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How unsafe are Muslims?

Kuldip Nayar

In a farewell message the outgoing vice-president, Hamid Ansari, has said that the Muslims do not feel safe in the country. Instead of introspecting on what he said, the RSS and the BJP have denounced him. Some have gone to the extent of saying that he could migrate to a country where he would feel safe.

The unkindest cut came from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said that Ansari could now pursue his agenda. A few others, occupying high positions, also made more or less a similar remark. There was not an iota of examination by the Hindu leaders and thus a great opportunity to disarm the Muslims of their fear was lost.

True, the vice-president could have made the same remarks earlier and submitted his resignation while in office. But that would have created another kind of a crisis which the constitution experts would have found hard to sort out. That way the country would have been thrown into a cauldron of doubt and suspicion.

The majority community must try to find out why every Muslim leader raises reservation about his community's

welfare whenever he gets the opportunity, particularly on the eve of quitting office. The remark that Ansari could go to any country of his choice does not in any way meet the point he has raised. Ansari was not saying whether he was safe or not personally. The outgoing vice-president was only conveying the fears of Muslims.

Personal attacks on Ansari would not do. The government leaders should ponder over what the outgoing vice-president has said and how the majority community could make amends to retrieve the situation. But the message has not been taken in the spirit it should have been.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has reportedly endorsed the view that since Ansari did not feel happy in India he could go elsewhere. As head of a Hindu organization, Bhagwat's remark attains the representative character, unfortunately reducing the whole thing to the perennial debate of Hindus versus Muslims.

Since Ansari's remark is a public property and coming as it did from the country's vice-president, it should be debated at all responsible forums,

including parliament. The government at the centre has constituted in the past a commission to find out how the Muslims felt. Justice Rajinder Sachar, who led the commission, said in his report that the Muslims were treated worse than the dalits. And he found that West Bengal, after nearly three decades of communist rule, had only a 2.5 percent educated Muslims. Time is ripe to have another commission to find out if Justice Sachar's report had made any difference.

Unfortunately, similar remarks of regret have been made by other Muslims leaders in the past. In fact, some celebrities also have joined the chorus. Take for instance, what film star Aamir Khan remarked a couple of years ago when he took potshots at politicians, while referring to the fear his wife Kiran Rao had expressed about India's growing intolerance.

"When I chat with Kiran (his wife) at home, she says 'Should we move out of India?' That's a disastrous and big statement for Kiran to make. She fears for her child. She fears about what the atmosphere around us will be. She feels scared to open the newspapers every day. That does indicate that there is this sense of growing disquiet, there is growing despondency apart from alarm. You feel why this is happening, you feel low. That sense does exist in me," Aamir said.

award function, also endorsed the returning of awards by creative people saying it was a way to express their dissatisfaction or disappointment. "People who are our elected representatives, people who we select to look after us for five years, State or centre... when people take law into their hands, we look upon these people to take a strong stance, to make a strong statement, speed up the legal process, when we see that happening there is a sense of security but when we don't see that happening there is a sense of insecurity," said the celebrity actor.

Understandably, the BJP reacted to his remark and completely rejected the comment of Aamir. "He is not scared but he is trying to scare people. India gave him all the laurels and respect. He should not forget that India made him a star," said BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain. Congress vice-president stoutly defended the actor and suggested that the Modi government should reach out to the people to know why they felt disturbed.

Rahul in a tweet said: "Instead of branding all those who question the government and Modiji as unpatriotic, anti-national or 'motivated', the government would do better to reach out to people to understand what's disturbing them." But the BJP

spokesman, as usual, pooh-poohed Rahul's comment saying that there was a conspiracy going on in the country to defame the nation!

The real problem is the line drawn by Radcliffe on the basis of religion. He did regret the killings in the wake of partition, but did not change the line. Those on the other side of the line are people of Pakistan who slowly and gradually are becoming part of the Islamic world. Fundamentalism has taken a firm grip.

There is practically no Hindu and Sikh on the other side of the border. Christians form the majority among the minorities in Pakistan. Their complaint is that the churches have been destroyed and there is a forced conversion. The democratically elected prime minister is doing whatever he can. But the last word is with the army. Unfortunately, the army is also getting contaminated.

Words of Ansari have great relevance because a soft kind of Hindutva is spreading in India. Those who are at the helm of affairs are pushing the division because elections fought on the basis of Hindus and Muslims are bound to benefit the Hindus. The fabric of secular India is being torn bit by bit. It's regrettable that ideology of secularism followed in the last seven decades is in great danger.

**Footprints of A Crusader
(The Life Story of Mrunal Gore)**

by

Rohini Gawankar

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Should Nawaz Sharif's Ouster Worry India?

D. K. Giri

Any major political or military event in Pakistan concerns India inasmuch as both countries are at daggers drawn on Kashmir. The ouster of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif should certainly worry India for a good many reasons. Nawaz Sharif had dealt with six Indian Prime Ministers and had developed working relations with all of them. With his business background, Sharif had realized that good trade and economic relations with India would ensure peace and harmony between the two countries. It is Nawaz Sharif more than any Pakistani Prime Minister who wanted to rein in on anti-India Pakistani military. In his second stint in 1997-99, as the Prime Minister, Sharif had removed two army chiefs in one year. He had appointed Pervez Musharaf by superseding other senior officers. It is another matter that Musharaf later staged a military coup and forced Sharif into exile. Pakistani Army thrives on antagonism with India and now Afghanistan as it believes such a stance brings them political and pecuniary gains. Furthermore, Sharif had taken on the pro-army Supreme Court which has the controversial habit of dismissing elected civilian governments. Sharif, although accused of rigging and manipulating elections by Pakistani media and political opponents, strove to establish the supremacy of the democratic state. Pakistan's politics is based on three pillars - the Islamic Groups, the Army and Kashmir; all the three confront, bedevil and squeeze the political democracy in the country.

Pakistan has a fledgling democracy which is yet to take firm roots. No civilian government in that country has ever completed its five-year term. Nawaz Sharif too did not run the full term in his three stints as the Prime Minister; 1990-93, 1997-99, and 2013-17. Earlier he was ejected by Army and now by the Supreme Court. Sharif's disproportionate income and assets were exposed by the Panama papers leaked by the law firm Mossack Fonesca. Nawaz Sharif has amassed wealth beyond his stated income, and his children had flats in expensive parts of London. The fact dug out from election records that Sharif did not disclose his firm in UAE during filing his nominations for National Assembly is another charge. Even Imran Khan of Tehreek-e-Insaf party, Sharif's *bête noir*, had also made faulty declarations of assets as a candidate. One recalls that Sharif was used in the past by the Army to attack Benazir Bhutto, and now Khan is being used against Nawaz Sharif.

