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Hindi spread requires patience

Kuldip Nayar

Whenever a state language wants to spread itself to the national sphere, it naturally meets with some resistance. The limits of both are delineated. One is confined to the state while the other has the entire country for its spread.

The chauvinists in states have not understood it or at least not in the manner it should be. There is no competition. One is regional and the other is national. That Hindi is the national language was decided by the constituent assembly. The parliamentary committee—representatives from the non-Hindi speaking states participated—once again made it clear that Hindi was the national language and what has been left to the future was the switchover from English to Hindi.

What is happening now is that an effort is being made to reopen the language issue. Some are challenging the very idea of India and making territorial demands. This is unfortunate. Hindi was adopted to be India's language by the constituent assembly and there is a wrong impression spread that it was done by the majority of one.

The controversy was over the adoption of numerals, not the language.

Today, the official business and most other work are conducted in Hindi, much to the difficulty of non-Hindi speaking people. In fact, during the framing of constitution, the issue of language was one of the most debated topics and the decision to declare a national language resulted in two prominent camps. One, the North Indians who advocated Hindi as the national language and, two, the South Indians who did not want it to be imposed upon them.

While the Hindi camp tried to push Hindi due to its “numerical superiority”, the Tamil camp rejected it outright and one of the Tamil leaders even went on to mock them by pointing out that if “numerical superiority” was the criteria, then the crow had to be chosen as national bird instead of the peacock. After several brainstorming debates, the Constituent assembly decided to finalize on Hindi with Devanagari script as the official language of the

Union, along with a special clause that English would continue to remain in use for all official purposes for the next 15 years.

But within few years, the committees set up to implement it began to face the ground realities. It came as a hard realization that 15 years would not be a sufficient period as the process of developing Hindi to a stage where it could be used as single national language would take more time. Even C. Rajagopalachari, who had always been in favour of Hindi as the national language and had imposed Hindi in 1937 when he had formed the Government of Madras, began to air his concerns about how Hindi was yet to develop to be acceptable as the single national language.

I was present at the discussion by the parliamentary committee when Govind Ballabh Pant was the Home Minister. I was his information officer then. When he started the business, he found that the non-Hindi speaking members were up in arms and vehemently opposed to use of the language in official business. Slowly and gradually, Pant brought around all members to reiterate that the union language, as enunciated in the constitution, would be Hindi. He left the matter of switchover to sometime in the future.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave an assurance to the non-Hindi speaking people that the switchover would take place only when they would be ready for it. His successor Lal Bahadur Shastri brought a bill in parliament to that effect. Parliament gave an assurance to the country that the non-Hindi speaking

people would not be put to inconvenience or handicapped.

Parliament is very sensitive on the subject and does not want to take any action until the non-Hindi speaking members endorse it. But a recent move by BJP government to promote Hindi had opened up a can of worms and scratched old scars. Social media was abuzz with debates over linguistics. While there seemed to be a general consensus among citizens that no language must be imposed upon by anybody against their wishes, most states in the south, Tamil Nadu in particular, had vehemently opposed any such move.

With the spread of soft-Hindutava in the country, Hindi is coming in its wake. Prime Minister Narendra Modi feels at home with the language. So do the other members from the majority of Hindi-speaking states. That is the reason why a non-Hindi speaking state jealously guards its regional language and even challenges Hindi whenever the particular state feels that the rightful space of its own language has been taken by national language.

Since the country has adopted a three-language formula—English, Hindi and the regional—the Hindi-speaking states are happy because it is their regional language. Non-Hindi speaking states are also happy because they have English and fit into the dictates of the Union which is primarily conducting its business in English.

Hindi chauvinists, who showed no patience earlier, are now quiet because they find that Hindi is a compulsory subject all over the country. If not today,

but tomorrow Hindi would have been learnt by the generations to come. Even the people in south India have realised that there is no go from the national language and their children are learning Hindi. Probably, the Modi government feels that it has to be only patient.

The noting on files is already in Hindi. Those who do so have the dictates of the Union in mind and give the English translation of the noting as well. It serves everybody's purpose and hence there is no reason for the government to take any extreme measures that will be looked down upon as an imposition. It would be better if things are left as they prevail today. Hindi is already there. Only a bit of patience is needed from the chauvinists. The RSS is doing that. Modi's occasional visits to the RSS headquarters at Nagpur testify to that.

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Notebook**Perfidious Wapsi**

What many feared and an equal number hoped against hope that it will not, has happened. Nitish Kumar walked back to the NDA after four years of his stint out of it. No wonder, the BJP is celebrating it as Ghar Wapsi. In this Wapsi he is not alone, his entire legislative party seems to be with him. The press tells us the story that what made him do it is the news (planted perhaps) that someone from the Gathbandhan met an important minister in Delhi with a plan to topple the Nitish Government. He verified from his own sources and found it correct, we are told, and it is this which precipitated the move. The choice of the verb 'precipitate' is revealing. Such a move had been worked out, perhaps with the Prime Minister, and all that was needed was to wait for an opportunity. Perhaps the unleashing of the CBI hounds on Lalu's family too was worked out in advance. And when it happened Nitish distanced himself from the minister who was under investigation, built pressure for him to resign, and, when he failed, as expected, he did the Ghar Wapsi.

They say power corrupts, the country got one more proof of this. It is not moral politics, not to protect the image of being incorruptible, but the desire to remain in power, that caused the move. If it was otherwise, he could have convened a meeting of the Mahagathbandhan legislators, offered to resign and requested them to elect a new leader. That would have been moral politics. Acharya Narendra Dev, the doyen of socialist movement who set high standards of morality, had resigned from the membership of the legislature when the socialists left the Congress.

Nitish could have followed his example. But he did not. It is shocking that not one MLA from the JD (U) has so far revolted. There are some fine socialists among them, and hence it is sad and tragic, to note that none of them has protested. On that day, in May 17, 2016, when he came to identify himself with the socialists, he had talked of Sangh mukt Bharat. This was the day on which the Congress Socialist Party was conceived in Patna in 1934, and he had committed himself to getting rid of the Sangh. The socialists cheered. He praised Medha, a symbol of peaceful non-violent resistance, the resistance of the type which the Father of the Nation would have approved, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha and this paper. And it should be added that Lalu, despite his impeccable secular character, preferred to the family's fortune more than the ideology and invited his ruin.

