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Arms and the Men

S.Viswam

There is never a dull moment in India these days. Whether it is politics or economics or defence, there is something interesting unfolding every day. We just survived the drama of the exit and entry of railway ministers and were waiting for the next episode in the Centre versus Mamata Banerjee to unfold before we have been overtaken by the Army Chief Gen. V. K. Singh's allegation that he was offered a bribe of Rs. 14 crore to allow the induction of sub-standard trucks in the army. This was a big stunner no doubt but there is another bombshell exploding closely in the wake of the defence scandal. This is what the media has already termed as "coalgate" in which the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) alleges that the government lost crores of rupees in not auctioning coal blocks and that too in defiance of Dr. Manmohan Singh's advice. The Defence Minister has ordered a CBI inquiry into the army chief's charge against (Retd) Lt. Gen. Tejinder Singh who is the alleged bribe giver. Gen. Tejinder Singh in turn has filed a Rs. 10 crore defamation suit against the army chief.

Defence Minister A.K. Antony's confirmation in the Rajya Sabha that the army chief had briefed him

on the matter immediately after the bribe was offered was reassuring, but not the minister's disclosure that the army chief neither wanted to pursue the matter nor had made a written complaint. Indeed, the fact that the episode is several months old, that it was virtually allowed to rest and that no action was taken till now is highly disturbing. The Minister could have ordered the CBI to inquire even without the army chief complaining in writing. If Gen. Singh was reluctant to pursue the matter for reasons known only to him, why make a disclosure now, just on the eve of his retirement, which itself, you may recall has been preceded by an unseemly controversy over Gen. Singh's actual date of birth.

Interestingly, the dramatis personae in all these shocking episodes are themselves men of high probity and personal integrity. Gen. Singh has an enviable record as an officer and a gentleman. Shri Antony's reputation as a clean politician is well deserved. No one can raise a finger against Dr. Manmohan Singh. Yet, by virtue of their inaction and or indifference towards an unsavoury development of national importance, a person who allegedly had the gumption to tempt no less an officer than the army chief with a huge bribe has been left free and

Ashok Saswadkar

(February 23, 1946-March 21, 2012)

not made accountable for his actions so far. This is a strange paradox, which we noticed even at the time of the 2G scam when the Prime Minister was rendered ineffective because of the “coalition dharma” and allowed minister A.Raja to play havoc with the distribution of a national asset among corporates. The 2G spectrum is as precious an asset as are defence equipment and the national resource, namely coal, and yet we see that the concerned top leaders have been gullible in the extreme in handling them.

Leaving that aspect of the story aside, we must acknowledge that Gen. Singh’s disclosure and the subsequent developments have brought into sharp focus the need for streamlining all the processes of equipment purchases and asset dispersals. The CAG’s revelations on the coal block allocations like its earlier disclosure of 2G scam details have exposed the weakness of one process. There are hundreds of such processes in operation in almost all sectors of the economy which need scrutiny.

One had thought that after the Bofors’ scandal, and the review of arms purchases after the Kargil war, defence purchases would have been made graft-proof. Apparently, the system is still porous. There are still the so-called “middlemen” roaming the corridors of the Defence Ministry peddling their wares and trying to win orders for top class as well as sub-standard equipment. This is a field that calls for tightening up as a task of high priority. The retirement of the army chief and the induction of his successor (already named) must be treated as the opportunity for a tone-up of the defence purchases system as a whole.

In these days when people live reasonably long in this country, Ashok died a bit early. One early morning, a few years ago, he got the warning. He suffered a cardiac arrest in the premises of Yusuf Meherally Centre at Tara, but thanks to timely cardiac massage, he revived. And after that, every time he suffered a cardiac incident, he realized that his time was not too far and could drop dead any time. But these repeated warnings did not deter him from doing what he was doing for a rural area in Raigad district. It is obvious that he had made up his mind to work till the end and he succeeded in his resolve. After the prayer in the morning on March 21 at Uddhar – his *karmabhoomi* for the last two decades -, he felt uneasy, was taken to a hospital in Pen, and died within hours on the way.

Socialists in Maharashtra largely start their day with a prayer that Sane Guruji wrote and popularized. If ‘*Vaishnav Jan To*’ was favourite of Gandhiji and is favourite of his disciples, ‘*Khara to Ekchi Dharma, Jagala Prem Arpave*’ is popular among socialists in Maharashtra. Ashok lived that prayer and in many minds his death following the prayer will remain etched for years. The prayer for him affirmed his rejection of God, but it also satisfied the deep urge of all of us to believe in something and pray. Like Gandhiji’s definition of God as Truth, Sane Guruji defined religion as giving of love. Though a non-believer, this prayer linked him to the people, largely Adivasis, among whom he lived and worked. Ashok lived to give love. No wonder a

young colleague of his said, at the condolence meeting held in Mumbai on March 26, “he was Matruhridayi”. No phrase could have described him better..

His body was brought to Yusuf Meherally Centre at Tara, from Pen and kept for nearly five hours. A large number of villagers and socialists lined up to pay homage, indicating his popularity. YMC, Tara, was his home for years and it was there that Ashok’s body was kept there on the way to the hospital to be donated. This was his wish and his relatives and socialist friends respected his wish. The Sion hospital for which he had filled the form for the donation, unfortunately, declined, and the body had to be taken to J. J. Hospital, which readily accepted. Getting permission to take the body to Mumbai was not easy, but was managed. Socialists in Mumbai are gradually and steadily coming round to the view that once dead, their bodies should be donated to a teaching hospital. This is an indication of the growing importance of environment among them. And one more view is cropping up, if donation is not possible, consider burial.

Ashok, ’46 born, joined the socialist movement via its youth wing. He belonged to the post-freedom movement generation of socialists who came to the movement because of the example of those who had joined it before, during, or immediately after, the ‘Quit India’ movement. His devotion to the movement was complete. Those days, the socialists in Mumbai

were still on ascendance. They were active in every field, among youth, labour and women, and they were organizing teachers, students, slum dwellers, small traders and hawkers. And they formed consumer co-operatives as well as housing co-operatives, and even co-operative banks. And they were also leading struggles against injustice. That was the time when socialists had not lost hope to be a powerful force in Mumbai. Ashok joined the movement not when it was at its peak, but also not when it was at its nadir. This was also the time when the children of many socialists joined the movement. Unfortunately for him, as well as his colleagues and his seniors, this phase did not last long. The demoralizing defeat in the first general election, the controversies that followed and the split had a cumulative effect over a period of time and the movement lost steam.

But the JP movement breathed some new energy in the socialist movement and the emergency saw socialists once again at their best. And Ashok was very active in that period. But this phase too did not last long. The premature loss of power by the Janata Party and the visible betrayal by those who formed the government of all that JP preached, did affect him as well as many socialists and disillusionment set in. Perhaps, that led him to constructive work, as it did many others. But their constructive work was not devoid of agitation. Many became activists as they are called now. Ashok too was an activist, leading agitations for the betterment of Adivasis.

At the condolence meeting in Mumbai an intriguing question cropped up. Were Mumbai socialists ever divided, a friend asked. He was

referring to the composition of the audience at the meeting. Socialists in Mumbai of all hues these days meet only to mourn the death of a 'sathi', one speaker remarked. While this is certainly true, it was not so in the case of Ashok. His work in the tribal area attracted Mumbai socialists of all hues and also activists to his village Uddhar in Raigad district. Mumbai saw the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, but it also saw the initiation of the process of splitting. The question, however, indicated a deep desire to unite the socialists. For all we know Mumbai may catalyze the process that is on for some time now. But as Dr. Vivekanandan, on a visit to Mumbai for an international seminar, remarked this effort should be flexible. The unity effort, he meant, should not exclude JD(U), if it was willing to jettison NDA, SP, if it gave up its ambivalence and JD(S), if it became less opportunistic.