The Supreme Court took cognizance of the Panama leaks and instituted a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) that included two army officials. The presence of army in JIT confirms that the Army was in pursuing Sharif who had tried to muscle into the Army's turf, the Kashmir policy, etc. The JIT submitted its report on 10 July and the Supreme Court gave its verdict on 28th of the same month. Invoking a clause of the constitution that stressed Islamic virtues that a Prime Minister "be sagacious, righteous, non-profligate, honest and upright", the Supreme Court decreed that Sharif was 'no longer fit to be the Prime Minister'. It asked the

Election Commission to de-notify Sharif from the National Assembly and ordered the National Accountability Bureau, an anti-corruption body to file charges within six weeks for the trial to be completed in six months. The court has thrown Pakistan's politics into turmoil as the general elections are due in a year.

The Muslim League (Nawaz) has the majority in the Lower House to elect the successor to Sharif. Nawaz Sharif would have liked his daughter Maryam to succeed him if she was not besmirched in the Panama saga. His second option was to bring in his younger brother Sahbaz, the current Chief Minister of Punjab province, the political stronghold of Nawaz's family. Until Sahbaz was inducted into the Lower House, Nawaz Sharif installed one of his loyalist-Ministers Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as the Prime Minister. The buzz now is that Shahbaz has been ditched in the family feud; Maryam and her mother did not want Sahbaz to have greater hold of the party at the centre and in Punjab where Shahbaz wanted his son Hamza to succeed him.

What will happen to Nawaz Sharif, Pakistani politics and India-Pakistan in the post-Sharif period? Nawaz Sharif's immediate future has become uncertain. He had confronted the power centers in the past. At one point, he ransacked the Supreme Court, challenged the political might of the powerful military, and ordered the removal of General Musharaf in 1999 when he felt that the army chief had bypassed him on Kargil. He had even planned to arrest Musharaf on his return from Sri Lanka.

As Musharaf was flying back into Pakistan in a commercial flight, Nawaz Sharif had got the Jinnah airport cordoned off, but the flight, on the pretext of refueling landed in another airport. Then Musharaf turned the table on Nawaz, contacted his military colleagues, quickly organized a coup, and put Nawaz under arrest. Sharif was handed a life imprisonment and was to be given a death sentence by the military courts. In a deal brokered by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia Nawaz escaped death and was exiled for 21 years. Ironically, again another deal with the army brought him back to Pakistan in 2007.

By most accounts, Sharif had tenuous relations with the Army. On 30 October 2016, Sharif has issued two stern messages to the army. One, the army should not interfere in the civilian administration and second, as Pakistan was getting internationally isolated for being soft on terrorists, the army should expeditiously conclude the investigation and trial on Pathankot and Mumbai attacks. The messages delivered in a closed-door meeting were leaked to the media, much to the outrage of the army. Although, later on, Sharif tried to mend it with the army by dismissing his officials responsible for leaking the deliberations to the media, it was too late. The army had planned to corner Sharif.

There are limited options for Sharif to escape the conspiratorial clutches of Courts, the Army and the Jihadists. As he is still popular with the people, he may call for early elections and win. He has steadied the economy, built closer relations with China, drawn 54 billion USD in FDI for the China-Pakistan economic corridor, mitigated the acute electricity shortages, etc. So the voters may still agree with him. On the other hand, the army is not sure if Imran Khan is

mature enough to rule Pakistan. Now, he is caught in sexual harassment complaints by the women workers in his party. The army may have found it more congenial with Shahbaz Sharif as he does not provoke as his elder brother did. But Shahbaz becoming the PM is not a certainty anymore. The army may leave it to the voters, as from General Kiyani to General Bazwa, the army is not keen on a take-over. Also the Supreme Court's activism with a Messianic complex may not go down well with the voters who would want full democracy.

On India-Pakistan relations, there may not be much of an impact although a stable democratic government is better for dialogue than the army. But on Kashmir, Nawaz Sharif is on the same page as the Army and the Jihadists whose *raison d'être* is fomenting trouble in India. The ties between India and Pakistan have plummeted to the lowest point at the moment. There have been no official meetings in the recent past. The walk-by greetings exchanged at Astana, Kazakhstan between Prime Ministers Modi and Sharif epitomized the animosity between New Delhi and Islamabad. There is not much hope for normalization of relations. The little hope that existed has been dashed by Sharif's exit. Only the international forces like US and China, which have stakes in the region for different reasons can help ease the tensions. USA has decidedly tilted towards India in its South Asia policy, and China which thrives on trade and investment would not like Pakistan to be embroiled in a bloody conflict with India. China has invested heavily in Pakistan and almost controls it as its vassal state. So, India need not worry though as USA and China, the big influencers in the region, will not like, the India-

Pakistan conflict to spiral out of control.

However, Nawaz had somewhat kept the doors for dialogue open. The door ajar under Nawaz may now be fully shut. The silver lining is the reassertion of democracy over other institutions like Supreme Court, military and jihadists. No wonder some terrorist groups have claimed that Nawaz Sharif had to go as he did not support jihad. In the event of democracy winning, the Pakistani voters might have the final say in the next general elections. India will watch the developments in its important neighbor with great interest and attention. If at all India could do anything it should encourage the promotion of democracy by Track-II diplomacy with its contacts with civil society actors. Unmistakably, a strong and stable democracy anywhere in the world and for India in Pakistan is good for peace, harmony and security.

Books by Surendra Mohan

1. **Vikas Ka Rasta: Nai Arthik Neetiyon ka vishleshan.** Price 600 rupees.
2. **Samajwad, Dharma Nirapekshata aur Samajik Nyaya** Reissued as second edition; Price 500 rupees
3. **Vartaman Rajneeti ki Jwalant Chunautiyan.** Price 400 rupees.
4. **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia ki Neetiyon:** (This booklet was published late last year.) Price 25 rupees.