In those four years of lucidity to some, and lunacy to others, and now perhaps to him, he roused hope. He became a Prime Ministerial face of the opposition in the country. He picked up an item from Gandhiji's constructive programme, the prohibition, and enacted a law and became popular among women. He toured all over the country to demand total prohibition. And he celebrated the Champaran Satyagriha. And hence, despite many doubters, some thought that he would be a harbinger of a new politics.

Politics where there is no corruption, politics where morality, ideology mattered more than power, politics where tainted people, even

if innocent, would resign on their own, politics which is fare to all. This is what the Freedom Fighters preached.

All this has been betrayed. This Wednesday in the last week of July, has become a black day in the country and should be remembered as such. It is the day when he betrayed the Sangh mukt cause for a few pieces of silver (power). As it happens, it is also the day when Medha, whom he had praised, was fasting, staring at the gloomy prospect of homes of two hundred thousand Adivasis drowning in the swelling waters of the Narmada river. The news of Nitish's perfidy must have added to her gloom. Bihar, which produced Mahavir and Buddha in past, Rajendra Prasad and JP and Ganga Prasad Sinha and Karpoori Thakur recently, to name a few, is not known for producing Mir Jafars. Will this land now be known as the land of Nitish the betrayer?

People in this country are bound to realize sooner or later that the lynch mobs who kill Muslims and Dalits, could kill also those who do not agree with their views even if they are Hindus. 'They will come for me', will haunt them and they will go back to Gandhiji and the heroes of the Freedom Movement, to learn lessons at their feet and decide to work for a India free from the contrary and divisive views of Hindutva. The treachery of Nitish will not go in vain, it will not be avenged but will be washed away by the sacrifices of those who are inspired by Swami Vivekanand, Gurudev Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

Let's hope that there are some in the JD(U), who are crying in their privacy at this betrayal. Let's further hope that they will find the courage to revolt and seek shelter in some other socialist party and work to liberate their brothers from the clutches of Nitish and also

work for an anti-RSS formidable front.

A few things are clear. His career graph has ended and his popularity has nose-dived. Now whatever he does, even for the benefit of Bihar, will be credited to the BJP and he

will develop the image of a poodle of Narendra Modi. He has committed hara-kiri that was entirely unnecessary and he will repent it. He will live to see his ruin and there will be no chance left even for penance. What a hara-kiri!

—GGP

After 17 days of Relay Fast at 21 places in Narmada Valley, Sardar Sarovar affected with Medha Patkar go on Indefinite Fast on the Narmada River Bank

Sardar Sarovar Project was initially pushed in the name of the drought affected in Gujarat. It is obvious; it was being pushed for the corporates and in the interest of the electoral politics. Without completing just rehabilitation of thousands of families in Madhya Pradesh the Government of Madhya Pradesh with the Centre's blessings is all ready to forcibly evict and throw the families with the children aged out in the tin sheds of 180 sq. feet which can't even accommodate their belongings, why talk of persons and cattle.

On July 24, the police force brought in for this operation carried out a mock drill in Badwani and continued with its intimidation tactics towards vacating the villages.

No doubt the political parties including Congress, JD (U), Left Front, AAP through their elected representatives and office bearers, have taken cognizance of and supported the people's struggle by raising their voice at the democratic forum of Madhya Pradesh assembly and the parliament. They have endorsed the people's demands for rights and opposed submergence as well as eviction without

rehabilitation. However the Shivraj Singh government seems to be determined to use force and violent measures. The time schedule with a plan to raise the water level by few metres every ten to twenty days is another conspiracy like a slow poisoning to kill the communities.

Against such violence, the 32 years old nonviolent movement of the people in Narmada region has to be necessarily taken to the peak. Narmada Bachao Andolan will initiate an Indefinite Mass Fast from July 27th, on the bank of the river Narmada.

As per the Madhya Pradesh Government notification (dated 25.5.2017), 18386 families of villages will have to vacate their house and the village while the lists therein have a number of flaws such as the families who have left decades ago or the others who were removed on the grounds of reduced back water level and related exclusion of theirs, are also included directed to leave by 31.7.2017.

On the other hand, many families that have been residing since generations and are to be surely affected, are left out! The reality is

that 192 villages and one township inhabit about 40,000 families which can be affected at the dam height of 138.68 metres with the highest flood.

With not a drop of water being available to Madhya Pradesh from Sardar Sarovar, it's shocking to see that the state does not hesitate to sacrifice its living communities. It has already promoted the false affidavits and shamelessly declared the project across the world as a symbol of development.

The grand reality as on today is such as the state of Gujarat, not completing the micro canal network, has diverted the canal waters to the corporates such as Coca Cola and Car industry even in the name of the drought affected. This year when the Narmada waters reached Saurashtra, what a coincidence that the heavy rains (about 22 inches in 2 to 3 days) have led to flooding of dams which were to be filled with Narmada and some even overflowed. The army had to be called and at least 5000 people had to vacate first in Gujarat before the valley. This has

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In Search of Privacy

J. L. Jawahar

Of late, privacy has become a big issue – both for the government and the judiciary. In fact, it is the problem of the individual more than that of any institution.

The government has devised Aadhaar card as a means of assuring that the various subsidies and benefits offered to poor people reach them without mediators. Then they started to link it with every activity of all citizens, thus making it an encumbrance for all unintentionally. Some approached courts seeking redressal and tell the government to stop it. Then it has become the problem of courts. Naturally, the courts of law searched for privacy in the Constitution, the document that governs the process of judgment. But they could not find any mention of it in the constitution. A doubt has arisen whether there is anything called privacy and if it is there, what it is like.