To say that Ashok was a man of great integrity is to say the obvious. Integrity was the norm among socialists then. Integrity was expected and taken for granted. The corroding effect of competitive politics had not taken its toll of socialist integrity as it had done of Congressmen's. Those who were active then and are still around will remember a poignant tale of socialist integrity. A young socialist, he was perhaps of the same age as that of Ashok when he joined the PSP committed suicide because he had 'borrowed' Rs. 700/- from the credit society of which he was the secretary to help a friend in need and the latter could not return the amount and this borrowing without the sanction of the committee, bothered the conscience of this young socialist so much that he went to Sevagram in search of peace and

to atone, but did not find peace and threw himself in front of a running train. In a letter to his mentor, he wrote, "when you receive this letter I will be no more" and confessed in detail why he committed suicide. He too had come to the PSP as a youngster and had risen to become the secretary of a ward in no time and had a promising future. Let's hope, some day, the training curriculum of future socialists will include this incident as a case study.

Ashok was not only frugal with his words he also lived frugally. He never sought limelight and preferred to remain a grass root worker, a colleague, a 'sathi'. His smiling photograph at the condolence meeting had the caption 'sathi Ashok Saswadkar'. The photograph captured what Ashok was. Many who saw his dead body remarked "he was sleeping in peace". The pain or the unease had not distorted its features. Even in death his body, his face had a rare tranquillity.

After an active but long stint in the socialist movement and, perhaps, a bit disillusioned, Ashok joined the Yusuf Meherally Centre and learnt his first lessons in rural development. The Centre, a body born in Mumbai to study urbanization and promote national integration, went to a village for a one time activity but for unforeseen reasons, stayed put there and took its first baby steps in rural development under B. C. Dutt, D. S. Thakur, M. S. Gokhale, and others. He was fortunate to work under and with them. His work at Tara and around earned him a well deserved reputation of a good social worker and his friendly nature made him very popular. His knowledge about rural development

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Jan Sansad Demands End of Company Raj and Corporate Plunder of Jal Jangal and Jameen

The National Jan Sansad concluded its three days of March 21 with a strong demand for a people's oriented progressive 'Budget' that will serve as an instrument of Social Change and promote sustainable, just and equitable growth. The Jan Sansad condemned strongly the budget, of about 15 lakh crores, proposed by the Indian Parliament which will only further the interest of corporations and the wealthy urban class. The Jan Sansad organised by the National Alliance of People's Movements in Rajendra Bhawan in New Delhi has brought together over 350 representatives from 20 different states of India to debate key issues of people's concerns that rarely find mention in the Indian Parliament.

Several crucial issues such as decentralized planning and increased role for Gram Sabhas in policy planning that would contribute to a comprehensive budget were raised by the Sansad. At least 40% of the budget should be allocated to the Gram Sabhas for spending at the local level. Making the connection between corruption and weak economy, Prafulla Samantra of NAPM, Orissa, remarked that the dialogue on corruption is incomplete unless the plunder of natural resources such as land, water, air and minerals is taken into account. Communities demanded that natural resources not be allocated for profit-making businesses without consent of Gram Sabhas. The budget should ensure equitable access to both economic and natural resources.

The previous budgets reveal that while subsidies provided to the

corporations amount to over 5 lakh crores, those allocated to the poorer agricultural classes are around one lakh crore. The Sansad argued that restructuring of the Indian tax structure, for instance by imposing estate, wealth tax, gift tax, inheritance tax, will generate adequate revenue which can increase spending on rural social infrastructure. "It is not sufficient that the budget is brought to public forums in the month of January every year. And even this is only an eyewash if none of the issues raised by organisations, trade unions are reflected in the final budget", claimed Prof Arun Kumar, Economist, JNU.

For equitable growth, the budget needs to have adequate and specific allocations for women, dalits, muslims and other minority communities. Speaking against the privatization of the health and education sectors, the Sansad also advocated for a 6% budgetary allocation. Dr. Meera Shiva spoke on the dangers of privatization of the health sector where multinational companies are into all sectors of health including services, insurance, diagnosis, and education. Their control over the patents, further facilitated by free trade agreements and WTO is denying access to millions of people across the world. The Union Budget has to stop promoting these agreements and must immediately withdraw from undemocratic processes like WTO and other bilateral trade agreements.

The panelists included Medha Patkar, K.B.Saxena, Dr Satyajit Singh, Amitabh Behar, Prof Arun

Kumar, Meera Shiva, Kamal Nayan Kabra, Madhu Baduri, Sumit Chakravarthy, and Praful Bidwai

While the Jan Sansad sessions continued, on the occasion of World Water Day, movement groups fighting water privatisation, dams, thermal and nuclear power plants staged demonstrations in front of Tamilnadu Bhawan and Kerala Bhawan, Jantar Mantar. In solidarity with people fighting against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant, Tamilnadu movement groups joined the Jawaharlal Nehru University student's Union demonstration in front of the Tamilnadu Bhawan condemning the States repression of the non-violent struggle by fisherfolk and local communities in Idinthakarai. Later in the day, thousands of nature based communities struggling against water acquisition and privatisation, demanded 'Save Water, Save Life, Save People' at Jantar Mantar. The groups included Plachimada anti-coke struggle, Nadi Ghati Morcha, Arunachal anti-mega dam struggle groups, Matu Jan Sanghatan, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, Narmada Bachao Andolan and others and was led by Medha Patkar, Sanddep Pandey, Vilayodi Venugopal and others.

Thousands of adivasis and marginal farmers from Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh who came for Jan sansad have been demonstrating against Adani thermal power plant since yesterday at jantar mantar. They were joined today by nearly 500 people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Kisan Sangharsh Samiti leading the struggle against destructive thermal power plants in the area have been

demanding that the illegal clearance granted to Adani Thermal and Pench water diversion project be revoked. Jan sansad passed a resolution in their

support and demanded that Ministry of Environment and Forest must take action against Adani & the police atrocities in the region.

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Marking the Martyrs day of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, a five thousand strong rally of farmers, workers, adivasis, dalits men, women and children marched from Shaheed Bhagat Singh Park to Sansad Marg on the concluding day of the first Rashtriya Jan Sansad (National People's Parliament). Medha Patkar, led the march along with social movement leaders from North East to Gujarat and from Punjab to Tamilnadu in which nearly 150 organisations from 20 states participated. Bhagat Singh had challenged the unjust and imperialist colonial British Parliament for which he was hanged. Medha pointed out that, "We are here today on the Sansad Marg to challenge the corporate driven, unjust and exploitative growth, being pushed by every government since early 90s, not with bombs but with our moral force, truth and non-violent struggles of the antim aadmi and aurat". We stand vindicated today as we have exposed, by our struggles and deliberations in the Jan Sansad over last three days, the falsehood of Indian prosperity and growth story. India is not shining, it is dying. Reduction of criteria of below poverty line by Planning Commission will not reduce the number of poor in this country. The country has lost faith in Planning Commission and its centralised planning which has completely neglected the gram sabha and ward sabha plans. Montek Singh Ahluwalia must resign, time has come to resign and retire. Ms. Patkar further added that we are to defend

the constitution. "Those protesting in Koodankulam are being labelled as anti national. They are not traitors. They are real heroes of the country."

The three day Jan Sansad deliberated the critical issues facing the nation today has led to mass suicides, displacement, impoverishment and all round destruction of natural on the critical issues of development such as food security, equitable budget, corporate plunder of resources, community rights over resources, electoral reforms, issues of unorganised work force. The Trickle Down theory, pushed forward by interests advocating for liberal reforms, has failed to fulfil its promise. Jan Sansad demands that the unorganised and unprotected sector of workers, who are 93% of our population, be given their due now. NREGA workers from states of Sitapur, Nanao, and Nandoi in Uttar Pradesh and Araria in Bihar demanded for NREGA wages be equal to minimum wages prescribed by the States and for a 365 day Right to Work program.

In its report to the Parliament, the Jan Sansad demanded comprehensive electoral reforms which will reflect the reality of the entire nation including that of labourers, adivasis, workers, women, muslims and other minority communities. The Jan sansad rally was joined by Justice Rajendra Sachchar, Swami Agnivesh, Devasahayam MG, Arvind Kejriwal, Sanjay Parikh, Suhas Borkar and other senior activists from movements across the

Jan Sansad passed resolutions on the issues of communities' control of natural resources, corporate corruption and many other issues.

country. The Jan Sansad ended with the decision to take forward this process to other States and districts.