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Imagining India

Visions of Swaraj and the Democratic Journey- II

Anand Kumar

The cultural foundations of Indian unity and nationalism have originated, among others, with the writings of Sri Aurobindo (1996). The contributions of authors like Bankim, Iqbal, Subramaiyam Bharati, Savarkar and cultural historian Ananda Coomarswamy (1910) were also considered quite significant. Sociologist D.P. Mukherji (1958), while analyzing the philosophy of Indian history, has underlined the need to recognize the impact of five momentous phases of changes in the making of Indian culture and civilization before the interface with the Western influence: i. Vedic Aryan, ii. Buddhist, iii. Gupta period, iv. Harsh and Vikramaditya, and v. the Muslim rulers.

The claims of territorial nationalism have been related with classical sources including Vishnu Puran, Vayu Puran, Ramayan, Mahabharat and a variety of Smriti and Samhita and the concept of Bharat or Bharatvarsha. For example, the following Sanskrit Shloka (among many others) defining the sacred geography of the Indian culture have been quite often quoted as evidence of the territorial basis of ancient India:

१. उत्तरं यत् समुद्रस्य हिमाद्रेश्चैव दक्षिण यथा
भारती नाम भारतं तद् वर्षं, संतति (पुराण विष्णु) (A depiction of the territorial framework of Bharat where the northern boundary is marked by the Himalayas and southern limits are merging with the oceans. Vishnu Puran)

२. गंगे च यमुने चैव गोदावरी सरस्वति नर्मदे सिन्धु
कावेरी जलेस्मिन् सन्निधिम कुरु (A well known morning prayer from the Puranas identifying the seven holiest rivers.)

३. अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी कांची अवंतिका.
पूरी द्वारावती चैव सप्तैता मोक्षदायिकाः (List of the seven holy cities which are the gate ways to Moksha.)

४. महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यः शक्तिमात्रेक्षपर्वतः. विन्ध्यश्च
पारियात्रश्च सप्तैते कुलपर्वताः (Identification of the territory of Bharatvarsha as a land with seven mountain ranges from north to south and east to west.)

They were elaborated with help of several classical texts in the works of Radhakumud Mukherji (1909/ 1954). Mukherji cites several classical and traditional prayers where India is defined in terms of a network of places of worship and pilgrimage for worshippers of Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, and other gods and goddesses. Then he reminds about the lists of great kings preserved in Vedic literature and supplemented by other lists in Purana and other works. In his discussion significance is given to classics like Arthasastra of Kautilya, Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, Niti-Sastra of Kamandaka and the treasury of Jain and Buddhist texts to provide evidences of an Indian civilizational framework with territoriality and a system of multi-layered kingship.

Anthropologist Nirmal Kumar Bose suggests that there is a geographical background of Indian culture which is signified by “the comparative isolation or protection afforded by the northern mountain wall, and the character of the two coasts of the peninsula; the heat and rainfall, and the character of her soil; and lastly the presence of an extensive alluvial plain in the north, succeeded in the south by a plateau which locally takes on the character of steppe or savannah or of humid mesothermal forest.” (1967, p.1)

The evolution of Indian nationalism has been outlined by a number of Indian leaders from Lala Lajpat Rai in Young India (1916) to Jawaharlal Nehru in ‘Discovery of India’ (1946). According to Nehru (1927), “The modern idea of nationhood is of recent growth even in the West and India in the past century was not, and is not even now, wholly, a nation like France or England is today. It was too vast a country to develop on those lines before the advent of modern methods of communication. But even in the remote past there has always been a fundamental unity of India—a unity of a common faith and culture. India was Bharata, the holy land of the Hindus, and it is not without significance that the great places of Hindu pilgrimage are situated in the four corners of India—the extreme south overlooking Ceylone, the extreme west washed by the Arabian sea, the east facing the Bay of Bengal and the north in the Himalayas. Sanskrit was the language of the learned throughout the length and breadth of the country and the provincial languages in the north were all derived from Sanskrit and were closely allied, the four principal southern languages being greatly influenced by Sanskrit. Every resident of the country felt a certain kinship with all others who lived in the great sub-continent, and those who came from outside India were the foreigners, the barbarians.”

The Ideals and anxieties about Swaraj It is true that there was an ever evolving vision of Swaraj which provided the continuity in the imagination about freedom and India after the British Raj. At the same time there were apprehensions about what awaits for India and Indians after the departure of

the British rulers and partition of an ancient civilization to create space for two post-colonial nation-states. There was an environment of anxiety and alert among the constitution-makers also. It will be relevant to have a synoptic view of the thinking of the representative voices of the people of India about the challenges before the people after Swaraj from the British Raj.

Let us remember that Congress adopted the resolution of Purna Swaraj at Lahore session on 26 January, 1930. It was 45 years after the establishment of the Indian National Congress, 25 years after the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 14 years after the Congress-League Pact, 13 years after the Gandhian-led Champaran Satyagraha, and 9 years after the Non-cooperation Movement. According to the Lahore Resolution: "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, or any other people, to have freedom and, to enjoy the fruits of their toil, and have the necessities of life, so that they may have the full opportunities of growth. We believed also that, if any government deprives a people of their rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence."

Explaining his vision, Gandhi wrote in 1937, "Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete political independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them moral and social, the

corresponding end is Dharam; i.e. religion in the right sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. but is superior to them all. . . Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue." (*Harijan*, 2.1.'37)

According to Rabindranath Tagore, writing in 1940, "The turning of the wheel of fortune will compel the British one day to give up their Indian empire. But what kind of India they will leave behind, what stark misery? When the stream of their two centuries' rule runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth will be revealed, bearing a tale of utter futility! There was a time when I used to believe that the springs of a true civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today, as I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt. . . . I look back on the stretch of past years and see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization lying heaped as garbage out of history. And yet I will not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man, accepting his present defeat as final. I shall look forward to a turning in history after the cataclysm is over and the sky is again unburdened and passionless." (Tagore: 1967, 358-9)

In 1940, Congress Socialist Jaiprakash Narayan presented 'An Outline Picture of Swaraj' which was published by Mahatma Gandhi in his periodical *Harijan* with appreciative note. It asserted that: ". . . The free Indian state shall guarantee full individual and civil liberty and cultural and religious freedom, provided that there shall be no freedom to overthrow by violence the constitution framed by the Indian people through a Constituent Assembly. The State shall not discriminate in any manner between citizens of the nation. Every citizen shall be guaranteed equal rights. All distinctions of birth and privilege shall be abolished. There shall be no titles emanating from inherited

social status or the State. The political and economic organization of the State shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. . . All large-scale collective production will be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the State shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralized. The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-governing units, self-sufficient in as large a measure as possible. The land laws of the country shall be drastically reformed on the principle that that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. . . . The State shall protect the interests of all the classes, but when any of these impinges upon the interests of those who have been poor and downtrodden, it shall defend the latter and thus restore the balance of social justice." (Prasad: 1964, 37-39)