It is not rare that our judiciary exercised rights that are not there in the constitution. That is what happens in regard to Public Interest Litigation, the venerable PIL jurisdiction. More important in that line is the constitution of collegium for selection of persons for appointment to the higher judiciary. In the case of PIL there was no controversy as everybody considers it a valve that can be opened to reduce the pressure on the people to get immediate redressal of their grievances. But in regard to collegium there has been a deep controversy as it amounted to usurping the rights of the executive

given in the constitution. In order to justify that violation of the constitution, the judiciary took the trouble to devise strange doctrines and wild interpretations of the constitution. Stress was laid on the basic structure and democratic nature of the constitution. It was stated that the democratic structure depends on the rule of law and the law is as stated by the courts. They erased the distinction between consultation and consent and exercised their right as conceived by them. It is a *fait accompli* and accepted by all reminding one of Stockholm Syndrome. It is pointed out here only to indicate that the judiciary has a right to interpret the constitution in such a way that it is not difficult to find a place for privacy in the constitution. In fact, it would be more relevant and justified in the present case.

It is not only the triad of Articles 14, 19 and 21 that imply privacy as a constitutional concept. There are also judgments wherein privacy is accepted as a right of individual that cannot be violated indiscriminately. Then the question arose whether privacy is also a fundamental right or something on par with those rights (as if we have much respect for those fundamental rights). Every right that is mentioned as fundamental in the constitution has been circumscribed (if not eroded) by some amendment to the constitution or some interpretation by the judiciary. Thus there is no force in Art. 13 wherein it is stated that all the laws “in so far as they are inconsistent with the provisions of this part” (of

fundamental rights) “shall to the extent of such inconsistency, be void.” Thus there is no advantage in accepting privacy as a fundamental right.

Then the question is how to conceive the idea of privacy and how to give it a judicial shape. It would be difficult to establish that right with a government that did not hesitate to declare that the individual has no absolute right even on his own body. It can be agreed that there are no absolute rights in a civilized society. But it cannot be denied that there are certain rights available to the citizens in a democracy and it is the responsibility of the government to safeguard the same. In nature one is born free. Shackles arise only because of the society into which we are born as we have certain social responsibilities. Wild animals do not have such restrictions as they do not have any such responsibilities. They are really free. Taking a natural concept, there is no limitation on the freedom of an individual. But limitations arise in view of his responsibilities to the society as a civilized member of it. But for those restrictions, he is supposed to be free. He can always demand that he must be allowed to live as he likes as a free individual. Apart from those restrictions, which must be legitimate and specific, whatever he does constitutes his privacy. He has a right to enjoy it without interference from any authority. “Leave me alone” he can say.

In every country citizens have certain rights that are not available

to others living in that country. It casts a responsibility on the government to keep track of its citizens so that any rights are restricted to them and not availed by others – for example, right to vote in elections or to prosecute a profession. Citizenship confers certain rights that are not available to others. To ensure that, it would be necessary to have a system to identify the citizens. Initially, Aadhaar Card is supposed to serve that purpose. But the card is issued on obtaining some more personal information than what is required for identification of citizenship. (Surprisingly, there is no restriction that Aadhaar card is issued only to citizens.) In addition, Aadhaar is now supposed to be linked to every activity of the individual. To open a bank account Aadhaar is necessary. I am advised to link my mobile phone with my Aadhaar number. Perhaps I may be asked for Aadhaar if I want to book an air ticket. Why is it required? It gives a feeling that the Big Brother is breathing over your shoulders. There is no such right to the government in a democracy. There was a furor when the National Security Agency of the USA started collecting information without any authority. Governments do not have any overriding rights to collect information about citizens clandestinely.

A question was raised that the people are giving so much of information about themselves on internet in the form of chatting and other relations. In many such cases it amounts to foolishness and it involved the concerned persons in trouble. But revealing information voluntarily cannot be an excuse for the governments to ask for revealing of such personal information without any legal authority. People

do not like surveillance even if what they do is not illegal or immoral. If the person has done anything illegal the government must be having the means to discover it and punish. But it does not justify surveillance of everybody to forestall the possibility of somebody doing something illegal.

In a democracy everyone is entitled to do anything that is not specifically forbidden. In a dictatorship people are not supposed to do anything except what is specifically approved. That is the basic difference that shall be maintained. We are in a democracy.

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happened once every few years and raises a question regarding whether Gujarat can or cannot have decentralized water management, and avoid such a huge destruction? Madhya Pradesh too would accept that it doesn't require any more power since its own power projects, such as the Bargi Power Plant kept idle as closed. Why can't then both the states, not having any urgency take a decision to defer impoundment until the R&R is complete.

The Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh, it is clear and obvious, is not for any dialogue with us who can bring into the debate, data and documents that can prove as well as challenge. Avoiding any discussion on the inadequacies, he has had a few dialogues till only with his party and Parivar colleagues. The groups he talked to included the middlemen who have looted the poor oustees for lakhs, which established the nexus that support the corruption and why there was no action even after 7 years long enquiry by Justice Jha

Privacy has a value. It gives flavor and beauty to personal life. It makes you what you are. It is your proud possession. Invasion of it is always resented. When law compels it to reveal, it is tolerated and obeyed.

Then, what is privacy? It is everything that is not expected to be revealed under specific laws. That line has to be drawn clearly. Privacy provides the background for fundamental rights. It provides the context in which fundamental rights become relevant and meaningful. Let us hope that our judiciary will give that protection to all the citizens.

Commission.

Today, Modi Government has totally ignored the social and environmental issues, so serious and detrimental, at the dam height of 138.68 metres, the Government of Madhya Pradesh seems to be ready to sacrifice the lives and rights of lakhs of people with police force and water floods.

The state has not only misinterpreted the order of the Apex Court dated 8.2.2017 but has also left hundreds of farmers/landholders deprived of the package granted by the Supreme Court. Instead of constructing all civic amenities at the R&R sites and create a situation conducive to shifting of the oustees to the sites, the state is focusing on erecting temporary structures, the tin sheds, spending crores of rupees where there is no permanent facility for either drinking water or water availability for building houses, the government is to make food camps with contractors to feed 20 thousand people at each, at the cost of 66

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India-China on the Brink of War!

