- The Committee System

It would be worthwhile to look at how the legislature in the U.S functions, for a change. The

Committee-system followed in the U.K and U.S differs vastly in the purpose, method and efficiency. In the U.S the Senate Committees for example on foreign affairs and defence issues are working phenomenally well. But we are following a non-descript system here.

Executive: Although not specifically stated anywhere in the Constitution, it is generally believed that the Constitution of India envisages a parliamentary system of governance as in the U.K. It has worked on this basis for the past seventy years. Norms, decorum and level of deliberations in the parliaments of the two countries differ so widely that it would be futile to say we work on the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. No minister here resigns when allegations of corruption, misconduct or impropriety are levelled against him. He would mostly react by saying these allegations are part of conspiracy hatched by the opponents to make him resign. MPs and MLAs express no remorse for their misconduct inside the House during the proceedings. Many of them are found busy elsewhere and take little or no interest in the Parliamentary work.

Council of Ministers is the most significant component of the Parliamentary system. Headed by the Prime Minister, it is the supreme executive arm of the state. In India it possesses no particular shape or size. Its composition does not necessarily reflect either merit or suitability, but only indicates that geographic, gender, caste, religion and special interests are taken into account. These considerations per se not bad, but indeed part of democratic forces. However, what worries is the fact that, in some cases a too flexible or too unwieldy Council is formed. In the Union Cabinet, Ministers / Ministries are found to be in charge of the State subjects like agriculture, forestry, drinking water, road transport etc. Once, there were three cabinet Ministers in the Central Government who dealt with Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Dry-land Development! In the state of Uttar Pradesh, there were three Ministers for electricity: one for its production, another for its distribution and the third for its consumption affairs! Education is handled by several Ministries- Higher, Middle and Primary, Technical, Sports and Culture, Engineering, Medical, Agriculture, Law, Vocational and others.

(To be concluded)

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We are leaving to the politicians, to the State and to the Government the main task of building up this country and of changing it. It is there that we go wrong.

Jayaprakash Narayan

REMEMBERING INDIA'S MOST POWERFUL LEADER

Dr. Uday Balakrishnan

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Chairman Investment Board

India is the world's largest democracy. It is raucous and at times chaotic, but the world knows very little about what makes a fifth of all mankind come together and stay together. People in the West know more about Ho Chi Min and Mao than about any Indian leader except perhaps Mahatma Gandhi. This essay introduces one of the greatest Indians of the 20th Century, who deserves to be better known in the rest of the world. Born in November 1917, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her security Guards in October 1984.

Pugnacious, ruthless and shrewd, Indira Gandhi was without a doubt the most powerful leader India has ever had since independence. Globally she remains the only third-world leader who stood up to American pressure – tellingly in 1971-and got away with it.

Her unorthodox education at home, in school and college in India, including stints in Shantiniketan, Switzerland, and Oxford conditioned Indira's national and international outlook. She grew up in the fierce churn of the freedom movement giving her a deep understanding of India.

Her international outlook as well as the vague socialism she practiced – amongst other things leading her to nationalize banks, doing away with privy purses and amending the Indian constitution to explicitly cast India as a socialist, secular republic – came from imbibing the liberal spirit of her times and those that her father fostered in her.

Her years as Jawaharlal Nehru's confidante and official hostess through his Prime Ministership developed in Indira, even more than in Nehru himself, a profound understanding of the complex mix of social and ideological forces driving free India.

Those within the Indian National Congress who elevated her to Prime Ministership, believing they had a novice who could be easily manipulated and controlled, realized much too late how well equipped

she was for the job and how ruthless she could be. It is hardly surprising then, that she could easily navigate treacherous political waters to continue as India's Prime Minister longer than anyone else except her father, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Indira Gandhi did not inherit her position but earned it through sharp political maneuvering that split the Congress party, ensuring that the breakaway wing she led became the successor to the one that was founded in 1885.

Indira Gandhi did not get an easy country to administer. At the time of her takeover as Prime Minister in 1966, India was less than 20 years into freedom, still raw from a partition that had devastated much of its northern and eastern parts. Pakistan and China were menacing again. The internal threats it faced, made India look very fragile indeed. She tackled them all with ruthless resolution. Long-running insurgencies in the country's North East in Mizoram and Nagaland were tackled with uncharacteristic toughness.

The only instance where the Indian Air Force was used in an internal conflict was when it was used to bomb Aizwal in early 1966 soon after she took over as Prime Minister. Within a year into her Prime Ministership, violent Maoism had reared its head for the first time in Naxalbari and was crushed.