Let us turn to the resolution outlining the main objectives of the Constituent Assembly which was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on December 13, 1946. It was a 8-point resolution which wanted to underline the following assurances: 1. To proclaim India as an independent sovereign republic, 2. Autonomy of the constituting units, 3. Guaranteeing and securing justice, equality, and freedoms to all the people of India, 4. Adequate safeguards for minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and other backward classes, and 5. Contribution to world peace and the welfare of mankind. (Shiva Rao: 1967, Vol. II, 3-4) All of these commitments became reference points in the coming years for claims and counter-claims of interest groups, social communities, and ethno-national identities and regions. They also got

recognized as the guiding stars for conflict resolution and policy-making.

A Painful Transition to Swaraj

It is true that the most challenging situation related with the dawn of Purna Swaraj (complete independence) was related with the proposed partition of British India to create two new nation-states – India and Pakistan. All India Congress Committee (AICC) adopted a resolution on 15th June, 1947 announcing its acceptance the Partition with a majority vote. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and the Congress Socialist members of the Congress Working Committee Jaayaprakash Narayanan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia had voted against it. Here are the relevant parts of this statement which became a turning point for the coming years of democratic nation-building: “...Ever since its inception, more than 60 years ago, the National Congress has labored for the realization of a free and united India, and millions of our people have suffered in this great cause. Not only the labours and sacrifices of the past two generations but the long course of India’s history and tradition bear witness to this essential unity. Geography and the mountains and the seas fashioned India as she is and no human agency can change that shape or come in the way of her final destiny. Economic circumstance and the insistent demands of international affairs make the unity of India still more necessary. The picture of India we have learnt to cherish will remain in our minds and hearts. The A. I. C. C. earnestly trusts that when present passions have subsided, India’s problems will be viewed in their proper perspective and the false doctrine of two nations in India will be discredited and discarded by all. The proposals of June 3 are likely to lead to the secession of some parts of the country from India. However much this may be regretted, the A.I.C.C. accepts this possibility in the

circumstance now prevailing.. (Shiva Rao 1966, Vol. I, 529-530)

Let us not forget that if the coming of Swaraj (independence) was tarred by ‘the partition’ and separation of the Muslim majority provinces in the eastern and western parts of British India as ‘Pakistan’, there was also integration of more than 500 princely states into the newly created Union of India. But it was a mixed blessing due to ‘moving from an alliance between democracies and dynasties’ to ‘really a union of the Indian people built on the concept of sovereignty of the people’. “It removes all barriers between the people of the States and the people of Provinces and achieves for the time the objective of a strong democratic India built on the foundation of a cooperative enterprise on the part of the people of the Provinces and States alike.” according to Vallabh Bhai Patel, in a speech, in the Constituent Assembly on October 12, 1949. But Patel underlines the inherent problems in this exercise which needed due care and caution to avoid separatism and disintegration in near future as the following: “As the House is aware, the States, as we inherited them were in varying stages of development. In most cases the advance had to be made from the starting point of pure aristocracy. Having regard to the magnitude of the task which confronted the Government of the Unions in the transitional period, and to the fact that neither the services inherited by them nor the political organizations, as they existed there, were in a position to assume, unaided full responsibilities of the administration, we made a provision in some of the covenants that till the new Constitution came into operation in these Unions, the Rajapramukh and the Council of Ministers shall, in the exercise of their functions, be under the general control of the Government of India and

comply with the instructions issued by the Government from time to time. The stress of the transitional phase is likely to continue for some years. We are ourselves most anxious that the people of these states should shoulder their responsibilities; however, we cannot ignore the fact that while the administrative organization and political institutions are to be found in most of the States in a relatively less developed state, the problems relating to the integration of the States and the change-over from an autocratic to a democratic order are such as to test the mettle of long established administrations and experienced leaders of the people.” (Shiva Rao: 1968, Vol. IV, 568)

It is also relevant to include the prophecy-like concerns of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar who presided over the Drafting Committee and Dr. Rajendra Prasad who was the chairman of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Ambedkar underlined dangers of a major contradiction which was about to be introduced with the new constitution and its consequences for the future of political democracy in the following words: “On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality to our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so

laboriously built up.” (Shiva Rao: 1968, p. 945)

It was followed up Dr. Rajendra Prasad who expressed concern about the need of integrity and character among the future leaders of India to be able to carry forward the task of peoples’ wellbeing and nation’s progress on the basis of newly created constitution. According to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, “After all, a Constitution like a machine is lifeless thing. It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it, and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them. There is a fissiparous tendency arising out of various elements in our life. We have communal differences, caste differences, language differences, provincial differences and so forth...” (Shiva Rao: 1968, p. 958)

Within a few months of adopting this Constitution, Jawaharlal Nehru issued a press statement as the first prime minister of democratic India where three major problems were underlined by him.

To quote from the statement of 12 September, 1950 in National Herald, “What are our principal problems? Broadly speaking, they may be placed under three heads: international, economic policy, and communal...” (Gopal & Iyengar: 2001)

Constitutional Basis of post-colonial India

Most of these early contributors and their trajectories became part of the intellectual history of modern India with the making of a Constitution which not only inaugurated an era of civic nationalism but also paved the way to move towards a new set of universal and humane ideals. India was on her way to re-invent herself through democratic values, representative institutions and participatory processes. Here all citizens of India were to be recognized through two lenses – i) a decolonized democratic polity based upon interdependent union of states and an overarching Constitutional Center, and ii). a common citizenship of a multi-cultural nation-state with a set of

fundamental rights and construction of four new clusters of such citizens who needed special constitutional protections and support. They were: 1. the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) or the Intermediate Castes, 2. the Scheduled Castes, 3. the Scheduled Tribes, and 4. the religious minorities. These were part of the promised social engineering in the resolution about the ‘Objectives’ of the Constituent Assembly. It was to achieve the goal of democratic nation-building through differential entitlements, along with a set of ‘fundamental rights’, for different categories of men and women as citizens of newly established republic. A new legitimacy system on the basis of universal adult suffrage, multi-party representative democracy and regular elections have incrementally institutionalized a dynamic interaction between and within these clusters for democratic power. Elite recruitment, new vertical and horizontal solidarities and a variety of coalitions are some of the significant consequences of this socio-political reconstruction in quest of unity in diversity.