D. K. Giri

The stand-off that began in mid-June at the tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan seems to escalate into a full-scale war. Experts believe that a war is imminent between India and China unless the stand-off is de-escalated through talks. China demands the withdrawal of Indian troops before any talks could begin. India says troops from both sides should pull-out, the status quo ante at the tri-junction be restored, then only talks could start for the long-term solution of the border disputes. Neither side is prepared to accommodate the request of the other. Consequently, the stalemate continues, pushing both China and India to the brink of war.

In the media, speculations on war, albeit a limited one, continue to pour in. China would not back off, risk a loss of image of the biggest regional power and of an aspiring world super power. India would not pull out unilaterally lest it should be seen as a lesser power than China, unable or unwilling to defend its friends and allies. Secondly, for China, it would be giving up part of its territory for negotiation, on which it has bonafide claim. India, although, at the moment is defending Bhutan's territorial claims, has serious security risks to let China build a road through Doklam. The road will bring China close to a spot, called the 'chicken neck' that connects India to its eight North-eastern States. India, at no cost, can allow this to happen. So, how will the impasse be resolved, with a war or diplomacy, or both? The jury is still

out on these three possible scenarios.

While both New Delhi and Beijing are feverishly preparing to back-up the stand-off and hoping for a face-saving, self-satisfactory solution, let us assess the forces at work – diplomatic, military, intellectual, and PR etc., also the political-strategic steps taken by New Delhi and Beijing. It is a part of Chinese compulsive tendency to grab territories of other countries. It has recurring territorial disputes with several countries, with Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan and so on. It uses a muscular approach to get into a particular area, create facts on the ground, utters belligerent rhetoric through official media and gives a *fait accompli* to the opponent. In most cases, the militarily weaker countries buckle under the pressure and give in. It used a similar tactic with Bhutan, as it had done in the past. The Kingdom of Bhutan had some supervisory role in parts of Tibet. China pushed Bhutan out of it as it annexed Tibet into PRC. This time around, Beijing was building a road up to a military base of Bhutan called Zompleri through a plateau known as Doklam. The plateau lies at the tri-junction between China, Indian State of Sikkim and Bhutan, and is currently disputed between Beijing and Thimpu. India supports Bhutan's claim over it. Beijing contends that as per the 1890 Border Settlement Agreement between China and Imperial Britain, the plateau belongs to China. Thimpu not being a part of the Agreement, disputes the claim. India, as the closest ally of Bhutan,

and a stakeholder in the geo-politics of the area, backs up Thimpu on this. India also invokes China's position way back in 1955 and the recent agreement of 2012. In 1955, at the famous Bandung Conference, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai had said, "with some of our neighbouring countries, we have not yet fixed our border lines and we are ready to do so. But, before such negotiations can be held, we are willing to maintain the present situation by acknowledging that these parts of our border are parts which are undetermined. We will restrain our government and people from crossing even one step across our border (and) if such things do happen we (would) admit our mistakes. As to the determination of common borders which we will be undertaking with our neighbouring countries, we shall use only peaceful means and we shall not permit any other kind of method. In no case, shall we change that."

Beijing and its foreign policy establishment have obviously forgotten such a historic statement made by their famous leader, or they conveniently ignore it to undertake their territorial expansionism. Similarly, only five years ago, in 2012, India and China agreed that all disputed border areas will be re-determined through negotiation. China has clearly violated all these commitments. China commits these violations in a calculated way. It is just that it miscalculated its move this time around. Beijing thought of clandestinely constructing the road as Bhutan would not have the gall

to resist. It did not anticipate such a strong reaction from New Delhi who, on a request from Kingdom of Bhutan, stepped in swiftly and stopped the construction work, mobilized its forces to prevent Chinese incursion. There have been such incursion by Chinese grazers, which have been ignored by Bhutanese, but a construction of a road up to Bhutanese border is unacceptable.

To be sure, it is a part of Chinese game plan to establish its hegemony in South Asia and entire Asian region, on the way to becoming the super power. It has brought other countries in the region into its 'sphere of influence' through trade, and investment, mainly in infrastructure – Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and others through its new strategy, one belt, one road (OBOR). India has refused to join OBOR, and Bhutan is the only country in the region who is completely with India, and with not even diplomatic contact with China. So, Beijing planned to upset that arrangement by walking up to Bhutanese door and bully it. Beijing did not reckon that India is emerging as a big power too on its own terms and pace, and is standing rock-solid behind Bhutan.

Many argue that a limited military confrontation to end the deadlock is possible as a diplomatic solution is not in sight. The Indian NSA, Ajit Doval is in China to participate in the BRICs security conference. But, China has pre-empted any peaceful negotiation with Doval by branding him as a 'schemer of the stand-off'. It is a continuation of their belligerent bullying tactic. However, a military conflict is unlikely for the following reasons. One, there have been

stand-offs in the past, in 1987 in Sumdorong Chu Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, which was resolved after six years through an agreement to ensure peace along the LAC. There were heavy posturing from both sides, but eventually they had to back-off and talk. Second, China's strength is mainly its economy, the second largest in the world, which it has built through trade. It has huge trade deficits in its favour with many big countries, 346 billion USD with United States and 46.6 billion USD with India. In the trade negotiation with US last week, China has been strongly snubbed by US negotiators for dumping cheap steel into their country and creating a huge trade deficit against them. China has been rattled. Likewise, they would not like to lose any part of the Indian market. Although Indians might go for cheaper Chinese goods, in case of war between the two countries, China need not underestimate the sudden surges of nationalism and mass boycott of Chinese goods. That will hit China below their belt. Beijing will not risk such a counter action. Third, China may be proving the Marxian axiomatic prognosis that the next stage of capitalism is imperialism. But, they would also heed the foreign policy dictum that pragmatism is the name of the game. Whilst China tries to encircle India by penetrating into India's neighbourhood, India is squeezing China internationally through its strategic partnerships with big powers. Beijing would have to be mindful of - United States, Japan, Israel, Chinese antagonists in South East Asia, Mongolia, countries of European Union etc. Fourth, both countries are nuclear powers. There are no winners or losers in a nuclear war, only losers. In desperation, nuclear countries can use the most

disastrous earth-destroying nuclear weapons in a war situation. China is heavily wary of a tiny country like North Korea because of latter's nuclear arsenal. So, it may not mess up with India. Fifth, the whole world will like to prevent a war between the two most populous countries in the world, two big markets.