Ever a pragmatist and conscious of India's diversities, Indira Gandhi could be flexible when she knew she had to be. A classic instance is how she diffused the anti-Hindi agitation in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu with understanding, by accepting that usage of English will continue.

Rampant poverty coupled with a rapidly growing population and mass illiteracy made a bad situation on the food front terrible at the time of her taking over as Prime Minister. Two successive monsoon failures in 1965 and 1966 had laid India low, leaving it dependent on imports to feed its people. The US, which stepped in to ease the shortage and stabilize food prices, kept India on a short leash.

It's a tribute to Indira Gandhi's sagacity in the midst of a political churn that she could take a long-term view of things. Her determined pursuit of an on-going objective to make India self-sufficient in food

Perhaps, the most impressive part of India's ambitious economic reform programme is the smoothness with which the transition from a closed, protected economy to an open export-oriented economy has occurred.

P.V. Narasimha Rao

grains saw dependence on imports plummet from 10 million tons in 1966 to 2 million in 1971 and almost nil thereafter.

Indira Gandhi recognized competence, accommodated and rewarded it very well giving it the freedom to carry on. When Satish Dhawan took over as the head of Indian Space Research Organisation, she allowed him to continue as Director of the Indian Institute of Science. Both flourished.

The likes of MS Swaminathan and Varghese Kurian were given the freedom and the time to unfold the green and white revolutions in India. When she saw the need for a dedicated external spy agency Indira brought in an extraordinary police officer, RN Kaw and gave him the freedom to develop one.

Indira Gandhi was a true visionary foreseeing the rising importance of space research as well as a scientific base in Antarctica. In both areas she thought big and put India alongside the most developed nations of the world.

Along with the Communist states of the world especially the former USSR, she was on the right side of history, supporting the North Vietnamese against the Americans, denouncing western imperialism in Africa and Asia and standing by Cuba.

Like other Indians, Indira too was crushed by the 1962 Chinese victory in its border war with us. Under her leadership, the Indian army recovered some of its lost pride by unexpectedly besting the Chinese in a little-known bloody border conflict in 1967.

Although she was passionate about non-alignment, it did not come in the way of concluding a Treaty of Friendship with the former USSR, and reequipping the armed forces with Russian help. Both proved their worth in the 1971 war to liberate Bangladesh. However there were some blunders too, for which India is, even now, paying the price.

While the 1971 war with Pakistan saw her at her best, she made a hash of the peace that followed. The Shimla Agreement she arrived at with Bhutto, let Pakistan off the hook, making the rump state, which had just perpetrated a genocide look honorable. Eventually this led to Pakistan going nuclear, fulfilling a vow that Bhutto had made that he'd do everything to get the Bomb.

By repatriating the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war (POWs) in Indian custody to Pakistan, Indira Gandhi ensured that not even one was tried for the genocide committed in, what was then, East Pakistan. One wonders if the Pakistan army would ever have returned to a dominant role in the governance of Pakistan, had that not happened.

Contrary to popular belief the 21 month long Emergency she declared in June 1975 was not her worst mistake. Rather it was the excesses that she allowed her son, Sanjay Gandhi, to commit during that period that bordered on criminal. These included mass forced sterilization and the heartless demolitions of places where the poor lived – Turkman Gate being a case in point- that made the Emergency a nightmare. She paid the price for her blunder and was elected out of office in 1977 only to come back as Prime Minister in 1980.

Indira Gandhi's worst failure was to emasculate a great political party and make it so subservient and beholden to her. She achieved this by blatantly promoting her mediocre sons, first Sanjay Gandhi who became the face of the emergency and the author of practically all the things it came to be notoriously associated with – the forced sterilizations and the destruction of the homes of the poor and the marginalized, best exemplified at Turkman Gate in Delhi.

When he died in a plane crash, she brought in her other son, Rajiv Gandhi who blew the massive sympathy-mandate he got through an ill-advised armed intervention in Sri Lanka, a dangerous game of playing to worst elements in the Hindu and Muslim communities and topping it all with a humongous arms scandal that finally brought his government down. The Congress party, thereafter, has remained a family enterprise leaving a once grand party as a personal fiefdom of one family ever since. By the time Indira Gandhi fell to an assassin's bullets on 24th October 1984, India was a very different country from the one she had taken over. It was more integrated as a nation than ever before. A distinct Indian identity emerged under her long administration. For that, India will remember her, along with her father Jawaharlal Nehru, as one of its greatest leaders.

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Power is always held upon the condition that its possessors are able to confer increasing material well being upon the masses.