(To be concluded)

Box 1 – The Preamble Democracy and Nation-building in the 1960s

Preamble

- **WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA**, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens:
- **JUSTICE**, social, economic and political;
- **LIBERTY** of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
- **EQUALITY** of status and of opportunity;
- and to promote among them all
- **FRATERNITY** assuring the dignity of the individual and the **unity and integrity** of the Nation;
- **IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY** this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

Some aspects of the President's inaugural speech

Rajindar Sachar

The Presidents oath taking though is a routine function, also is an event for people to judge whether the dignitary who is going to take over the highest office under the constitution has shed off his political loyalty to the political party and is now above groupism.

The inaugural speech of President R.N. Kovind passes a fair deal of test but it is unfortunate that he left a little chink which one wishes could have been avoided. In his address he showed himself to be rising above the din of regressive communal atmosphere that Modi government is encouraging when he very openly said; “Our diversity is the core that makes us so unique. In this land, we find mix of states and regions, religions, languages, cultures, lifestyles and much more. We are so different and yet so similar and united”. This effect was spoiled by some BJP persons shouting *Jai Shri Ram* - a slogan totally out of place at the oath taking ceremony.

But a chink appeared in this welcome approach and cast a little shadow. President rightly pointed out the massive contribution to the India's freedom struggle and its development. He specially openly mentioned Gandhiji, “Patel”, Ambedkar contribution. The reference to Deen Dayal Upadhaya though not very apt at the occasion may be papered over as loyalty to one of his earliest political leaders.

But what has hit the public is the total omission to mention of Nehru even though he may not have praised him on his political achievement. But to talk of

India's freedom movement without mention of Pandit Nehru is unacceptable, rather heresy. No one grudges praise for Sardar Patel, he could have mentioned him as strong leader and his vast contribution to the country - Sardar Patel's role in integrating princely states is incomparable. Nehru's name should at least have found place, even though without praising his important role in the freedoms struggle. The truth is that whether you like it or not. Nehru's massive contribution in the freedom struggle cannot be put under cover.

I will give instance of how even being a committed member of Socialist Party of J.P. and Dr. Lohia since 1946 I faced a similar situation and how I dealt with in my humble manner.

It must be recognized that the reverence and hero worship for Nehru was normal and strong of my generation who had been brought up on the heroism, sacrifice and intellectualism of Pt. Nehru. I remember basking in Nehru's presence when he came to Lahore to canvass for my father's assembly election. Again when in 1945, after his release from prison, Pt. Nehru while going to Srinagar, broke his journey at Lahore – my father had invited him and some other important leaders for an informal get together at our place. I remember the awe, inspiration, admiration and respect with which all of us felt in his presence. And yet I behaved what many may call it unacceptable and foolish behavior of mine in 1955, which I confess in later time makes me somewhat feel stupid and yet it shows the different phases one passes through.

In 1955 Punjab High Court at Chandigarh was to be formally inaugurated by Pt. Nehru. I was then general secretary of High Court Bar Association. Pt. Nehru had come to Chandigarh the evening before. My father who was then the Chief Minister of Punjab invited Pt. Nehru for breakfast at his residence in the morning. I was staying with father though my office was in another sector. Here was an occasion for a young man like me, who had hero worshipped Pt. Nehru from his waking period and amongst the earlier books which had inspired me were Nehru's Autobiography, and Letters from Prison to Indira. But then I had grown up, become a full blooded socialist and still in thirties. We in the socialist party were convinced (rightly or wrongly, time alone will tell) that Pt. Nehru, who had shown the vision of socialism to us had not kept that pace, and was following wrong policies. Our disappointments with his policies were deep, though I was a small fry in part of that milieu. So I told father that I will not be at breakfast table to receive Pt. Nehru, though my wife will certainly be there along with my mother to play the hostess and look after the arrangements. My father and I had beautiful understanding and our sense of values and respecting each others' views were the same. That is why he accepted my hesitation though he mentioned that I was being childish. I thereafter next early morning went out of the residence to my office before Pt. Nehru arrived for breakfast. I had even at that time that admiration and inspiration for Nehru that I could not

think of being at home and be rude by not joining for breakfast. Of course I behaved absolutely correctly and all of us office bearers received Pt. Nehru with all the dignity and respect and deference due to him when he came to the High Court to inaugurate it.

Later on and now I laugh at my

presumptuousness – a chit of boy, whom Pt. Nehru will not even notice beating his chest by absenting himself and denying to himself such a close breakfast meeting with one of the greatest of leaders of India and who had been a hero of our family. But then I take it that such are the peculiarities of radical youth, the devil may care attitude and the almost

fatalistic belief in the rightness of the cause of one's own party. But then I suppose that is the real difference between youth and old age – one may laugh now, but one does not demean it because at that time it represented what I like to feel was a youthful, genuine and unshakeable faith in a socialist society – which faith, fortunately I have still not lost.

Denying children admission on technical grounds

Sandeep Pandey

The founder-manager of City Montessori School in Lucknow, Jagdish Gandhi, has recently published full page advertisements in local edition of all national dailies claiming that even though he would like to admit children under section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009, the children whose admissions were ordered by the District Magistrate and the Basic Shiksha Adhikari in his school did not fulfill one or more criteria required for such admissions. The children either live more than a kilometer away, the definition of 'neighbourhood' stated by Uttar Pradesh government and a necessary criterion to be fulfilled by children seeking admission under the abovementioned section of the Act, or were less than 6 years of age whereas the Act applies to children in the age group 6 to 14 years.