- **Madhuresh Kumar**

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grew simultaneously with that of the Centre. And when he left the Centre, he promoted Nirmitee and worked for the upliftment of Adivasis in an area, not too far from Tara. Nirmitee functioned from Tara for a long time. Tara was a place for convergence of Mumbai socialists, and when Nirmitee started its activities among Adivasis and farmers at Uddhar, the Nirmitee too became an attraction for socialists and also activists.

Though a separate unit, and a part of a larger group of organizations for the upliftment of Adivasis, Nirmitee worked with the Centre whenever any calamity befell the Raigad district. It is the Centre from where the relief activities were undertaken all around and Surekha Dalvi, his colleague and Ashok gave their best to these activities with the YMC workers.

In Ashok Saswadkar, socialist movement lost a good grass-root worker and the Janata weekly lost a trustee, but what he has done and which his colleagues will continue to do, and what Nirmitee and YMC are doing, will become a lesson in socialist transformation of rural areas. Janata dips its banner to the departed socialist worker and its trustee.

-GGP

Selection of Lokpal and Social Justice

Venkataramreddy Yerram

The Lokpal, according to the Bill (The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill-2011), is a collective body, comprising 1+8 members who will be men of good character and high integrity. The selection process has become contentious: the Bill envisages that the selection shall be made by the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India or his nominee, and an eminent jurist nominated by the President of India. A Search Committee will assist the Selection Committee. 50 percent of the Lokpal members shall be from the judiciary, and 50 percent shall be from among the SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, and women.

If we look at the composition of the Selection Committee closely, three out of five namely the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and the so-called 'eminent jurist' to be nominated by the President will be government men, "giving the government political control over the process". The Anna team suggested a much wider and a more apolitical committee of Selection, consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, two judges selected by all the judges of the Supreme Court, the CAG, the CEC, the CVC, and the previous three Chair-persons of the Lokpal - 10 in all, who have no need for the favours of the Executive.

That half the members of the Lokpal should be selected from SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and women, was an afterthought inserted, later, during the discussion in the Lok Sabha, on the insistence of caste-

based parties such as the RJD, the SP, and the BSP. And the representation for minorities and women, added at the wish of the Congress, with an eye on the Assembly elections in U.P, is another red-herring to the main issue of tackling corruption. Giving representation to the disadvantaged sections, in the Lokpal, on ground of backwardness, does not, in the least, contribute to elimination of corruption in government. Social justice is not coeval with the issue of corruption. It is an altogether a different issue.

Reservations were meant to help the candidates from disadvantaged sections, in employment and in education, because it is felt that due to their age-old backwardness, they may not be able to compete, on an equal footing, with those from socially privileged sections. In other words, candidates with social handicaps were provided a "level playing field" in race for government jobs and for seats in educational institutions. The question of providing "level-playing field" does not arise in corruption cases or in filling places on the Lokpal. In fact, in higher echelons of government like the Supreme Court, Election Commission etc, insertion of reservation element will leave scope to question the equity and justice of their decisions on grounds of identity, which is highly improper and even detracts from the high place they occupy as independent bodies.

There is, on the other hand, a lurking tendency to condone corruption on grounds of social backwardness. In support of the BSP's dismissed Minister in U.P, Shri.Kushwaha, who was accused

of huge misappropriation of funds meant for public health, BJP Chief, Shri Gadkari who has welcomed him into his party, pleaded that he was from "very backward caste". Recently when the name of Excise Minister in A.P was found in ACB's list of those who received tainted money from a liquor syndicate, a Minister had openly stated that he was being targeted because he was a BC. In fact, Mayawati herself raised this bogey when she was being probed, sometime back, for disproportionate wealth. And, if Lokpal itself is to be constituted on the criteria of social divisions, corruption, God forbid, may also be judged on the basis of "mine" and "thine" which is the beginning of the end of the Rule of Law in the country.

As for reservations for minorities, apart from its being wholly irrelevant to the issue of anti-corruption, it violates Article 14 of the Constitution, which says, there shall be no reservation on grounds of religion. Even if the Bill were passed by the Parliament, it would not have surmounted the judicial hurdle. Constitutional pundits were right in saying that the minorities' insertion in the Bill was an "election gimmick" and "politically motivated"¹. It was a sop offered by the Congress to Muslims in U.P to win their favour in the impending Assembly elections. And it could even be a "ploy to let anti-corruption legislation fall a victim to a wholly extraneous issue - reservation."²

The sponsors of this reservation farce had, earlier, gained substantially from government-controlled CBI, and they may hope

to reap similar benefits in future from a socially divided Lokpal. Lalu's 'disproportionate assets' case was a case in point: the CBI deliberately weakened its own case, at the trial court, after he became a Minister in the Congress-led UPA government. And when the case was lost, as expected, the CBI did not go on appeal, in spite of Bihar government's (Nitish Kumar) protests. Congress at the Centre, had also wrangled the support of the regional satraps of U.P, by letting the CBI play fast and loose with mega-corruption cases against them, whenever the UPA government was in trouble for want of sufficient numbers in Parliament, thanks to the ditching inclinations of its allies.

It is unfair to think that such celebrities as the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India and others of their ilk as the case may be, will be excluding eminent and well-known people, when available, on grounds of religion, gender or caste. It is simply not possible to ignore them on such silly grounds, at such high levels. Social identity can not be the sole criteria for every activity -intellectual, scientific, ethical, etc. Unless we disabuse ourselves of this obsession, at least, at the commanding heights of nation's polity, we can not make real progress alongside the nations on march like China. Then why was this "non-issue" raised to obstruct the passage of an anti-corruption legislation, in Parliament? The objectors were, after all, the same people who countered Women Reservation Bill by insisting on sub-quotas for women. It is an irony that an egalitarian ideal of social justice was turned into a road-block to the vistas of women-empowerment and anti-corruption crusade, in this country.

Reclaiming the Socialist Paradise in Sweden!

D.K. Giri

Sweden has been held as a socialist paradise where some of the basic values of Social Democracy have been consciously provided and preserved. Also, Swedish Social Democrats have had two unique achievements to their credit. First, no other political party, let alone a social democratic party, has ruled for such a long period of time, duly elected by a popular vote, elsewhere. Elected during the dark days of depression in 1932, it remained in power on its own, or in cooperation of other parties, for almost the rest of the twentieth century. Second, the Socialist Party in Sweden successfully carried out the social democratic experiment through most diverse and difficult conditions such as during the Second World War, during the post-war and cold war periods, the oil crisis of 1970s, the rise of New Right and very recently globalization. But of late, the Socialist party has lost two successive elections in 2006 and in 2010. Although it still remains the single largest party in Swedish Parliament, SAP's (Swedish Socialist Party) percentage of popular votes touched a record low of 30 percent. Admittedly, there has been a rightist shift in European politics, but the second successive loss of SAP has shocked the socialist world. Lots of analyses have been carried out in Sweden, including by the Crisis Commission of the party, and outside by political observers. I have argued in this journal and elsewhere, that it is not the policies per se, but the presentation, the alliance with 'red' and "green"

and the tactics used have cost the comrades so dearly. The Swedish media, for their curious calls, focused on the leader, may be an echo of American presidential campaigns. Mona Shalin was constantly heckled by the media, her successor Hakan Juholt was hounded out of his position, so the SAP has a new leader in Kjell Stefan Lofven, since 27 January'2012. It is too early to assess his leadership, but from his record in the Union, and the acceptance speech, one could / pontificate / if the paradise lost, will be reclaimed in 2014.

Comrade Stefan Lofven, a former trade union leader is the new chairman of the Social Democratic party. He studied economics at school, learnt welding skill, and then studied, for a while, social work in the University. He has been a trade unionist all his life, during which he gained national and international experience in politics with several positions he held in his Metal Workers Union, Olof Palme Centre and the party. He has made a modest beginning having realized the enormous burden on him as the leader of the largest party in Sweden.

Reaffirmation of Social Democracy

Comrade Stefan Lofven's speech reflected the wise words of Woodrow Wilson, "Absolute identity with one's cause is the first and great condition of successful leadership." Stefan said, "I am so thoroughly convinced of the need for social democracy and social democratic policies.... I share the belief in social democracy and our values.