Harold J. Laski

NANDINI: INCARNATE DIVINITY

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

She is the source of the glory and good in Indian civilization. Gentle, life-giving, life-sustaining, holy: a friend of everyone, particularly the self-effacing housewife in India. More than seventy-five years ago when I was being brought up by my grandparents in a tiny village on the banks of Tambraparni, the most precious area at home was the cowpen at the back. It was a poor, rural household and my grandmother herself looked after the cow Lakshmi and its calf Mrinalini. They were very much part of the household and it was a fascinating time for me to watch my grandmother milk the cow, after allowing the calf to have its fill. Sometimes I would even get a small cup of the fresh, still warm milk which tasted very sweet and I believed my grandmother when she told me that the heavenly nectar (amrita) tasted exactly like this. It never occurred to me to doubt the ancient lady; and so she fed me not only with this fresh milk but plenty of mythologies referring to the cow and why it is sacred to us, even as I trailed behind her as she swept the cowpen, gathered the dung, mixed bran and water for the cow and then allowed it to go out to graze with the cowherd. My Tamil nursery rhymes had a lovely one about the cow too:

“The cow grazes in the garden;
The calf leaps around;
The cow is licking its calf;
The calf is drinking from the udder.”

Much later, when I took up Sri Aurobindo's Savitri for my doctoral research, I entered the tremendous world of Vedic symbols where the cow had a prime place. The cows formed the visible wealth of the Vedic Age. “The image of the Cow is the most important of all the Vedic symbols. For the ritualist the word gau means simply a physical cow and nothing else”, says Sri Aurobindo and then proceeds to fix the symbolic significance of the cow. As the cow is constantly associated with Dawn and the Sun and appears in the Angirasa legends, it would mean the rays of the sun, the Light that streams from the sun. The cows (rays) get lost and are recovered repeatedly, according to Vedic hymns. Dawn is referred to as gomati (radiant) and that she yokes cows to her chariot yunktegavamarunanamanikam (her host of the ruddy rays); the Ashwins drive on gomadhiranyavad (the

path of golden light). Sri Aurobindo produces several such instances and concludes:

“Therefore it is established beyond question that the cows of the Veda, the cows of the Panis, the cows which are stolen, fought for, pursued, recovered, the cows which are desired by the Rishis, the cows which are won by the hymn and the sacrifice, by the blazing fire and the god-increasing verse and the god-intoxicating Soma, are symbolic cows, are the cows of Light, are in the other and inner Vedic sense of the words, go, usra, usriya, the shining ones, the radiances, the herds of the Sun, the luminous forms of the Dawn.”

The radiant Vedic beginning for the cow has remained unblemished down the millennia in the Indian consciousness. The person who harms a cow can never escape retribution, such is the crystalline faith of the Indian. The heavenly cow, Kamadhenu leads the way. The opening chords of Valmiki's Ramayana deal with Viswamitra's avarice to get control of Vasishtha's Kamadhenu till he realises that his kshatra-tej (physical strength) is next to nothing against Vasishtha's brahma-tej (spiritual strength). The tale is very familiar. Not so familiar is the beautiful image of Kamadhenu's daughter Nandini in the history of Ikshvaku dynasty. Kalidasa lavishes the finest ranges of his poetic imagination on Nandini, in his Raghuvamsa.

King Dileepa had committed unknowingly a minor sin. Once when he was returning from Indra's court through the Kalpaka gardens where Kamadhenu was resting, he did not go past as pradakshina. Kamadhenu reacted immediately: “Unless you atone by worshipping my child, you will not become a father”. Dileepa did not hear the words as the heavenly Ganges was rushing by making a big noise. Vasishtha reveals this to Dileepa and asks him to look after Kamadhenu's daughter Nandini for a while. Which Dileepa and his wife Sudhakshina do with great sincerity and love, taking the cow to graze and guarding it from danger. In the course of this happening we are told by Kalidasa the many ways in which Indians held the cow holy. Even the dust raised by the hoofs of a cow has the power to purify mortal beings! After Sudhakshina worshipped Nandini and Nandini's calf had its fill, Dileepa would himself take the cow to graze in the forest. He would not take any servants, as he was particular that he should be Nandini's personal bodyguard.

One quality which is sure to be found in a great work of cinema is the revelation of large truths in small details. The world reflected in a dew drop will serve as a metaphor for this quality.