In an order delivered by Justice Saumitra Dayal Singh of the Allahabad High Court on 9 August, 2017 regarding the admission of child Chaitanya Dev to Nursery class in Maharishi Patanjali Vidya Mandir of Allahabad, in the matter of Sudhir Kumar, father of Chaitanya, vs. State of U.P. and others, said that for schools which run Kindergarten, Preparatory or Nursery classes the

provisions of the Act apply even if the age of child is less than 6 years. The school claimed that the child did not live in neighbourhood. On this the Judge reprimanded the school saying that since it had not admitted even one child against the 202 seats which were supposed to be reserved for children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, which is 25% of the strength of entry level classes in this school as prescribed by the Act, the criterion of neighbourhood was irrelevant. Only if the school had admitted 25% children under the abovementioned categories the question of neighbourhood could have been examined. The Judge took the school to task saying that since the school had wasted one full year of the child, it was now its responsibility to educate the child till class XII instead of the stipulated class VIII. The government will compensate the education of child from classes I to VIII at the rate of Rs. 450 per month but the school will have to take care of the expenses on Chaitanya's education from classes IX to XII on its own. He added that if any of the buses run by school to carry its children go in the direction of Chaitanya's house then the school will have to provide free bus service to

him for the duration of his study in the school.

It is hoped that after such a clear cut and strict order by the HC the schools which have been playing truant in admission of children under the Act will now stop resisting the entry of children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections into their precincts. The Judge said that denying admission to children under section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act on technical grounds is against the spirit of the Act. The Act has been made to facilitate the admission of children who are denied education. If the private schools will put all their energies in blocking the admission of underprivileged children then the purpose of the Act would be defeated.

Jagdish Gandhi challenged the admission of 31 children in academic year 2015-16 under the Act ordered by DM, Lucknow. The HC and then the Supreme Court ordered him to admit 13 out of these 31 children who lived in the neighbourhood of one km. In 2016-17 Jagdish Gandhi again refused to admit 55 children, 14 of whom are still in court against him even after the entire academic year is over.

(Continued on Page 13)

Who cracked the *Mahagathbandhan*?

J. L. Jawahar

It is cracked, no doubt. The question is who the culprit is. It is not surprising that everybody says “not in my name” particularly when a criminal is obviously there before your eyes. But we should not jump to conclusion based on apparent situation. We should not ignore facts – good or bad. Maha or not, the gathbandhan (coalition) had a short life. Why was it formed at all? After the BJP swept the polls in 2014 and got unexpected majority to form government in the center, everybody has seen the writings on the wall. They realized it was a tsunami and it could not be stopped unless all the other forces join hands and stand together. It is no doubt a wise political decision. The fact is that there is nothing common between the parties that have joined hands except that they have a common enemy – the BJP that has swept the polls. “My enemy’s enemy is my friend” is the principle on which they came together. That is the only cement that holds together the bricks to appear like a wall. Naturally their survival depends on the enemy. The parties have not discarded their identities. They kept their members as separate camps. Obviously they expected the coalition as a short term arrangement. The only agreement is that they will form a government under the leadership of M Nitish Kumar after elections to the Assembly. Why did they choose him as Chief Minister beforehand? They know he is the only one that has credibility among them. Such coalitions will necessarily break down after the enemy disappears by any reason. Unfortunately, in this case, the enemy is getting stronger day by day and becoming invincible at least for the near future.

The political situation does not stand still. Changes happen and one has to deal with it wisely. The change in this case is in the form of allegations of corruption against the Deputy Chief Minister. The coalition tried to prevail on the Chief Minister to close his eyes on this issue and allow him to continue in the cabinet. But the world is not confined to only the coalition partners. There are other people observing the situation. Political parties are jealous of each other. When opportunity arises they will try to prove the other as unprincipled, particularly when the candidate is the one claiming some moral ground. They allege that he is closing his eyes as he is fond of the Chair and he is in no way better than any of the other politicians. In the heart of hearts even the members of coalition are of the same view. How could he be different when he joined hands with us? He knows what the RJD party is when he joined hands. How can he refuse to accept its candidate now in the cabinet? That is, when you joined hands with a corrupt party to form the government, you have to carry on with the corrupt member in the cabinet. It amounts to a compromise on the part of Nitish Kumar. Isn’t it? Everybody knows that the head of the party is disqualified on allegations of corruption. Does it mean that everybody in that party is also corrupt? We find that almost all the terrorists are Muslims. In spite of it, we do not agree that all Muslims are terrorists. It could be the same with the party also. The person nominated by that party to join the cabinet has no allegations against him. The Chief Minister has no objection for him. No doubt, that is also a compromise to some extent. But it is pragmatic. Those

who find fault with Nitish now, should have objected then.

Suddenly some allegations were raised about the Dy. Chief Minister by no less an organization than the CBI. He was not removed from the cabinet immediately as it would precipitate a crisis in the coalition. It has to be done with concurrence of all coalition members. It would have been the simplest and easiest step if he was replaced with another member of the same party. By that the cabinet could have maintained a clean image. But the head of that party was shouting from (his) house tops that he would not resign under any circumstances. As a loyal member of coalition, Nitish was meeting all the members of coalition pleading that the member may be told to resign and some other member be nominated for cabinet. But none of them had the courage to tell that to the arrogant head of that party. Others were taunting Nitish on that. He was not removing him as it would jeopardise his Chair. But if he removes the member, it would certainly lead to break down of coalition and he would be blamed for that. It would be a sin on his part if not a crime. Instead of cooperating with the Chief Minister to maintain coalition respectably, the other partners were willing to play the game and see the fun.

At this juncture came another development that has thickened the quagmire and entangled him deeply. It was the election of President. A long time was available for the parties to select their candidates. In fact, the coalition members met many times to select the candidate, but could not

identify any one that is acceptable to all of them. There was no unity of purpose. To cover up the absence of unity they declared that they will announce their candidate after the official party announces their candidate. Obviously, they preferred to react rather than to act. That was how they lead the coalition. The common enemy was there that drove them to form a coalition. But now there is no common friend to unite them. The ruling party selected a Dalit candidate who happened to be the governor of Bihar at that time. As Chief Minister of the state Nitish had to work with him on daily basis and he has developed cordial relations with him. He could not but congratulate him and offer his support as he was sure to be the next President. The coalition has not yet selected its candidate and even if the selection is made it would be only as a matter of token as he was sure to be defeated. But the coalition partners did not like it. They never feel like one with the Chief Minister. They only wanted to show their supremacy over the CM as partners of coalition that made him the Chief Minister. If they were wise enough to take advantage of selecting their candidate in advance, Nitish would have naturally committed to him even if he was not likely to get elected as President. Even if it is in the interest of the state, what he has done has become a confrontation with the coalition partners. They have nominated another Dalit candidate to contest election for President. The habitual communal politics came into play. There may not be anything to choose between the two candidates except the party to which they are affiliated. But the coalition candidate is a woman and also from Bihar state. Thus, the fact that Nitish could not support her became a remark against him. The play of gender card is only an opportunism. The bill to reserve some seats in Parliament to women is lying there for decades. That is how

they show value for women. Even Hillary Clinton could not get any advantage of playing the gender card in America. In spite of insulting women in the most uncivilized manner, most of the women in America voted for Trump and made him the President. Feminism has no place in politics.