I feel it so deeply; it is so strong within me, because I know that the Swedish people also share it with me.” One is heartened to know the leader speaks with such conviction and passion. But his last sentence here needs qualification and merits discussion. Stefan contends that it is not the policies, but the shortcomings in the party that have cost them the election. As outside observers, let us probe it a bit deeper. There is no disagreement whatsoever when comrade Stefan says “our values are timeless.” It is true that socialist values like freedom, equality, and solidarity are needs as basic as food, shelter and employment. For instance, is it not true that freedom is essential for creativity or development (a la the noble laureate Amartya Sen), equality for partnership, solidarity for harmony and justice for sustainability? These principles are universal, irreducible, and indivisible. But they have to be part of a collective consciousness before they can be accepted by the majority translated into votes and power. Social Democrats should not make them sound as platitudes, a commentary on moralism, but as critical inputs for development and nation building.

Comrade Stefan said, “I am a fully convinced feminist.” He added “I react extremely strongly when I see how women are discriminated against in our society and in our working life. How often women have lower salaries, how hidden structures restrict women’s career paths and chances in life... I intend to fight for increased gender equality and the freedom of women.” This is the most powerful statement made by the leader of SAP, because the largest marginalized group in the world even today consists of women. Some 70 percent of

12,000 plus million poor are women; mostly in developing countries girls outnumber the boys in child labour, including child prostitution. Women are grossly under-represented in decision making process. The development occurs mostly at the cost of women - in terms of loss of work, unpaid work, and inequality in workplaces. The gender inequality must be fought by all progressive forces for a fairer and more balanced society.

Social Democracy is International

Comrade Stefan shows his experience of the diversities in the world as the international secretary of the Swedish Metal Workers Union. He argues that though world has many problems, it also has the infinite possibilities to develop. According to him, social democracy is essentially a freedom movement and people’s dreams of freedom know no national borders. That is why it is natural for social democrats to align with world’s progressive forces. One need not labour the point that whether, we like it or not, the world is extensively joined-up now by explosion of information technology. Through digital new media, political mobilisation has become easier as we witnessed in Arab Spring, or at home the nation-wide support for anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare. The new social media can provoke transnational mobilisation as well. Also, the free movement of capital, goods, services and people, not only in the European Union but across the world has made internationalism almost mandatory for political parties. Comrade Stefan rings the right note here.

Environment and Climate Change

The speech emphasized the need for investment in innovation. That

leads to the need for investment in the environment friendly technology. If it is done in a smart way, it will create both jobs and growth. Investment should be made in skilling and re-skilling people. They must have the competence to land a job. Investment thus will create conditions for growth and jobs tomorrow. For the sake of climate and environment security, there has to be a balance between business and politics. To this, he may like to add the balance between the environment and economics because much damage is done on the economic grounds; the greed of a few cuts into the needs of many. This is encouraged or condoned by states in the name of economic growth without social accountability. While, the potential dynamism of the market must be harnessed to the social purpose, the over-regulation of the economy by the state through unimaginative executive must also be overcome.

In defense of politics

In his famous book, ‘In Defense of Politics’, Bernard Crick talks about why politics matters, “the decisions made by politicians affect us all, from cradle to grave.” In the days of acute cynicism about politics and all-round criticism of politicians, Stefan’s call for ‘more politics’ is a breath of fresh air. Distressed at the deprivation, inequality and discrimination, he feels that these social anomalies are consequences of bad or less politics, “whenever we look in 2012, we see that there is need for more politics, not less; people all over the world, are crying out for social democratic politics, justice, equity. One is so encouraged by this strongly positive attitude to politics. Social democracy can thrive only in a political atmosphere of optimism, positive thinking,

solidarity that calls for a pro-active stance, not cynicism or selfish individualism. The Stockholm based international Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) had conducted a study on why politics is unpopular and how to make it a legitimate and an acceptable tool for action and change. Stefan could make it one of his priorities to arrest the depoliticisation in the society and encourage people to take greater interest in politics. One of the ways to do so is to make his party matter to people in their daily lives through active politics of the party. Stefan very rightly says, "Politics is the best tool we human beings have to improve the societies we live in. Politics makes a difference".

To be sure, the party is still debating and defining the dynamics between the party, the policies and the leader. For any party, these are the elements in a campaign that win or lose the election. In matured parliamentary democracies, all three should matter in elections. But when media plays a prime role in election campaigns, in order to create sensation, increase readership and viewership, they tend to focus on the leader. Because the party is a group of many other leaders, cadres and candidates, policies are inanimate intellectual and ideological stuff, it is the leader who is live and in the public glare. Therefore, his personality, personal life, mannerisms, etiquettes and charisma become the focus. Brecht, the German poet and playwright endorses this trend, "there are many elements to a campaign, leadership is number one, everything else, number two."

Stefan's speech sounds that of a strong, optimistic and daring

leader. His words, "we do not fear the future, we long for it". Once, in 1990s, the Labour shadow foreign secretary Gerald Kaufmann attacked the foreign secretary of Britain, "we should not let things happen to us, we must make things happen for us". Such 'call for action' echoes in Stefan's speech, "the future is not something that just happens to us, let me stress that the future is formed by the people together." He suggests that the party should be amongst the people, talk to them, get involved with them. To be sure, it sounds the perfect strategy.

The leader began his speech by saying that it is not the policies the people have turned their back on, it is the shortcomings of the party. He did not elaborate the shortcomings and others need not wonder about it as it is the internal matter of a party. However, from whatever appeared in the media so far, one is wary of the unpleasant fact that, a party which prided in its consensus and cohesion, went through a bitter leadership contest. Whether the party is in need of organizational reform or not, hard for us to say, but surely, the image of party discipline and unity needs to be restored sooner than later.

Policies were again not elaborated except passing reference to public finances, job creation, investment in innovation and human resources. The party leader believes that the party has the right set of policies - on education, on health, on environment, on workers, on citizens' rights and responsibilities, taxation and so on. Close observers of Swedish politics will find hard to agree fully with the leader. In 2010 elections, the party had a pre-poll alliance with the 'red' and 'green' and what is called the common minimum programme

agreed between the alliance partners would have impacted and even diluted the social democratic policy platform. Also six years of Moderate rule which is said to have tinkered with the welfare state call for a readjustment of social democratic policies to repair it. It is right that the principles of social democracy are constant and timeless, but the programmes are not which correspond to the contemporary challenges.

Finally, history shows that whenever an ideological party loses an election, the hardcore tends to hark back to the comfort zone of past traditions. Comrade Stefan will be well advised to eschew this tendency. Whilst it is prudent to secure and consolidate one's traditional support base, it is practical to build a winning constituency by reaching out to others. The SAP leader has to address and relate to all sections of the society. While one fights for the poor, one needs the rich to generate surplus albeit in an ethical way and pay for the poor in solidarity.

In Sweden, a rich country, in moral and ideological terms it is important to speak and plan for the poor, but in electoral terms, it is necessary to talk to the rich. What is the SAP platform and message for the rich and the middle class? It is good to hear the statesman Stefan to speak of the next generation, but as the time unfolds, it will be better to hear the politician Stefan talk of the next election. At any rate, the whole socialist fraternity in the world is hoping that Stefan and his party wins the fight for reclaiming social democracy in Sweden which to a great extent has been the torchbearer for many.

From the Archives

Socialism and Ethics

Jayaprakash Narayan

I seek your indulgence now to bear with me in examining a problem that has deeply worried me of late. The problem is that of methods or means. It is important for us, both in the light of our impending decision to break away from the Congress and of the tragic events that have recently taken place.

In the West, opposition parties do not consider it wrong to use lies and falsehood to bring the rival party into dis-repute; they do not consider it wrong to practise bribery and corruption to achieve favourable results at elections. There are certain parties, which go much beyond lies and corruption. For them, even murder, loot and arson are a party of political strategy. We have witnessed this strategy unfold its bottomless tragedies in the past months.

From time immemorial there have been politicians who have preached that there is no such thing as ethics in politics. In the old times, however, this amoralism did not spread its corrupting influence beyond a small class that played at politics, and the mass of the people were left uncorrupted by what the leaders and ministers of State did. But since the rise of totalitarianism, which includes both fascism-nazism and Stalinism, this principle has been affected by it. This has resulted in such an eclipse of moral values from social life that not only its political sector has been darkened but every

sector of human life including even family life.