Satyajit Ray

Kalidasa unveils a soulful scenario in the forest with the great hero and the cow mid the flora and fauna. Mother Nature is at her best now but then, Nature is also red in tooth and claw! On the 22nd day, as if from nowhere, a lion leapt upon the cow. But Dileepa was unable to move his hand when he sought to shoot an arrow at the lion. Also, the lion spoke in a human voice that it was Kumbodhara, an attendant of Shiva and had the right to kill animals for its food. Realising his helplessness, Dileepa spoke humbly that he was duty bound to protect the cow. Since Kumbodhara's aim was only food, it ought to let go Nandini and eat Dileepa instead. The argument between Dileepa and Kumbodhara has a stately tread, showing us how subtle is the way of Dharma. Kumbodhara finally agrees to take Dileepa instead and even as the king bowed in readiness, there was a shower of flowers from the heavens and a voice calling out, "My son, get up."

It was Nandini who spoke. The lion was nowhere to be seen. Nandini assured the king that it was so well protected that even Yama could not harm its body, and the illusion of a lion was created to test the king's sincerity. The king's reverence for Vasishtha (guru-bhakti) and compassion were revealed by this incident. Presently Dileepa and Sudhakshina saluted Nandini and Vasishtha and took their leave. Within a year Raghu was born, Raghu the matchless hero who raised the fame of the Ikshvaku dynasty to unprecedented heights.

Stealing herds of cow (go-grahana) was a familiar method of instigating wars in ancient days. In fact, it was Duryodhana's stealing the herds of Virata land that brought Arjuna into the open at the conclusion of thevana-vaasa of the Pandavas. By choosing Gokula as his residence, the Krishna incarnation raised the status of the cowherd clan no end. The Tamil hymnologist Perialwar (7th century) sings ecstatically of the way the cows remained mesmerized when Krishna played the flute in Brindavan. Krishna holding the flute to his lips with a cow licking his foot is a favourite icon for the temple sculptor, an image that never fails to charm us. Like many ingredients of Sanatana Dharma such as the Tulasi and the Savitri legend, the cow has also endured blemishless, without losing any of its spiritual content and holiness. For instance, the cow has been adroitly linked to the flag of Ahimsa unfurled by Mahatma Gandhi during quit India in

an unforgettable short story by Raja Rao. Written in English, 'The Cow of the Barricades' (1938) presents a symbol of Bharata Mata in the cow.

The British government unleashes terror on the people of a small town during the non-co-operation movement. The Gandhian Master who leads the Movement in the town pleads for patience and non-violence, but the restive labourers erect barricades against the soldiers so that they will not be able to enter the factories. One can feel violence in the air as the soldiers and workers get ready for a confrontation. It is then that the cow revered in the town appears:

"There she was, Gauri, striding out of the Oil Lane and turning round Copper Seenayya's house towards the Suryanarayana Street, her head held gently bent and her ears pressed back like plaits of hair, and staggering like one going to the temple with fruits and flowers to offer to the Goddess."

The cow goes up the barricades and seeing her the workers lay down their arms and the soldiers too recognise her as the symbol of Peace. A transformation comes upon them too and there is the tragic climax which is nevertheless bound with the holiness of peace.

"But when they (the soldiers) saw the cow and its looks and the tear, clear as a drop of the Ganges, they shouted out, 'Victory to the Mahatma! Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!' and joined up with the crowd. But their chief, the red man, saw this and fired a shot. It went through Gauri's head, and she fell a vehicle of God among lowly men."

The mother had saved her sons and peace comes to the town and they erect a metal statue of Gauri with reverence.

"And never have our carpenters had gayer times than since Gauri died, for our children do not want their basawanna-bulls but only ask for Gauris. And to this day hawkers cry them about at the railway station, chanting 'Gauris of Gorakhpur! Polished, varnished and on four wheels!' and many a child from the far Himalayas to the seas of the South pulls them through the dusty streets of Hindusthan."

The cow Lakshmi who was with Ramana Maharishi has also been a presence in our consciousness. Considered the reincarnation of an old lady who had sustained the boy Ramana

Quote : History would be an excellent thing, if it were only true.

Leo Tolstoy

in his early days of stay in Tiruvannamalai, Lakshmi withdrew from her physical body in 1948. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, deeply affected by the news has written a crystalline poetic homage to her memory which concludes:

“May we evermore
Learn from sweet Lakshmi to salute thy Light,
To bend in self-surrender and adore
Thy Presence reigning on the starry height
Piercing the darks of sightless human sight.
Give us the Grace, like her, to see
Beyond the human form, thy Majesty
Enveloping the universe. Like her
Make each of us a true interpreter
Of spirit-radiance ...”

The milk and ghee of the cow have a very important place in Ayurveda as well. Blessed is our land where all of creation is thus shot through with divinity!