Having said all these, one is not sure of any occurrence in world politics including in bilateral relations. Anything is possible, even a war. At any rate, India needs to recognize China as the biggest threat to its security and growth. The big power play between New Delhi and Beijing will continue for long in the Asian theatre. India needs to match up to China in economy and military strength. The only decisive edge India has over China is in diplomacy as it is a democracy and is not perceived by any as an aggressor country. So, until India is an equal power, in theory, to China it has to use its diplomatic prowess to contain and neutralize China. No doubt this is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing Modi government. Can Modi use his so-called 'charm-offensive' to meet this? Will the conservative foreign policy establishment support Modi effectively? Are Modi and Sushma Swaraj (not a right choice for the Foreign Ministry) up to it? We will watch in this column as it unfolds.

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Modi Government and the Nation's Food Security - II

Neeraj Jain

Globalisation and the Attack on PDS

The mounting foodgrain stocks on the one hand, and rising malnutrition levels and starvation deaths on the other, led to an uproar across the country. Activist groups and NGOs started mounting pressure on the government to expand the scope of the public distribution system. The Supreme Court too intervened, and passed a series of orders ensuring a multitude of food rights, such as providing 35 kg subsidised rations per family, heavily subsidised rations for poor families (the Antyodaya Anna Yojana), security to pregnant and lactating women, and so on.¹

The UPA Government then in power at the Centre was in a quandary. The increasingly vociferous people's movement and Supreme Court orders were becoming a huge embarrassment. But the World Bank and foreign investors were also equally firm—that the government should do nothing to increase its expenditures on the poor. A way out of the dilemma was found by the government's sorcerous bureaucrats. They conjured up a bill—the National Food Security Bill—that ostensibly aimed to provide food security to all the poor, but in effect, subverted the whole issue. It was passed by the Parliament in August 2013, and signed into law on September 12, 2013.

Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 75% of the

rural population and 50% of the urban population (on the whole, roughly 67% of the total population) will be entitled to five kilograms of grains (rice/wheat/millet) per person per month at the price of Rs 3/2/1 per kg. The Act also provides for children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years to be given an age-appropriate meal, free of charge, through the local anganwadi, and children in the age group of 6 to 14 to be given one free cooked mid-day meal every day (except on school holidays) in all government and government-aided schools. Another provision is that all pregnant women and lactating mothers would be entitled to maternity benefit of Rs 1,000 per month for six months.² Distribution is to be conducted under the PDS and other existing welfare schemes, while provisions for specially targeted groups such as mothers and children are to be funnelled through the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal schemes.

The media hailed the food bill as a “historic step” to weed out hunger from the country, but the reality is that the NFSA is actually a disgrace for a country that claims to be an emerging economic superpower:

- Firstly, the Act provides the poor only starvation foodgrains. While the Indian Council for Medical Research recommends that an adult requires 14 kg of foodgrains per month and children 7 kg, the bill restricts the entitlement to only 5 kg per person per month!

- Secondly, the Act provides only for cereals, with no entitlements to other basic food necessities such as pulses and edible oil required to combat malnutrition—whose prices have soared in recent years. The Empowered Group of Ministers, set up by the Central Government to draw up the framework for the Act, was very clear about it. It proposed that the definition of food security should be “limited to the specific issue of foodgrains security (wheat and rice) and be delinked from the larger issue of nutrition security”—a stand which actually violates Article 47 of the Indian Constitution.³ The aim of the Act is thus clear. People, including children, can remain hungry / malnourished / anaemic, but shouldn't die of starvation because that makes bad publicity!

- Thirdly, the Act does not provide even this limited coverage to all the poor—it expands the percentage of the population that would be provided subsidised foodgrains through the PDS to 67%, but as we have discussed above, 75% of the rural population and 73% of the urban population are unable to access the minimum recommended 2200 / 2100 calories.

- Even states like Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh have better food security acts.⁴ Thus, for instance, Tamil Nadu has a universal public distribution system, wherein each and every family, whether below the poverty line or not, is entitled to 20 kg rice free of cost. The PDS in Tamil Nadu also supplies other

essentials like wheat, sugar, kerosene and tur dal at subsidised rates.⁵

BJP and Food Security

While occupying the opposition benches, BJP leaders, during the debate in Parliament over the National Food Security Bill, had criticised the Bill as being very inadequate. Arun Jaitley had stated: “Are we substantially expanding the right over what existed prior to this Bill being brought in? Are we substantially increasing the outlay? The answer is ‘no’ . . .” Murli Manohar Joshi had even moved an amendment demanding that “every person . . . shall be entitled to 10 kg of food grains, two and a half kg of pulses and nine hundred grams of cooking oil per person per month.” The BJP election manifesto promised “Universal Food Security”, saying that it is integral to national security.⁶

However, after coming to power, the BJP has made a complete U-turn on this issue. The finance minister has gone completely silent on the question of expanding the scope of the NFSA to include other food essentials like pulses and edible oil. In a hearing before the Supreme Court on a PIL filed by Swaraj Abhiyan praying for directions to the government for providing drought relief in affected areas, when the Supreme Court suggested that the government provide 2 kg of pulses (dal) and 1 kg of edible oil per month at subsidised rates through the PDS, the government declined saying it was facing fiscal constraints!⁷

Arun Jaitley has also gone completely silent on the issue of providing “Universal Food Security”. Our much vocal Prime