Since the victory of Stalinist methods in Russia, it has been commonly believed that there is no room for moral values in Marxism, and it is usual for a socialist who talks of such matters to be branded as a socialist who talks of such matters to be branded as a renegade or, at the least, deviationist. I should therefore, like to state before you in the clearest possible terms that I for one have come to believe that for the achievement of socialism a strict regard for means is of the highest importance. Socialism means different things to different persons, but if by socialism we mean a form of society in which the material needs of every individual are satisfied and also in which the individual is a cultured and civilised being, is free and brave, kind and generous, then, I am absolutely-clear that we will never reach this goal except by strict adherence to certain human values and standards of conduct. It is too often believed that all would be well only if there were no exploitation in society and everyone was well fed and clothed and housed. But a society of well fed and clothed and housed brutes is a far cry from socialism.

There were many things that Mahatma Gandhi taught us. But the greatest thing he taught us was that means are ends, that evil means can

never lead to good ends and that fair ends require fair means. Some of us may have been sceptical of this truth by recent world events and events at home have convinced me that nothing but good means will enable us to reach the goal of a good society, which is socialism.

When, in a statement the other day, I talked of the need of spiritual regeneration, some of you might have thought perhaps that I had been so deeply shaken by recent happenings that I was trying to escape from the hard realities of life. Those of you who might have thought so are completely mis-taken. I have no knowledge of matters spiritual, if the terms is understood in a religious or metaphysical sense. I have not suddenly come to acquire faith in something called the spirit or the soul or Brahman. Such philosophy as I have is earthy and human. I am concerned merely with the problem of the type of men I should like to live with in society. Clearly, I do not like to live in a society of liars and murderers, of men who have no kindness in them, no tolerance, no fellow-feeling.

No one can say what human nature is; but this much can be said that it is what you make of it. A good man is not born, becomes good by training. Therefore, if the aim of our Party is not only to produce well-fed, well-clothed and well-housed animals, but also to produce good

men, then I say that all our political work must be inspired by certain ethical values. I hope that you will give this viewpoint the consideration it deserves.

I crave your indulgence again to permit me to examine another problem from a somewhat unorthodox point of view.

There is a view held by some that all politics are power politics. I consider this to be a disastrous point of view.

I shall examine here two important aspects of this way of thinking. First, let us see how it affects Party organization. Those who hold this view should logically make every attempt to do not say that they are actually doing so to secure power within the Party itself. And power, according to this view, being the quintessence of politics, the use of every kind of means may be considered justified to secure power, including means such as lying, scandal-mongering and cheating at Party elections. Clearly—and I hope all of us would agree—such means could only result in the complete disintegration of the Party. I, therefore, hope and pray that every one of us will reject all such means and eschew all quest for power within the Party. It is human to yearn for recognition and aspire for positions of influence and leadership. But one should be content to reach these positions by virtue of one's work and service done to the cause.

The second aspect of this view which I wish to examine here has a far deeper and wider significance. The theory that all politics are power politics has the necessary underlying basis—though this may

not be obvious to the protagonists of this theory—that the State is the only instrument of social good. In other words, those who subscribe to this theory believe—unless they are mere self-seekers, in which case unworthy of notice—that they must capture the State in order to be able to serve society and bring about the social transformation they desire.

I reject this view completely. The Congress today has captured the State, but every thinking Congressman will agree that the Congress would completely undermine itself if it depended on the State for every effort at social change and development. In fact, the view is growing among the constructive workers in the Congress that they must cut themselves off from the parliamentary machine and function independently so as to serve both society and the State.

The experience of totalitarian countries, whether fascist or communist, has shown that if the State is looked upon as the sole agent of social reconstruction, we get nothing but a regimented society in which the State is all-powerful and popular initiative is extinct and the individual is made a cog in a vast unhuman machine. Such a society is surely not the objective of our party; nor could a society of this nature even be an intermediate stage in the evolution of the democratic socialist society that is our aim.

Democracy requires that the people should depend as little as possible on the State. And, both according to Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx, the highest stage of democracy is that in which the State has withered away. Totalitarianism, as distinct from a transitional "dictatorship" of millions of toilers

over a small defeated class of vested interests, can hardly be a half-way house to full democracy. It is necessary for the growth of full democracy that popular effort has the freest possible chance, and that the people, through varied kinds of economic and cultural organizations and institutions, are enabled and encouraged to improve their condition and manage their affairs.

Accordingly, the type of mind that I should like to see develop within the Party is one that would make every one of us indifferent to whether one is Prime Minister of the Republic or a trade union or other field-worker. I believe that whether or not we have the government in our hands, if we succeed by constructive work in creating a sound trade union movement capable of running industry; in educating the working class in the arts of citizenship, in creating co-operative communities in the villages; in mobilising the youth and children as country servants of the nation; in creating cultural influences that go down even to the most backward sections of the people; if we succeed in eradicating caste, superstition and bigotry; if we succeed in enlisting the co-operation of hundreds of thousands of selfless workers to whom the seats of power offer no attraction—if we succeed in all this, we shall also succeed in building up a socialist society. In this event, the State will inevitably become a socialist State, and will play its inevitable and appointed role, which would go little beyond the imprimatur of the law on what has already been accomplished, or on what cannot be prevented from happening. The State in this manner will only be an instrument in the hands of a popular

socialist movement-i.e., of the people or—organized independently of the State for a socialist way of living—rather than the source and fountainhead of all Authority and will.

These observation are of particular significance in the context of the historic decision we are about to take. The temptation for members of an opposition party to look always to the seats of power is great. We must keep this temptation in check. We must remember today, and never forget it in the coming years, that it would be by constructive work, rather than by the tactics of a parliamentary opposition; by positive service rather than by exploiting the mistakes and faults of others, that we could succeed in establishing a democratic socialist society.

I might refer here briefly to an important corollary to what I have said above. In a revolutionary party, i.e., a party that aims at fundamental social change, there are always a par—liamentary wing and a wing made up of field workers. A time inevitably comes when a conflict arises between these wings as to which should dominate the other. Such a conflict has already arisen within the Congress, which at least had a revolu—tionary past; and the victory had already gone to the par—liamentary wing. In this event, the field or constructive workers of the Congress would probably separate and form themselves into an independent body of social servants. We, on the other hand, should so develop our Party that construc—tive and parliamentary work are integrated together and the constructive workers have the dominant voice. Only then could the Party become a fit instrument of full democracy.

From the Archives

On the Move

This Conference takes note of two amazing contradictions in the political scene of India. Within a year and a half of the achievement of freedom, on which the people had set their heart and for which they had striven and suffered, hope lies shattered and an astonishing mass of discontent prevails and is increasing. And yet this discontent is so diffuse that, while every section of the people is discontented in its own way, the people as a whole are unable to discover a constructive unity in their discontent. A diffused discontent can alone destroy; a constructive and centralised discontent can build. On the resolving of these contradictions depends the future of India as a nation, the social well-being of the people and the dignity of the citizen.

2. Diffused and scattered dissatisfaction may destroy our people in one of two ways; through paralysis of the will or through chaos and disintegration. When preservation of law and order and of the status quo becomes the chief aim of the ruling party as it has become of the Government of India and other provincial governments, discontent is stifled, tensions are driven underground, all initiative passes into the hands of a bureaucracy and the people's will while docile is broken and frustrated. When every discontent is indiscriminately used through violence and sabotage to further the misconceived in—terests of a single party, as in the case of the communists and RSS or similar other organisations, a war

of each against all takes place, chaos prevails and society loses its coherence. Ab—juring these ways of paralysis and chaos, a party can, however, use discontent in order to build. When tensions and discon—tent are so used that the people bend their energies with singleness of will to destroy peacefully social evils and to con—struct prosperity and equality, the nation is built and the people grow in mental and material stature. This is the way of the Socialist Party and no other party is at present resolved to travel this way. And yet the Conference must take note that the Party has hitherto been unable to persuade the people in their vast majority to travel this way with such speed that the perilous situation requires, due both to its own failings and to general inertia.