Then came the time to select a candidate for Vice-President. This time the coalition was wise enough to announce their candidate immediately in one sitting. Nitish offered his support to that candidate along with the coalition members. Obviously, he was not thinking of going against coalition partners and expecting they will prevail on the recalcitrant party to cooperate with the Chief Minister and save coalition. All in vain.

The nominee of the ruling party won the election as President. As a matter of courtesy, Nitish had to go and congratulate him, which he did. There was no indication that the partners will act to solve his problem. They wanted to see how Nitish will solve the problem. Or, in their opinion, there is no problem at all. For Nitish, it is a grave situation. He has to act. Instead of removing the tainted minister and bear the sin of breaking the coalition, he decided to resign as Chief Minister and stepped out. Things moved fast. The ruling party BJP immediately offered support as if they were waiting for such a development. If he accepts the offer he would be able to continue as Chief Minister without the support of the present coalition members. But support is coming from a party which he condemned earlier. If he does not accept it, there would be either a President's rule or elections in the state of Bihar. What could he get by that? And what could he lose if he accepts the support offered by BJP and form a government? The support is an

opportunistic movement on the part of BJP. There will be a blame that he accepted the offer as he was fond of power. What is wrong in it? Is it not for grabbing power that political parties are formed? Is there anybody who would be benefitted if Nitish refuses to accept the offer of support from BJP? There would be a price for accepting the support from BJP. They may try to dictate. But he can always decline to toe the line if it is unworthy and quit if necessary. Why to reject it now without trying? He decided to accept the offer and took charge as Chief Minister again. The fast developments gave rise to suspicions that it was all prearranged. If it was really a prearranged affair, it could have been prevented by facilitating Nitish continue as Chief Minister of coalition by removing the tainted minister. Having refused to do that, the coalition has only to regret but not to blame anybody. There is no use of searching for scapegoats.

Having observed this sick drama from the beginning, even the socialist friends who have claimed Nitish as their own all these days, try to find fault with him and blame him as crazy for power. They blame him for breaking the coalition. I feel particularly sorry when *Janata* weekly did not hesitate to call it "treachery of Nitish". But they did not have the courage to call the party any names who "preferred to the family's fortune more than the ideology". On the other hand complements are paid for "his impeccable secular character". It is clearly showing prejudice. It is depressing to note that even among the so-called socialists there is so much of bias and partiality. Naturally it lead to tilted analysis of the situation and failed to call the spade a spade. If there is any life in the coalition, there is nothing to prevent them from electing another person in the place of Nitish

when he resigned. They refuse to see the reason and allege that it is not any principle that made Nitish resign. It is only the “desire to remain in power that caused the move.” That is the crux of the problem. Everybody in the coalition lost the power while Nitish even after resigning regained his power. Naturally it caused jealousy and became an excuse to blame him. They refuse to ask why such a situation was allowed to develop. Why none of the coalition partners were willing to get rid of a tainted minister to save the

coalition? They want to retain power at the cost of reputation of Nitish. If there is any trace of principle and morality in Indian politics, it is only in people like Nitish and not in those who created a situation where he was compelled to commit *hara-kiri*. By that he hurt himself, but strangely, others are weeping. Allegations against Nitish are illogical and do not get credibility just by referring to Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. It is a shallow attempt. It is time to realise that the coalition broke

because of its intrinsic defects, its lack of any common base except enmity with the ruling party. It was not a coherent group. The partners refused to take any responsibility to ensure the success of coalition. They enjoyed the situation where Nitish faced a moral crisis. The coalition partners have neither mutual trust nor respect for each other. Still we could not find any other politician who stood for his own convictions to the extent Nitish did. Let us wait and see what is in store for him in future.

(Continued from Page 10)

Imitating CMS, several other schools like Navyug Radiance, owned by Bhartiya Janata Party leader Sudhir Halwasiya, City International, owned by Jagdish Gandhi's daughter Sunita Gandhi, Dr. Virendra Swaroop Public School, Mahanagar and two branches of Saint Mary Intermediate College did not admit a total of 105 children in 2016-17.

In the current academic year 2017-18, 296 admissions have been ordered by the local administration and of the 167 children who have approached CMS, all of them have been declared undeserving by it. According to the school 117 of them live outside the limit of one km, 135 are below 6 years of age, 89 are already enrolled in other schools and 38 don't qualify to be in economically weaker section category. Some of the children fail on more than one criterion. The number of schools which are defiant about not admitting children under the Act is going up every year as a result of CMS's stance. It is entirely because of CMS that admissions to schools under section 12(1)(c) has become such an uphill task.

If Jagdish Gandhi is rightly claiming that all admissions ordered

by the office of BSA are faulty then action must be taken against the BSA. However, if the BSA is correct then administration or the government must take action against the truant schools.

An important question which arises is whether Jagdish Gandhi has a right to examine the criteria required for admission for each of the children who are admitted to his school. If in this manner, every non-governmental person started examining the correctness of government's decision then the entire work of government can come to standstill. For example, if the fair price shop owner took a stand that s(he) would first examine the genuineness of the ration cards owners before distributing the food grains as part of Public Distribution System, then the whole scheme would be hampered.

In the same advertisement published by Jagdish Gandhi in which he has given reasons for not admitting children under the RTE Act, he has also claimed in one corner that he and his wife Bharti Gandhi do not own any private property, jewellery nor have large bank balances. The question which must be asked is where is

Jagdish Gandhi getting the funds from for publishing expensive advertisements and hiring costly lawyers like Shanti Bhushan and Abhishek Manu Singhvi? Is it from the fees that he charges from the parents of children who study in 20 branches of CMS? Does he have a right to waste the hard earned money of parents on contesting the admissions of underprivileged children in his school?