Minister Modi, who lectures the people of the country every other day on making India great, has not spoken a word during the past three years on the terrible malnutrition and poverty levels in the country and the need to provide universal food security to the people. Jaitley’s

allocation for food subsidy has increased by only 7.29% per annum (CAGR) over the three years the BJP has been in power; and as a percentage of GDP, the food subsidy has actually fallen in the four budgets presented by Jaitley so far (Table 1).⁸

Table 1: BJP Government Allocations for Food Subsidy, 2014–15 to 2017–18 (Rs crore)

	2014–15 (A)	2015–16 (A)	2016–17 RE	2017–18 BE
Food Subsidy	117.67 1	139.41 9	134.83 5	145.33 9
GDP at Current Market Prices	12,433 ,749	13,675 ,331	15,075 ,429	16,847 ,455
Food Subsidy as %	0.95	1.02	0.89	0.86

With the government not interested in distributing sufficient foodgrains (at least 7 kg per head per month, if not more) to all the poor at subsidised rates, then what has it been doing with the mounting foodstocks with the Food Corporation of India? Exporting them, to earn foreign exchange needed to finance the luxury goods imports of the rich! India’s wheat and rice exports

have zoomed. Recently, *World Grain*, an international business magazine for grain, reported that India would most likely continue to be the biggest supplier of rice to the world’s market for the sixth consecutive year in 2017, shipping 10.7 million tonnes, compared with 10.3 million in 2016¹—in a country with the largest number of malnourished people in the world.

Table 2: India: Wheat and Rice Exports (million tons)¹

	Wheat	Rice
2012–13	6.5	10.2
2013–14	5.6	10.9
2014–15	2.92	11.95
2015–16	0.61	10.41

Yet More Cuts in Food Subsidy Planned . . .

The Modi Government is now planning yet more steep cuts in food subsidy. This is going to be done through what Modi and Jaitley have called the JAM trinity—Jan Dhan (bank accounts), Aadhaar and mobile telephony. All are becoming near universal, and the government's plan is to gradually eliminate the PDS, identify the poor through Aadhaar, and provide direct cash transfers to the poor into their Jan Dhan accounts. According to the government's Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, who has been parachuted directly to Delhi from Washington, this will enable the government to stop leakages as well as exclude the better-off from the PDS, and the government can then invest the savings into infrastructure (that is, transfer it to the private sector through the PPP route); simultaneously, prices can be "liberated".¹

This is typical 'free market jargon'—that worships the free market, and demands that market must be allowed to determine prices. But that is precisely one of the reasons why the PDS had been introduced in the country in the first place: speculators would often cause foodgrain prices to zoom, creating havoc for the poor, which ultimately forced the government to introduce the PDS. The PDS not only guaranteed foodgrains to the people at fixed and subsidised prices, it also acted as a check on speculation in foodgrain prices. In fact, some years ago, during the first term of the previous UPA Government, it had taken steps to weaken the PDS, and that had led to a sharp rise in foodgrain prices in 2008, forcing the government to backtrack.² A sharper fluctuation in prices can also be seen in the case of those crops for which there is no procurement. For example, the retail price of toor (arhar) dal across the country doubled in just a few months to reach Rs 170 to Rs 200 per kg by October

2015—while what triggered the price increase was a fall in production, the prices zoomed because of hoarding of pulses by traders.³

Once the PDS is dismantled, speculators would again be able to rule the roost. If and when wheat and rice prices zoom, the government would then have to increase its cash transfers to the poor. But it is doubtful if the government would do that, as it is seeking to reduce its food subsidy bill. It is going to spell absolute disaster for the millions of impoverished people in the country.

Such is the nationalism of Delhi's Badshahs—it is confined to making people shout slogans of "Bharat Mata ki Jai", while they themselves are slavishly implementing the dictates of our foreign governments who are seeking control over the Indian economy for the naked profiteering of their giant corporations.

(Endnotes)

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(Continued on Page 15)

Petition against GM Food Crops and GM Mustard

Bharat Dogra

Recently over 100 Gandhians, most of them activists involved in several justice based struggles and various constructive activities, signed a petition against the commercial release of genetically modified mustard variety DMH 11 (GM Mustard in short). In addition this petition, sent to the Prime Minister on June 14, makes a strong statement against other GM crops as well, particularly GM food crops.

This petition came at a time when the controversy surrounding GM food crops is about to peak with the final decision on commercial release of GM Mustard still pending before the government. Mustard or sarson is a very important oilseed crop of India but in addition its leaves are also cooked as a much relished vegetable (sarson ka saag) and on top of it mustard has several medicinal uses including home remedies.

As no GM food crop has yet been approved in India this decision will have wide reaching impacts. There has been a lot of international interest in this issue as well as decision taken in such a leading and important developing country as India is likely to influence some other developing countries as well.

Earlier this controversy had peaked during the tenure of the UPA government in 2009-10 when Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh had called for public hearings to be held on this issue all over the country. Finally on February 9, 2010 Jairam Ramesh

announced the important decision of moratorium on Bt brinjal which was widely welcomed. This time around also there is a lot of public interest but the transparency of the earlier process is missed.

The petition by Gandhians against GM Mustard and other GM food crops has come at just the right time when people have started asking a lot of questions about GM Mustard. This petition has been signed by some of the most senior Gandhians like S. N. Subba Rao of National Youth Project and P. V. Rajagopal of Ekta Parishad.

The petitioners identify themselves as “members of the Sarvodaya movement and Gandhian networks” and say that they have serious objection to the release of GM Mustard. The petitioners say that there is sufficient evidence to show that GM crops are not safe for human health. “Apart from the bio-violence that forms the inherent basis of genetically modification technology” the petitioners note that transgenic varieties can contaminate all other crops as well and if GM varieties keep spreading then after a point there will be no GM-free agriculture.

The claim of promoters of GM Mustard that this is necessary for increasing yields is rejected in this petition which goes on to say, “Worldwide, experience shows that in the case of rapeseed which is of the same family as mustard, countries which grow non-GM rapeseed such as Germany, France,

England and Czech Republic show yields much higher, almost double, compared to the ones which grow GM-rapeseed such as Canada and USA.” Further, there are other non-seed based agronomic approaches to increasing mustard yield such as the System of Mustard Intensification. This has already given good results in several parts of India.