* * *

REVISIONING AMERICA: THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN STUDIES-II

Prof. Sachidananda Mohanty

Member, Governing Board, Auroville Foundation,
MHRD, Govt. of India,
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Shakespeare at Harvard

While Professor Gupta may be right in a certain sense, it has to be admitted that the knowledge-power nexus underlies much of the trajectory of the discipline from the World War II to the formation of the United States Information Service (USIS) during the administration of President Eisenhower. Myopic program administrators often look at the issue in narrow terms and raise the question of ‘American tax payers’ money’ while deciding the question of candidates’ desire for higher study in America. The late Professor S. Nagarajan, the doyen of English literary studies in India, faced this question squarely while appearing for a Fulbright Award in America in 1957 on the basis of an application for research on

Shakespeare. Nagarajan was successful in his second attempt, and had a commendable stint at Harvard. He asks rightly in an essay: ‘Shakespeare at Harvard’: ‘What do they know of America who only American Literature know?’

‘Serviceable to our Needs’

In what precise manner could we make American Studies ‘serviceable to our needs’, a question relevant to the present? ‘We are living at a time,’ Prof. Gupta says aptly, ‘when it has become vitally important for nations and cultures to know, study, and become familiar with other nations and cultures, and in this context American Studies, like other area studies, deserve a significant place in our programs of study and research.... Finally... study and research in American Studies can impart training of the mind which can be profitably used in study and research in other areas also.’ The last has been true of many of us who have been exposed to cutting edge research through American Studies and have embraced research in other areas such as the gender, regional and postcolonial studies.

Despite the truth of what R.K. Gupta says, it must be admitted that the biggest bane of the discipline of American Studies in India, is a disproportionate reliance on the American patronage, and funding. With globalization and the rise of the unipolar world, it is of utmost importance to safeguard national sovereignty in the field of culture, economy and polity. While Indian Studies, and Centers of South Asian Studies proliferate in the U.S. for understanding Indian society and culture, the same cannot be said of India vis a vis American Studies. Needless to say, we need to indigenize the discipline and, as Professor Gupta said, ‘make it serviceable to our needs’. American Studies will have to be reincarnated in India ideally in a comparative framework.

IV

By now a series of theoretical, demographic and institutional factors have led to debates on question of ethnicity and pedagogy in America, the theoretical underpinnings of the diversity claims and the various conflicting positions such as a notion of Euro-Centrism and Afro-Centrism resulting in Culture Wars. This in turn has led to a conservative backlash. For instance, Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*, 1987, laments how the American

Widening roads to solve congestion is like loosening one’s belt to solve obesity
– it eases constraints but does not solve the problem.

Lewis Mumford

students have fallen victim to mindless destruction by treating all traditional literature as oppressive and reactionary. Similarly conservative critic E.D. Hirsh in his *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Ought to Know*, 1987 regrets the lack of knowledge of the American students. 'To be culturally literate', argues Hirsh 'is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world'.

The Future of American Studies

What then is the future of American Studies?

1. The questioning and skepticism of the notion of American identity and sensibility is timely and welcome. The demand by an increasing section of the non-white population in America to study marginalized literary experience has led to a revisiting of the American literary canon. This has to be seen as productive given the crisis of literature and culture in other parts of the world including India. There are opportunities here for creative collaborations in inter-disciplinary and cross cultural terms.
2. While American Studies Program of an earlier era underlined to rubric of an overarching commonality, critics like John Carlos Rowe argue that 'recent approaches have stressed hybridities that have occurred historically among many cultures constituting the United States'. 'Such hybridities require scholars to look at the multiple cultural influences involved in important social formation.' Similarly, other scholars like Max Shell working through the Longfellow Institute at Harvard and others such as Paul Lauter disprove the indispensability of monolingualism for civic cohesion and identity in America.
3. Beginning with the late eighties of the last century, there has been a churning in the field of the literary canon making in India, parallel to the churning in the field of American Studies. We must take advantage of this crisis, and use the opportunities to forge creative alliances with American Studies in an interdisciplinary and comparative studies framework. This will be possible by delving deep into the disciplines especially in the frontier areas, and working out viable methodologies and tools of analysis sensitive to the evolution of the knowledge systems.

Global Era

'What is the future of American Studies in the global era?' asks Caroline Levander in her essay: *The Changing Landscape of American Studies in a Global Era*. She adds:

Does it make intellectual sense to retain the national referent of 'American' as an organizing system of knowledge at the current moment, and is there something, identifiable as American in an increasingly global culture? American Studies emerged as distinct multidisciplinary research field during the Cold War, and its intellectual assumptions, some would argue, have tended to be bounded by the era's incipient nationalism. Yet the field's founding limitations—has actually generated one of the most significant intellectual opportunities in humanities scholarship in recent history.