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Bengal Chemicals up for sale

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944) was Professor of Chemistry at Presidency College, Calcutta (now Kolkata), an Indian patriot, educationist, and industrial pioneer who established the famous Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals as early as in 1901 when India was still under foreign rule. Addressing students in Trivandrum, Kerala on 13 March 1925, Mahatma Gandhi had held Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray out as an example to follow :

"I would like you to keep the two most brilliant examples we have in our own dear country, and those two are Drs. J.C. Bose and P.C. Ray. At least to the students of science, they must be household words, household names. I believe that they are household names to the whole of the educated India. They went in for science for the sake of science and we know what they have achieved. They never thought of what the profession of science would bring them in the shape of money or fame. They cultivated it for the sake of it ...".

Today the famous Bengal Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals, which Acharya Ray established more than 115 years ago, and which had throughout the 20th century given many foreign companies a run for their money, might be up for sale. Efforts are on to prevent this. See the article below by Rabin Majumdar, himself a retired Professor of Chemical Technology, published in The Statesman.

–Anil Nauriya

On the eve of our preparation to celebrate the 157th birthday of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray falling on 2 August came the perturbing news that Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Limited (BCPL) and its landed assets have been put on sale by the Government of India, the owner of the company since 1980-81.

The celebrity composer-artist Pratul Mukhopadhyay sings with gusto - alu becho chhola becho, ... O bandhu... tomar... swapno becho na (sell potato, sell gram (but) dear friend... don't sell your... dreams).

The audience is enchanted, they cheer and applaud. But when dreams are thrown out in the open market for bidding and selling, we keep mum. BCPL owes its origin to Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works Limited (BCPWL, 1901) popularly known as Bengal Chemical or BCPW. Its founder-proprietor was none other than Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray who described BCPW as his daughter (and his students as his sons).

Prafulla Chandra was a great dreamer and a visionary. Among his many projects undertaken to ameliorate the condition of his countrymen, BCPW was perhaps the best vehicle to realise his dream. It was also instrumental in demonstrating his ideas and methods to his countrymen.

As India's first own Heavy Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry, BCPW rose to dizzying heights in his lifetime and became a symbol of indigenous wisdom and pride.

The story of BCPW and its creator spread far and wide and the people of Bombay (now Mumbai) placed at the disposal of Ray a handsome morsel of land at a token price of just one rupee to set up a Bombay unit of BCPW which became a reality in 1938.

The successes were not miracles, they were won through great perseverance, hard labour and research. In fact, research and

innovation were in-built into BCPW from conception to its development into a successful industry. Just before he fell seriously ill for the last time and became inactive, Ray got disillusioned and quit from the Board of Directors and that too on a question of reinvestment of company profits into research and well-being of workers that he favoured, against other members who wanted this to be paid to shareholders.

BCPW strived to demonstrate, inter alia, how to weave education and research to the benefit of an industry and how an industry having significant pollution potential can live and grow sustainably. We failed to recognise the significance of BCPW and thus Prafulla Chandra Ray has never been given credit as a pioneer of industrialisation in modern India.

He has been widely misinterpreted and misunderstood albeit being sort of worshipped and further distorted in the process. In Independent India, we ignored him and others like him and indulged in other easier routes to

industrialisation; we even failed to realize the necessity of researching, developing and inculcating ideas and methodologies expounded by him and demonstrated through BCPW.

Quite a few research institutes grew up in free India bearing the names of scientists winning recognition of Western countries, mainly Europe. PC Ray was a notable exception. BCPW has often been described as merely a Swadeshi adventure of an idiosyncratic scientist and failed to attract necessary sympathy and support.

It started to show signs of wilting in Independent India; efforts to make it profitable brought about further decline. Finally, the Central Government took it over, rechristened it as BCPL and a new government company emerged. It continued to survive with subsidies and capital loans on soft terms only to grow more sick.

A closer look reveals that the popular household products, industrial and agricultural chemicals that were the hallmark of BCPW got little support to expand. Emphasis was laid on 'producing' tablets and capsules of medicines and formulations of wellknown brands. Marketing was the other area sought to be modernised - BCPL joined hands with on-line shoppers and retail chains. Consequently, it was the in-house R & D that suffered casualty.

The net result was that BCPW minus Dreams = BCPL. It was reported that BCPL made a profit of more than Rs 4 crore in the last financial year (2016-17) after prolonged losses over six decades. Wasn't it a reflection of the company's turnaround, of gaining

inherent strength towards sustained growth to make profit? Why then is the current call for putting BCPL in the list of companies for disinvestment and sell-out?

BCPL workers have filed a case at Kolkata High Court against the decision and have obtained an interim order of stay. This might be considered as a welcome step but will it be sufficient to save BCPL from eventual death? It is hardly any exaggeration that our education and research in science and technology today have become mere parasites thriving on everything alien to the realities in India, particularly in respect of the needs and aspirations of people.

Our precious resources like land, forests, water bodies, mines and coasts are on sale or lease, so are our education, agriculture, health and biodiversity, with active assistance from governments in Delhi and in States. When even 'Navratnas' are not spared, can the government be moved by appealing in the name of dreams, freedom, self-respect and sustainability?

Even in these days of open global market and business, developed countries are eager, on the one hand, to export dirty industries to greener countries ready to embrace them and, on the other, are still keen on focusing in areas of their strength and maintaining their supremacy and control. Only those who are conscious, alert and have self-esteem can possibly resist the imminent death of BCPL.

They can join in chorus with workers of the company and restrain the spree of disinvestment and sale/lease for temporary benefits to the exchequer.

Let us assert that BCPL and its lands must not be sold or leased out to

promoters/investors. Instead, let the government take appropriate steps to set up an Industrial Laboratory cum Research Institute in the name of PC Ray to innovate and develop sustainable technologies not only for BCPL but also for other similar industries in India.

Let there also be provision for complimentary research into themes like History of Science, Technology and Industry, Social basis of Technology and Industry, Industrialisation in relation to History, Environment and Social Culture etc. - research topics that were initiated by the Acharya himself.

And that will possibly be the surest way to rejuvenate not only BCPL but also India. Death is always sad, but death of dreams is dreadful to a nation. Silence in such a situation is to commit suicide and that is a crime.

Acharya Javadekar
A Satyagrahi Socialist



G. P. Pradhan

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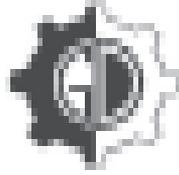
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