3. When the people strove against foreign rule, the fail—ings of men and organisations in the struggle were many, but what turned tens of millions into an effective army was the single-minded hunger for freedom. That hunger is appeased, but a greater hunger gnaws and tears. The people are not yet sufficiently aware of the precise character of this hunger and have not yet given it a name and a form. On the one hand, it is plainly and simply the hunger for food and clothing and hous—ing, to satisfy which the people are compelled to engage in a scramble which wastes their time and weakens their dignity and on the other it is the hunger for social and economic equality whose

This is the resolution passed unanimously by the delegates of the Annual Cen—ference of the Socialists Party held at Patna on 6 to 10 March 1949. The resolu—tion was moved by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and seconded by Asoka Mehta.

satisfaction alone can put blood and flesh on the dry bones of democracy and enthuse every Indian into a full grown citizenship. The main task of the Socialist Party is to unite and integrate the various sections of the people with their differing discontent through an awareness of the single-minded hunger for equality and prosperity. Every Indian shall have his food and other bare comforts with ease and no Indian shall be compelled to bend to another in servility. This awareness must also find concrete embodiment in a programme realisable by the people and their Government within the next few months and the Conference resolves on the outline of such programme:

1. Creation of a land-army for the cultivation of new lands and the State to care for their food and clothing and allowances. Recruitment to the army be made from all sections of the people and a national service year for the purpose be made obligatory in colleges.

2. Forthwith stoppage of legal or illegal ejectments and fresh settlements by the landlord, harvest to the tiller and security of homesteads; no increase in land revenue; planned redistribution of land to reach within a three-year period a minimum of 12 1/2 acres and the maximum not to exceed 30 acres per farming family and adequate arrangements for rehabilitation.

3. Development expenditure to be made through gaon and zilla sabhas and co-operative societies; voluntary effort for small-scale irrigation, manuring, cattle pastures and the like.

4. Vast State aid to small and medium-scale industries;

polytechnic schools for all sections of the population; scientific research for small-unit inventions and bottom as well as top planning.

5. Nationalisation of banking, insurance, mining, electricity and British assets and their management by autonomous corporation.

6. Living wage for all salaried and wage earning sections; dearness allowance to be pegged to price index.

7. Reduction of prices and recognition of the principle of parity between agricultural and industrial/ prices; co-operative trading between city and village in select districts.

8. Overhaul of administrative and recruitment standards, grades promotion to be revised as for a free country; institution of an Indian Economic Service.

9. Clear demarcations of rights and functions of State, Government and political parties and no curtailment of civil liberties.

10. Planned! state aid for the rehabilitation of refugees. 4. This Conference urges the people and in particular the members of the Socialist Party to reach this programme to as large number as possible. It appeals to organisations of farmers, agricultural labourers, factory workers, salaried and trading sections, to endorse this programme and intensity its appeal among their members. Only, in the measure that this programme and the awareness of the hunger for equality and prosperity and the Socialist Party as the instrument of his hunger and the programme, can act as a mirror of numerous sections of the people who can see reflected in it their woes and their desires and thereby engage in a united endeavour instead of wasting themselves in sectional attempts,

can the diffused discontent of the people be centralised. The people will then integrate and diverse their energies into construction. In the event that this programme receives the organised backing of the great masses, but that the Government is unable to accept and put it through, it is always open to the Indian people to resort to satyagraha and strike in furtherance of it. A change of Government in a democracy should undoubtedly be sought only through the vote. But when a perilous situation obtains, when the choice is between paralysis and chaos as it is to-day, it is the bounden duty of the people to resort to peaceful action for the removal of specific evils through a specific programme.

5. The conference is of the view that the year ahead will see the scattering of gloom and despair and the acquisition of a new faith and the most potent means to achieve this is the acceptance of this programme by the great masses and the tenacity with which increasing numbers cling to the Socialist Party. This then is the year of a new faith and hope, the summons to devoted action, delight in the furtherance of this programme for equality and prosperity.

- Compiled by Qurban Ali

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People's Participation and Human Development: Challenges of Reconstructing Indian Polity - IV

Ravi Kiran Jain

It may be noticed here that after the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts Part IX and Part IX-A have been inserted after 43 years of the working of the Constitution. These parts relate to The Panchayats and The Municipalities respectively. It may further be noticed here that under Part XIV Chapter 1 the Services under the Union and the States and the posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of any State, cannot be construed to mean that the Services are for the affairs of the Panchayats and the Municipalities. Therefore, the bureaucratic structure which has been recognized under Part XIV Chapter 1 has no relation with the affairs of the Panchayats and the Municipalities. It is only for the centralized system of governance which is envisaged under the Constitution before the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts that the services were recognized. The decentralized governance does not envisage a bureaucratic interference.

Disadvantaged sections of the people in our country have been living in rural as well as urban areas. In the past, it was always believed that urban areas would develop automatically whereas concerted efforts will have to be made to plan the development of rural areas.

Now these two Constitutional amendments show that the path to the

city runs through villages. It is just not possible to create healthy cities surrounded by sick villages. Now if we have a look at the items in the 11th and 12th Schedule, we would find that health, culture, education, poverty alleviation programme, public distribution system, small-scale industries, rural housing and things like that have become subject matter of decentralized planning by people's participation without any bureaucratic interference for development of rural areas as well as urban areas.

Now under part IX of the Constitution Panchayats "shall be constituted in every state" at the village, intermediate and district levels in rural areas, and under part IX-A, Municipalities "Shall be constituted for (a) transitional areas, i.e. to say an area in transition from rural area to an urban area (b) for small urban areas, and for larger urban areas, to be known as Nagar Panchayat, Municipal Council and Municipal Corporation respectively, for urban areas. Now these panchayats for rural areas and municipalities for urban areas are the creation of the Constitution and not creation of an ordinary statute. These institutions are Constitutional functionaries. These institutions can be used to realize the rights contained in Directive Principles of State Policy which is evident by the perusal of the relevant provisions of the Constitution. Article 243-G gives

power to the Panchayats in rural areas and Article 243-W gives power to the Municipalities in urban areas "to function as institution of Local Self Government" having powers with regard to "the preparations of plans for economic development and social justice" as well as the implementations of the schemes for the economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in Eleventh Schedule (for rural areas) and Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution (for urban areas).

The Eleventh Schedule and Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution of India are reproduced below:

Eleventh Schedule

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension.
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation.
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development.
4. Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry.
5. Fisheries.
6. Social forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce.
8. Small scale industries, including food processing industries.
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries.
10. Rural housing.
11. Drinking water.
12. Fuel and fodder.
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.
15. Non-conventional

energy sources. 16. Poverty alleviation program 17. Education, including primary and secondary schools. 18. Technical training and vocational education. 19. Adult and non-formal education. 20. Libraries. 21. Cultural activities. 22. Markets and fairs. 23. Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries. 24. Family welfare. 25. Women and child development. 26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded. 27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. 28. Public distribution system. 29. Maintenance of community assets.

Twelfth Schedule

1. Urban planning including town planning.
2. Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings.
3. Planning for economic and social development.
4. Roads and bridges.
5. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
6. Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management.
7. Fire services.
8. Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
9. Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
10. Slum improvement and upgradation.
11. Urban poverty alleviation.
12. Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds.
13. Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.
14. Burials and burial grounds; cremations, cremation grounds; and electric crematorium.
15. Cattle pounds; prevention of cruelty to animals.
16. Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
17. Public amenities including street lighting,

parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences. 18. Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.

We have to appreciate how wide are the powers of these institutions which include a power of “preparing plans for economic development and social justice” and the execution of such plans. The development activity has been brought at the grass root level available at the doorstep of “We the people of India” who will involve themselves in economic development and social justice, which means human development on the Fundamental Principles of governance, contained in Part IV. In the lists contained in Eleventh and Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution there is hardly any item which might be required for the exercise of the collective right to human development.

In *Air India Statutory Corporation Vs. United Labour Union*, 1997 S.C.645 (at666), the Supreme Court says “The Directive Principles in our Constitution are forerunners of the U.N.O. Convention on Right to Development as inalienable human right and every person and all people are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development in which all human rights, fundamental freedoms would be fully realized. It is the responsibility of the State as well as the individuals, singly and collectively, for the development taking into account the need fuller responsibility for the human rights, fundamental freedoms as well as the duties to the community which alone can ensure free and complete fulfillment of the human being. They promote and protect an appropriate social and economic order in

democracy for development. The State should provide facilities and opportunities to ensure development and to eliminate all obstacles to development by appropriate economic and social reforms so as to eradicate all social injustice. These principles are imbedded, as stated earlier, as integral part of our constitution in the Directive Principles. Therefore, the Directive Principles now stand elevated to inalienable fundamental human rights. Even they are justiciable by themselves.”