However, Levander's desire to stick to the boundaries of the newly emerging discipline to the American hemisphere in the form of what she calls 'hemispheric studies' may not go far enough since it leaves out from the ambit much of the world literatures and cultures including our own. Surely there is enough potential in trans-cultural studies with focus on America and one or more nations of the world. Such a study must be based on equal footing and not be asymmetric in approach in terms of the fundamental goals, tools and methodological apparatus that earlier disciplines were guilty of.

The Way Ahead

Regrettably, some of the dominant approach in India that attempts to fashion out the new discipline of American Studies, while making progress, tends to follow essentially the old grooves. For instance, the widely circulated booklet, *American Studies in India*, 2012 based on a consortium of Indian academic institutions, embracing colleges and universities, that lists diploma and certificate courses, continues to underline 'the uniqueness of American culture and experience' (See the page 'Welcome to American Studies in India' and 'American Studies Content and Pedagogy Development'). Nor can we make substantial progress in this direction by offering separate disciplinary slots for Indian students of American Studies. A truly cross-disciplinary and trans-cultural approach to American Studies must try and integrate the 'Indian' and 'American' approaches.

China hardly qualifies as a mortal danger to the liberal international order.

Fareed Zakaria

Disciplines must be embedded in one another rather than being offered as windowless boxes in terms of the various 'components', currently given in the courses of study.

As Stanley Bailis correctly states : 'in the most abstract sense, American Studies is an ongoing debate, a continued formulation of questions and answers relating to the very idea of what America might be, and the manner in which it could be studied, both past and present,'

Thus, the crisis of American Studies is the crisis of the American exceptionalism. The crisis will be resolved by a reinvention of America and the continued contestation of the American identity, heterogeneous and pluralistic in character. In the final analysis, the search for a social and cultural equity will give validity to American Studies at home and abroad.

(Concluded)

* * *

GANDHIAN JOURNALISM – IV

Dr. R. Sampath

Former Chief of Bureau, *The Hindu*
Visakhapatnam

"Before I read this statement, I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned advocate-general's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true and I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of government has almost become a passion with me, and the advocate-general is entirely right when he says that my preaching disaffection did not commence with my 'Young India' but it commenced much earlier, and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the advocate-general...it is impossible for me to disassociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay...I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of the citizen. The only course open to you, the judge, is,

as I am going to say in my statement, either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people..."

"When Gandhiji sat down, Mr. Justice Broomfield bowed to the prisoner, and pronounced the sentence. 'The determination of a just sentence,' the judge declared, 'is perhaps as difficult a proposition as a judge in this country could have to face. The law is no respecter of persons. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever heard or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your country men, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life.'

"The judge then announced that Gandhi must undergo imprisonment for six years, and added that if the Government later saw fit to reduce the term 'no one would be better pleased than I'. Mr. Banker received one year jail and fine of one thousand rupees. "On hearing the sentence, the Mahatma rose and said that the sentence 'is as mild as any judge could inflict on me, and so far as the entire proceedings are concerned, I must say that I could not have expected greater courtesy'...."

Long before the advent of Gandhiji on the Indian political scene, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was facing a similar sedition trial for his "scurrilous writings" in his journal 'Kesari'. Prior to the pronouncement of the sentence of transporting him to Mandalay prison, Tilak made his historic statement, in which he declared 'Swaraj is my birthright. I will have it'. Tilak and Gandhiji had thus shown to journalists how they should react in such trying circumstances. While they deliberately broke the law, they did not search for escape routes. They stood by their courage of conviction and faced the consequences boldly and without any remorse.

Another political development that brought out Gandhiji's courage by giving a clarion call to Indians "to act as citizens of free India" was the August Revolution of 1942, about which Nadig Krishnamurthy records in his 'Indian Journalism' thus: "The All-India Congress Committee met on August 9, 1942, and ratified in a resolution Gandhiji's

No man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.

Patriot Daniel O'Connell

idea that the British should quit India. Gandhiji asked all Indians to declare themselves free and independent and to act as citizens of free India. He invented the slogan 'do or die' in the event of government opposition. Gandhiji made it clear that the struggle had to go on non-violently and truthfully....In order to suppress the movement the Government began to adopt repressive measures. The Government order relating to the press activities imposed the following restrictions: the registration of correspondents; the limitation on the number of messages regarding the disturbances; prohibition of news regarding acts of sabotage; limitations on headlines and space given to news of disturbances; compulsory Press advice; and arbitrary censorship. On hearing the press restriction order on newspapers, Gandhiji made a statement that it was better not to publish newspapers than to bring them out under all kinds of governmental restrictions. Several newspapers, including the 'Harijan' the 'National Herald', the 'Indian Express' and the 'Dinamani' stopped publication. A majority of newspapers, though they severely criticised the various press restrictions, continued publication."