Regarding ecological and health risks of GM Mustard this petition says that this is likely to increase herbicide and agri-chemical use. This will have a very adverse impact on a very important pollinator like honeybee and on the production of honey. As mustard is widely used in Ayurveda GM Mustard will also have a very adverse impact on Ayurveda.

The petitioners have demanded that in view of the adverse impacts of GM Mustard in particular and GM food crops in general, the government should reject GM food crops to protect the interests of farmers, consumers, the interests of environment as well as the larger national interest. Alternatives of eco-friendly agriculture are available. As the petition puts it, “Organic non-violent agriculture or Rishi Krishi is the need of the hour if public health and long-term food security are to be saved.”

What this statement has said is in conformity on the one hand with the views expressed by several senior scientists or groups of scientists such as the Independent Science Panel and the Union of Concerned

Scientists as well as some eminent scientists of India such as Dr. Pushpa M. Bhargava.

One of the signatories and founders of Ekta Parishad P.V. Rajagopal has said that the basic principles of Mahatma Gandhi are

for decentralization and increasing self-reliance of rural communities while technologies such as GM crops are taking us in the opposite direction of making farmers excessively dependent on big corporates. Ran Singh, another signatory and one of the

coordinators of Ekta Parishad said that Mahatma Gandhi emphasized concern for the poorest and respect for all life forms, and technologies such as these which increase the expenses of poor farmers and have adverse impacts on bees and other life forms should be opposed.

Bhilare Guruji

Jatin Desai Mahatma Gandhi and several other leaders were arrested after All India Congress Committee passed the Quit India resolution post mid-night of August 8, 1942. Gandhiji was released from the Aga Khan Palace Prison on May 6, 1944. He had contracted malaria and went to Panchgani for rest on the advice of his physician. His wife Kasturba and secretary Mahadev Desai had died in the Aga Khan Palace. It was in July 1944 that Nathuram Godse tried to attack Mahatma with a dagger. At that time there was no Pakistan and so no question of giving Rs 55 crore to Pakistan. Bhilare Guruji passed away on July 19, 2017 at the age of 98 in his village Bhilar in Satara district, Maharashtra, India. He was a young boy when Gandhiji was resting in Dilkhush Bungalow in Panchgani. Bhilare Guruji and other youths were looking after Gandhiji. One day a group of 18 to 20 people came from Poona (now Pune) in a bus and held a day-long demonstration against Gandhiji. When Gandhiji came to know about the protest he invited the leader of the group Nathuram Godse for a discussion. Godse refused to meet him. During the prayer meeting in the evening, Godse, dressed in a Nehru shirt, rushed towards Gandhiji with a dagger in hand. Bhilare Guruji and Manishankar Purohit, owner of Surti Lodge of Poona, overpowered the attacker. Panic resulted, but Gandhiji remained calm. He told Guruji to

release Godse and asked Godse to spend 8 days with him so that Godse could understand his point of view. But, Godse refused to accept Gandhiji's offer. There are people who raise a question about the authenticity of the incident. But, the fact is Guruji saved Mahatma. There are records which prove that the attack on Mahatma took place and the attacker was Nathuram Godse. The news of Bhilare Guruji's bravery spread immediately and he became a hero. Mahatma Gandhi's great grandson Tushar Gandhi in his book **Let's Kill Gandhi: A Chronicle Of His Last Days**, writes, "Before leaving Poona, Godse had boasted to his journalist friends that some important news concerning Gandhi would soon reach them from Panchgani. Joglekar, a reporter working for Godse's periodical *Agranee*, corroborated this fact. A. David, the then editor of the *Poona Herald*, stated under oath, while deposing before the Kapur Commission, which was set up in the sixties to investigate the conspiracy behind Gandhi's murder, that Godse had made an attempt on Gandhi's life and he had also heard of his boast to fellow journalists about the planned attack. In a small news item, the *Times of India* reported that a Poona-based editor had attempted to assault Gandhi. The police records show that there were day-long demonstrations against Gandhi at Panchgani. The records also mention

that Godse was held for trying to rush at Gandhi shouting slogans but does not state whether he was armed. Dr Sushila Nayyar, Gandhi's physician and close associate testified before the Kapur Commission that one of the protesters was found to be carrying a dagger, but could not confirm whether it was Nathuram Godse. However, the two men who overpowered Godse, Manishankar Purohit and Bhilare Guruji, testified to this attack before the Kapur Commission, and stated that they had caught and disarmed Nathuram Vinayak Godse, that day at Panchgani. Bhilare Guruji was present when Tushar Gandhi's book was released in Mumbai in 2007. A day before Bhilare Guruji passed away, I was talking to Jayant Diwan, who has interviewed and documented many freedom fighters including Bhilare Guruji around ten years ago, about Bhilare Guruji. He had narrated extensively on the Nathuram Godse's attempt on Mahatma and how they overpowered him. Again, that was not the first attempt on Gandhiji. Nathuram Godse and his gang continued their efforts to assassinate Gandhiji a few more times till they succeeded on January 30, 1948. Generations will remember Bhilare Guruji and Purohit for saving the apostle of peace in 1944. In today's world full of hatred and war, one needs persons like Bhilare Guruji to save humanity.

—Jatin Desai

March for Science

We are delighted to note that, on 22nd April this year, more than a million people undertook a March for Science in 600 cities across the globe, demanding robust funding for science and demanding that governmental policies be guided by scientific evidence.

We are planning to complement and supplement this global effort in India as we feel it is very relevant in the current juncture. On the one hand, scientists from India have played a commendable role in the discovery of gravitational waves and of Higgs Boson, in the interplanetary mission through Mangalyaan and in reducing foreign dependence through the development of indigenous satellite launching capability. But, on the other, science in India is facing the danger of being eclipsed by a rising wave of unscientific beliefs and religious bigotry, and scientific research is suffering serious setback due to dwindling governmental support.