The Right to Development encompasses within its ambit all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right of self-determination. The Right of Development is of multi-dimensional character incorporating all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights necessary for the holistic development of the individual and the protection of this dignity. Democracy implies people’s participation not only in decision-making about preparation of plans for economic development and social justice but also in execution of such plans.

Chapter-II of Human Development Report (HDR), 1993 deals with “Peoples’ participation” wherein the report speaks: “Participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that effect their lives. People may, in some cases, have complete and direct control over these processes, in other cases, the control may be partial or indirect. The important thing is that people have constant access to decision-making and power. Participation in this sense is an essential element of human development.”



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A New Era in Myanmar

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**People's Participation and
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Challenges of Reconstructing
Indian Polity - V**
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The conduct of successful elections for a few seats in the Myanmar Parliament and the political legitimization of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) represent a dramatic turning point in that country's politics. It marks, as Suu Kyi has herself pointed out, a "new era" in Myanmar, and hopefully an era which will witness the entry of that hitherto-isolated country back into the global mainstream of politics and economics. Myanmar has had a chequered history for the last four decades and has remained under military control since the overthrow of the last democratic government it had for a brief time. The military has held power through suppression and oppression, and like all countries where the army holds sway, by denial of all kinds of rights and liberties to the people. More important, it has ruthlessly crushed the pro-democracy movement launched by Suu Kyi and her party, and as the rest of the world including India watched helplessly it kept Suu Kyi under house arrest for several years. Indians have a soft corner for Suu Kyi and her movement although the government of India has often appeared to be siding with the military regime

and not doing enough to facilitate her release from house arrest and her active return to the national mainstream. This was largely under compulsions of national interest and realpolitik particularly when China has eyed her interests in Myanmar with the ambition of establishing her influence in the entire region. India has had functional relationship with the military regime of Myanmar and has sought to stabilize her own influence as a counter to the Chinese designs. The military regime has had a change of heart and has sought to liberalise Myanmar politics and economics consistent with the radical changes in the world order. Pursuant to this "re-awakening" five years ago, the military establishment has opened out the country to political and economic winds blowing from outside, and released Suu Kyi from house arrest. By winning most of the seats it contested, the National League for Democracy has become the main opposition in the National Parliament, with Suu Kyi herself having won a seat for herself. Testifying to her statesmanship, she has appealed to her followers not to gloat over the victory but work with other parties for political unity. The NLD's victory also will not automatically mean

the end of the military regime, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party has a comfortable majority in Parliament in which a big bulk of seats are reserved for the armed forces.

Between the lines

A Partisan Government

Kuldip Nayar

Aung San Suu Kyi has waged a valiant battle against the generals and in favour of democracy. Despite severe odds she never lost hope and was a beacon of strength and confidence to her people. Her electoral victory is richly deserved. That said, it remains to ask: what next in Myanmar? The non-military civilian parties won elections in the past too, but were denied power by the army. Myanmar has vast natural resources which are yet to be tapped, and the country is geographically so situated as to constitute a geostrategically important port of call in the South Asia and South East Asian region. Unsurprisingly, both India and China feel they have vital stakes in that country's future and hence would like to develop their influence accordingly. As against this other major powers would also like to test the waters in this part of the world, and a beginning was made in December last when the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton visited Yangon to meet the generals and also Suu Kyi. Myanmar can be expected to seek US intervention now to ease the current regime of international sanctions against it. The new era Suu Kyi speaks of will bring benefits to the poor nation only if the world adopts Myanmar as a country deserving aid and moral and material support, and the generals on their part liberalise the economy, release all political prisoners, allow dissent and open up the country to real democracy. The political system of Myanmar cries out for radical reforms and new strides on the path to full-fledged democracy.

At the height of an Akali agitation in the eighties, Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, then out of office, reached Delhi under the guise of a truck driver and burnt a copy of the Indian constitution. He personally did not agree with his Akali party's fiat but went along with the decision as a disciplined soldier. Subsequently, he regretted his act of burning.

I don't know whether Badal has felt the same way after filing a mercy petition to the President on the clemency of Balwant Singh Rajoana who has been sentenced to death. The Punjab and Haryana High Court has adjudged him an accomplice in the murder of former chief minister Beant Singh. Mixing religion with politics has been the bane of Akalis. But I thought they had come out of their contradictory position. The manner in which the party and the government connived at the "unrest" in the state a few days ago indicates that the passion of religion still has the better of the community.

Most unfortunate was the role of the Akal Thakt. It is a highly respected seat of Sikhs and many others in the country look up to it with prayers on their lips. Its hukamnama on the clemency of Rajoana meets the norms of religious assertion but mocks at the laws and the courts in the country. The decision was not politic but it conveyed the impression that the highest religious authority of the Sikhs could have a perspective that went against the ethos of democratic

secular society. The twin principle of "miri piri" (polity and clergy) does not fit into the religious fervour.

What happened in Punjab during the agitation over the clemency of Rajoana reminds me of the lawless and brutal days which the state went through some years ago. Once again the message of the recent happening is that a few determined people, fired by religious fanaticism, could dictate an agenda which made Punjab an uncertain state. The nation heaved a sigh of relief when the fire of extremism was extinguished in Punjab and it began to live like a normal Indian state since three decades ago.

A similar kind of indignation swept through Tamil Nadu when Nalini, a culprit in the Rajiv Gandhi murder case, had served her life sentence and was ready to be released. Even the state assembly passed a resolution for clemency. The Sonia Gandhi's family too did not oppose the clemency. But since the release went against the spirit of the judgment she was kept in jail along with three others. Yet the state did not witness the stir which Punjab did, nor did any party make a political capital out of it as the Akali did.

I personally think that hanging should be dropped from the statute book because it is medieval in practice, tit for tat, a tooth for a tooth in attitude. Some 125 countries in the world have done away with the death sentence. India too without

banning the hanging was more or less following the practice till a few years ago, without specifically saying so. Even the Supreme Court endorsed it by underlining in a judgment that hanging should take place in the “rarest of rare” cases. But surely, the result was to the contrary. The statistics show that the cases of death penalty were the highest in the five years following the Supreme Court’s advice.

There is no go from a parliamentary act to stop the hanging. It is time that the political parties in the country paid serious attention to the proposal. The sentence should be for life, meaning thereby that the guilty should not be released till his death. Alternatively, we can adopt the practice followed in America where the court gives a sentence for 40, 50 or 80 years. In any case, the sentence of hanging is reprehensible and should stop.

Yet the existing law has to prevail till the abolition of hanging. What I

saw in Punjab was not the protest against death sentence but defiance. True, the situation would have taken an ugly turn if Balwant Singh Rajoana’s execution had taken place. Yet what it conveys is that how weak the state has become over the years in fighting against some motivated elements who decide to mock at the law. The five-star facilities provided to Bibi Jagir Kaur, once a minister but now a convict, in jail takes the cake. Does the government realize what the messages it gives to the people? Is it the extension of the government’s double standards shown in the case of Rajoana?

The point at issue is not whether Balwant Singh Rajoana should be given clemency - a petition is pending before the President of India - but whether the pressure and the violence threats should be used to get a favourable decision. When the state government itself becomes partisan, it sends out a wrong signal. It was alarming to find a few officials at Gurdaspur, a city in Punjab, not

rising to the occasion and putting down a communal riot firmly. That the government suspended or transferred them shows that it woke up to its duties. But then the damage had been done. What hurts me more than anything else is the attitude of the Punjab chief minister. How could he file the clemency petition when Rajoana does not want clemency, as he has said in writing? How does the state government come into the picture when the step is legally, leave apart the fact of clemency, questionable?

It is another matter that Rajoana should not be hanged because the death sentence is an outdated practice which the country should have abandoned long ago. The Badal government, I am afraid, has only proved that when the option is between religion and politics, it opts for the first. That the BJP is an integral part of the Punjab government does not surprise me because it too mixes religion with politics when it suits the party.