How relevant is Gandhiji's journalism today? Answers J.V. Vilanilam, former Vice-Chancellor and Head of the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala, in his article in 'Vidura' (January-March 2014 issue): "Those who tend to consider Gandhian journalism impractical, irrelevant, insipid and even uninspiring in the modern, sophisticated, cyber world will have to revisit the fundamental goal of journalism in any clime and time. They will come to the conclusion that all media have to serve society and uplift the moral, social, political and cultural values of life." Prof. Vilanilam justifies his argument by quoting extracts from the Salzburg Declaration of 2002, released at a meeting of journalists from 32 countries: "The Declaration emphasises the service aspect of journalism.... Gandhiji also believed that a newspaper is a social institution and that its success depended on the extent to which it could educate the readers. His ideas about journalism are quite fresh and relevant even today." Citing the fact of Gandhian newspapers such as 'Young India' and 'Harijan' which followed certain high moral values and obligations of service, Prof. Vilanilam wonders, "They seem to have anticipated the tenets of the Salzburg Declaration."

The following words of Paranjoy Guha

Thakurta put Gandhi's experiments with truth in proper perspective. "What indeed is truth? Gandhi struggled with this one question throughout his life. Such was the centrality and significance of Truth (Satya) to Gandhi's ideas that he believed that truth was the ultimate goal of all human beings and that it was embodied in all things. Gandhi believed that there was an absolute Truth (God), but that he could not understand it directly. He, therefore, sought to inch his way towards absolute truth by grappling with relative truth. Gandhi 'experimented' with truth; and it is interesting for our purpose to note that this experimentation led him to journalism (he founded and was associated with three publications, none of which had large circulations by current standards but which were widely quoted, politically influential and helped shake the might of the British empire). While Gandhi experimented with truth in deed, western philosophy has attempted to define this difficult concept through some key theories."

To sum up, Gandhiji as a journalist exuded his 'dharmic' power on the thinking of Indians, particularly newspaper editors. As an uncompromising champion of his own dictum, 'practise before you preach' ('karo pahle, kaho peechey'), the Mahatma exemplified the great qualities that are required of a journalist: truthfulness, self-restraint, steadiness and courage.

(Concluded)

* * *

Book Review

BACKSTAGE THE STORY BEHIND INDIA'S HIGH GROWTH YEARS

Montek Singh Ahluwalia

*(Published by Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd.,
New Delhi, pp. 434, 2020, Rs.595)*

'BACKSTAGE – THE STORY BEHIND INDIA'S HIGH GROWTH YEARS' by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission arrives at a time when India's growth rate has touched a new low. This tome of 434 pages by the eminent economist, dedicated to Isher his life partner and source of enormous intellectual support, contains a wealth of information on the emergence of India from a chaotic situation in the 1990s to the dramatic turnaround in the years that followed. Himself a key role player in the paradigm shift of Indian economy

Quote: We British are in general not just irreligious but down-right anti-religious.

Charles Allen

and polity, the author portrays with skill and humility the role played by top political leaders, administrators and economic advisers during those hard times. While the introduction on the blurb of the book refers to “the spectacular trajectory of Ahluwalia’s life from its humble beginnings in Secunderabad to the corridors of power in New Delhi,” nowhere in the eighteen chapters does Ahluwalia claim any personal credit for the initiatives he made and dynamism he displayed in the formulation of the economic reforms.

This is fascinating narrative ‘of the acceleration of economic growth between the early 1990s and the late 2000s’ which was of crucial importance and ‘a unique accomplishment in the economic history of developing countries.’ The backdrop is briefly alluded to Montek Singh Ahluwalia who writes that “political credit for the success of the Green Revolution must be given in large measure to Indira Gandhi who took bold decisions and to C.Subramaniam the agriculture minister, B.Sivaraman the agriculture secretary and M.S. Swaminathan the Director- General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research. India’s growth rate was, however, poor compared to the East Asian Group of Four—Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong which registered 9% growth per annum.

The book is divided into four parts. The first two parts, containing six chapters, provide the prelude for the historic economic reforms of 1990s. Parts 3 and 4 containing 12 of the 18 chapters of the book present a comprehensive review of the policies formulated for the restructuring of the economy. In 1990 Montek Singh Ahluwalia presented a paper for reform of fiscal policy, industrial policy, trade policy and exchange rate policy which came to be known as M.Document.