We note with deep concern that financial support to even premier institutions like IITs, NITs, and IISERs has been slashed. Universities are facing shortage of funds to adequately support scientific research. Research funding agencies like DST, DBT and CSIR are reportedly impacted by reduced governmental support. Scientists in government laboratories are being asked to generate a part of their salary by selling their inventions and from other sources.

While we can justly be inspired by the great achievements in science and technology in ancient India, we see that non-scientific ideas lacking in evidence are being propagated as

science by persons in high positions, fueling a confrontational chauvinism in lieu of true patriotism that we cherish. Promoting scientific bent of mind can certainly help improve the social health of our country where incidents of witch hunting, honour killing and mob lynching are reported regularly.

We feel that the situation demands the members of scientific community to stand in defence of science and scientific attitude in an open and visible manner as done by scientists and science enthusiasts worldwide. We appeal to scientists, researchers, teachers, students, as well as all concerned citizens to organize 'India March for Science' events throughout the country, particularly in the state capitals, on 9th August 2017, with the following demands:

1. Allocate at least 3% of GDP to scientific and technological research and 10% towards education
2. Stop propagation of unscientific, obscurantist ideas and religious intolerance, and develop scientific temper, human values and spirit of inquiry in conformance with Article 51A of the Constitution.
3. Ensure that the education system imparts only ideas that are supported by scientific evidence.
4. Enact policies based on evidence-based science. Appeal by

• S. Mahadevan, S G Dani, Nitya Anand, Babu Joseph, Debashis Mukherjee, M R N Murthy, Arvind Gupta, Deb Shankar Ray, K M Seethi, A P Thomas, Ajit Srivastav, D. R. Naik, Partha P Majumder, Ayesha Kidwai, Jayanta Mukherjee, Express interest to participate.

(Continued from Page 6)

rupees per person per day. In the place of permanent road to be constructed, it is spreading fine crushed stones on the mud roads. The plan is to force various categories of landless, artisans to doctors to the rented houses, if not the tin sheds, pushing them out and killing the living communities by drowning.

The Chief Minister, who merely expresses sympathy with the oustees, is certainly not for resolution of conflict, but for war! The Prime Minister still performing as a former Chief Minister of Gujarat, is insisting the CMs of 12 BJP ruled in the August 12th and perform an Aarti with 2000 Sadhus coming from Varanasi. Such a perverted depiction of development politics is unbearable. The judiciary too can't accept violent ways to progress nor should it accept the claims of ideal rehabilitation without full assessment. We can't let go the brutal lynching of tolling masses, the village communities, agriculture, natural ecosystem & the culturally rich region, the oldest of the civilization that is of Narmada.

It's in this context that after waging a nonviolent people's battle over 32 years, we are taking to a path of indefinite fast challenging ourselves, appealing to the sensitive citizens in our own society and expecting that a better sense will prevail amongst the ruling politicians. We will stay out on the banks of Narmada and continue to fight.

–Kamla Yadav,
Bhagirath Dhangar, Dr. Sunilam
Contact: 9179617513-

Desecration in South Goa

A five member team visited the sites of desecration of religious structures and burial places across South Goa on 14th July 2017 to understand the ground reality. The members of the fact finding team were Adv. Irfan Engineer, Director, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) and Neha Dabhade associated with CSSS, Fr. Savio Fernandes, Executive Secretary, Council for Social Justice and Peace (CSJP), Ranjan Solomon and Roselle Solomon, prominent activists working for rights of minorities associated with CSJP.

The team visited the sites of desecration at Curtorim, Chandor, Gudi-Paroda and Curchorem in South Goa. They spoke to the priests of the related Churches, members of the Christian community, people's elected representatives, politicians and people from across various faiths. Till the time of going to the press the team was unable to meet the police officials due to time constraints although appointments were fixed, however the team will meet the officials prior to the final report.

The observations on ground points to a possibility that the incidents of desecration and vandalism are a part of a pattern which is planned and executed by the same persons or organizations. All the attacks have been executed with heavy steel implements directed at the bases of the structures to cause

maximum damage. The team sensed the pain and anguish which was palpable in the shock and fear on the faces of the members of the community.

The general perception of the community pointed to certain statements at a Hindu conclave and during the visit of a National office bearer of the political party in Government as possibly encouraging such incidents.

The desecrations are carried out in a form of a campaign to strike fear, insecurity and mistrust among communities in Goa. Most of the desecrated crosses visited by the team have been targeted more than once in the past more particularly hinged around political developments in the state. The law and order machinery have failed to solve the cases and apprehend the culprits responsible for such crimes thereby emboldening the perpetrators. The helplessness and fear prevalent in the Christian community is giving rise to a feeling of being treated as second class citizens.

The following are the primary findings after the interactions:

The atmosphere in Goa is vitiated and communalized to cause polarization through relentless anti minority narrative. Christians and Muslims are especially targets of demonization through false propaganda. Muslims are portrayed as terrorists and loyal to Pakistan

while Christians are portrayed as being agents of Portugal and anti-nationals and seeking to convert members of other religious communities through fraud/inducement.

The fact finding team recommends that strict action in accordance with law be taken against individuals/organizations indulging in hate campaigns against minorities in Goa and those responsible for desecration and vandalism. To ensure transparency it would be appropriate to order a judicial commission to investigate the desecrations in a time bound manner. The team also urged the civil society organizations to continue their struggle for justice to the citizens of Goa.

Incidentally, at the time of going to the press, it has been reported that one Mr. Francis Pereira has admitted to have single handedly desecrated and vandalized one hundred and forty odd religious symbols since the last five years. The team strongly feels that the arrest appears as a familiar script to similar crimes across the country to pacify the civil society and the affected communities and divert attention from the actual perpetrators. The extensive damage caused as witnessed by the fact finding team could not have been possibly inflicted by a single person, more over who is 50 years old. The fact finding team demands an impartial investigation into the crimes. —CSSS

(Continued from Page 11)

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