It all began in 1991. Prime Minister P.V.Narasimha Rao inducted Dr Manmohan Singh into the Cabinet as the Finance Minister. Manmohan Singh’s budget speech of 1991-92 ‘A New Vision’ was the turning point which evoked the admiration of many including a phone call from Ambassador Abid Hussain from Washington who sang the famous lines from the 1956 film Jagriti praising Mahatma Gandhi’s success in achieving independence. In the chapter titled ‘The Road to Reforms’ Ahluwalia draws an interesting comparison between Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, describing the latter as the ‘Real Architect’ of the reforms. Conceding that without the prime minister’s support the finance minister could not have become the real architect, the author narrates

an interesting quip: “Without the prime minister’s backing, the finance minister would be a zero. It is the prime minister’s backing that puts a one before the zero, making it a 10,” said P.V. Narasimha Rao.

The ‘Road to Reforms’ based on ‘Continuity with Change’ was laid and the journey picked up momentum despite road blocks and systemic problems such as corruption. The narrative of the important three areas – inclusive growth, building infrastructure through public-private partnership and the rule of the Planning Commission – bears testimony to Ahluwalia’s deep knowledge of the subject, allied to intuitive wisdom. The author’s easy style of writing laced with subtle humour makes the work unputdownable. Ahluwalia concludes with an analysis of the challenges ahead and solutions to overcome them. Accelerating agricultural growth, employment generation and managing centre-state relations are crucial for sustaining a high GDP growth rate, according to him. Among the issues of immediate importance are ensuring macroeconomic stability and fixing the banking system. “Modernizing tax administration needs to be given top priority”, he says. The practice of subjecting public sector banks to dual regulations, by both the RBI and the ministry, should be ended. Ahluwalia emphasizes the need for faster policy changes than before: “The case for faster change is also reinforced by the fact that growth is bringing about structural changes in the economy at an accelerated pace and these changes pose new challenges that must be addressed with urgency. Technology is also changing more rapidly and globalization is accelerating the spread of technological change.”

Despite many constraints the climate in India is favourable for policy changes, particularly because of the growing enthusiasm and aroused expectations, of the younger generation which is better educated and more exposed to technological changes than the older generation. It is the responsibility of the political leaders to ensure the required acceleration of the pace of change. “Good economics may not seem to be good politics in the short run, but wise political leaders will realise that it is almost always the best politics in the long run. How to marry the two is, in some sense, the real test of political leadership,” writes Montek Singh Ahluwalia. This timely publication is bound to be welcomed by all, particularly by those engaged in the study of public policy and development.

A.Prasanna Kumar

Good economics may not seem to be good politics in the short run, but wise political leaders will realize that it is almost always the best politics in the long run.

Montek Singh Ahluwalia

‘Navy veteran for stronger Eastern Seaboard’

(Newspaper report on launching of book ‘India’s Strategic and Security Concerns’ of Cmde. C.Uday Bhaskar, at a function organised on February 2, 2020 by Centre for Policy Studies and Visakhapatnam Public Library)

Admiral (retd.) Arun Prakash, former Chief of Naval Staff, has underlined the need for strengthening the Andaman and Nicobar Island Command and the Eastern Seaboard.

“It is time the Eastern Seaboard was strengthened to neutralise China which is seeing India as a potential adversary and partnering with Pakistan,” he said after releasing a compendium of articles titled ‘India’s Strategic and Security Concerns’ written by Commodore C. Uday Bhaskar at a programme organised by the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and Visakhapatnam Public Library, here on Sunday.

“Traditionally, India is a non-aligned nation. We (the country) undertake overseas missions as per the guidelines of the United Nations (UN). We had allied with the erstwhile U.S.S.R. in the past and we can do the same in future. There is, however, no immediate need for it,” he observed.

Regional rivalry

He said that the Andaman and Nicobar Command remained a skeletal command and it should be strengthened in view of the Malacca dilemma” .. “All nations except the U.S. are wary of China. The rivalry between the U.S. and China interlocks with regional rivalry. India must draft its own security policy and strengthen the Eastern Seaboard and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Command,” he said. The former CNS spoke on his association with CPS, and commended the good work being done by the centre by organising debates and discussions on contemporary issues.

Speaking on the occasion, Commodore Uday Bhaskar said Visakhapatnam can become the fulcrum for the Eastern Seaboard. “If Vizag has to realise its full potential, the contribution of organisations like CPS ‘has to be taken forward;’ he said.

Agreeing with Commodore Uday Bhaskar’s observations, CPS Director A. Prasanna Kumar said that Visakhapatnam city had not witnessed even a single major communal conflict or other disturbances. Commodore Uday Bhaskar lauded Visakhapatnam Public Library president S. Vijay Kumar for renovating the library and making it available for intellectual debates and discussions.

(The Hindu, February 3, 2020)

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