Inside Pakistan

Pakistan has changed in some ways since my last visit one year ago. Terrorism is absent from most parts of the country. Punjab has not experienced even a single incident in the last 15 months or so. Above all, terrorism is no more a topic in any discussion. I did not see any armed security person on the streets of Lahore. Still people do feel uneasy and even insecure, but appear to have reconciled to the circumstances and the conditions.

In the same way, the Taliban do not figure in the daily discourse as was the case last year. No doubt, they are there and it is contended that the Pakistani army does not go

after them as much as it does in the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan. It is apparent that fanaticism is not thriving any more, although an appeal in the name of religion has not lessened in effect. The maulvi is still a bugbear for all, more so to the liberals who seem to have toned down their voice of dissent.

Sensing that the establishment is not with them, the rightist forces have arrayed themselves on a platform, Council of Defence (DAFA), to pounce upon those who dare to think of peace and harmony. Leaders include Hafiz Saeed who is connected with the terror attacks on Mumbai and

the India-baiter Gul Mohammad, former ISI chief. They fear that Islamabad may even make up with their top enemies, America and India.

However pernicious their hate campaign, there is a genuine desire among the people to have good relations with India. Despite all pressures, the common man on both sides has nourished good feelings towards one another. Yet I have never seen before the surge for friendship which exists today in Pakistan. “We have wasted last 65 years in animosity,” said many leading people. “Let us not waste any more time.”

Defence Preparedness Learning from the past

Maj. Gen. S. G. Vombatkere

Elderly persons have a feeling that if the hatchet between India and Pakistan is not buried in their lifetime, it might not happen after they are gone because the youth is indifferent. However, I found many young girls and boys keenly interested in India and want to interact with their counterparts. But their main problem is the visa which is "impossible" to get.

Trade with India is awaited with abated breath, not only because it would give a break to the deteriorating economy of Pakistan but also because it would provide an opportunity to have contact with India. The bonds of common culture, common traditions and common ethos are convincing more and more Pakistanis that their long-term interests lie with India, not with the Islamic world which the rightist forces are trying to sell all the time. This, however, is not the case with the media which I found too involved in domestic happenings like our newspapers and television channels.

A few businessmen told me that the extremists have already begun threatening them of dire consequences if they were entering into any trade relationship with India. Most significant is the news that cantonments have their walls full of slogans against India written in chalk. (Chalking is the common practice to spread an idea).

No doubt, the general perception is that the army is strong. But I did not find it throwing its weight about as happened even in General Musharraf's time. The military seems to have realized that a takeover would not be easy this time. The political parties are daggers drawn but they have let it be known that martial law is out of the question.

(Continued on Page 9)

The media is full of Army Chief Gen. V. K. Singh writing to the PM that India's army is unprepared for war in terms of weapons, ammunition and equipment. This is undoubtedly extremely serious. That the communication was leaked is even more serious. It is vital to find out who leaked that communication. It is unrealistic to interpret this leak as "retaliation" by a man frustrated at having lost his year-of-birth case in the Supreme Court. Let us not imagine that the General is naive to be unaware of the enormous personal, professional and national risks and repercussions of the Army Chief himself violating national secrets. It must also be noted that just before his letter to the PM became known, Gen Singh had brought out the corruption (over a period of time including more than one of his predecessors) regarding the quality and cost of the Tatra vehicles which are a vital part of the army's transportation system. The matter is burdened with many questions, so it is necessary to ask questions that may generate democratic light instead of the present political heat.

While the country's spooks are trying to find who caused the leak, it is necessary to look at what was contained in the letter to the PM, and why he chose to go to him over the head of the Defence Minister. What was revealed in his letter is that corruption is a serious factor within the defence procurement system, and that at present there are serious inadequacies and shortages of military hardware which make

the army essentially unfit for war. It takes considerable moral courage to bring such an issue before the country's chief executive. Regarding Gen Singh communicating directly with the PM, there will be few in the country who would deny that extreme urgency coupled with extreme importance would justify the step, especially if the agencies in the normal channel have not been acting or reacting to the situation. Hence the real question is whether there was and is some urgency in this matter. Perhaps stepping back in time may help in learning from past mistakes.

Military urgency

China's show of military muscle on India's northern borders in recent times should be causing concern in government offices, but it apparently has not. If it had, government would not be so casual in dealing with defence matters especially with the matter of weapons and equipment that impact on battle efficiency, and so dismissive with pension issues of military veterans that impact on the morale of serving soldiers. Could it be because of the present government's complacency following assurance of political and military support as USA's strategic junior partner? One may recall that the hindi-chini-bhai-bhai and panchsheel principles were cause for a certain complacency leading up to India's political and military humiliation by China precisely half a century ago this October. The Chinese have an undeniable sense of history, and it would not be

beyond the bounds of possibility if China has planned a repeat to keep a competing regional economic and military power, especially one that has aligned with USA, “in its place”.

When Indian troops went into action in 1962, they were logistically entirely unprepared. The Indian soldier, sent into battle with inadequate or inferior weapons, ammunition, equipment and clothing, was let down by the top military leadership of the day. Barring a few competent army officers, the top military leadership lacked the moral courage to stand up to the political-bureaucratic establishment. It was the military failure on-the-ground that has always been highlighted, the political failure underplayed, the bureaucratic role hidden. It is moot to question why the Henderson Brooks-Bhagat Report on the 1962 war with China still remains classified despite calls for its release, when the usual period for such documents is 30 years.

It is understood that the Report comments on the causes and suggests remedies for the failures in the political-bureaucratic-military system that caused the unpreparedness which ended in a national embarrassment. Understanding the causes for system failures can avoid future fiascos. It is a truism that little is learned from successes but there is a lot to be learned from failures; national lessons from a huge national failure. The reluctance to declassify the Report appears to be centred within the bureaucracy since political parties of various ideological persuasions (including some with none) have formed the union government over the decades, and could not all have decided to withhold this vital document. This

reluctance seems to indicate the propensity of an entrenched and increasingly inwardly-turned and self-seeking bureaucracy to defend itself. Shades of the BBC serial “Yes, Minister”.

Could it be that our military planners have assessed probability of an attack from the north this year, putting a sense of urgency to getting our military hardware into shape? Or, if that is not possible in the limited time because of on-going corruption and/or stalling by bureaucracy or bureaucracy-misled politicians, to tell the PM that responsibility for any possible 1962-type military reverse this time around would fall squarely on government? When the balloon goes up, who will be holding the explosive parcel of military weapon-equipment-ammunition inadequacies that has been passed around the past several years?

Dismiss the General?

Politicians of various hues have joined chorus to demand the dismissal of Gen. V. K. Singh for revealing national secrets. This presumes guilt of Gen. V. K. Singh even before investigation of the leak and is unbecoming of responsible people's representatives. Who would benefit from the leak of Gen. Singh's letter to the PM? Certainly not Gen. Singh himself; in fact, he stands to lose heavily by the leak, as is becoming increasingly apparent. Is it possible that Gen. Singh's letter provides names or points directly or indirectly at entrenched interests in the defence procurement system? Would his letter be unconnected with the shady Tatra deals (among others) that have been going on through the tenures of more than one of his predecessors? Would it be possible that a hidden political or bureaucratic hand leaked his communication to

the PM so that the uncomfortable, possibly incriminating, details in the communication would be obfuscated by the fact of its being leaked? Yes, if Gen. V. K. Singh was indeed responsible for the leak, he deserves dismissal, though not before it is proved transparently and beyond doubt. On the other hand, if certain military officers, bureaucrats or politicians are found to be responsible for the leak, similar strong action should be ensured against them. This is neither the time nor the situation for a fast-track court and summary dismissals; due process is vital and essential in a responsible democratic republic. We must “hurry up slowly”.

But even more importantly, the 1962-type material inadequacies of the military pointed out by Gen. Singh, due to corruption and politico-bureaucratic delay over years, must be very urgently addressed if history is not to repeat itself by India being humbled again. And in this connection, immediately bringing the Henderson Brooks-Bhagat Report into the light of day is a must. To stretch the point a bit, perhaps, Gen V.K.Singh has done the nation good by exposing the military inadequacies albeit at considerable personal and professional risk and cost.

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Strengthening Socialist Forces

D.K Giri

When I asked a veteran Social Democrat in India for comments on my article “Building Social Democratic Alliance (SDA)”, (25 March, Janata) in opposition to both NDA and UPA, he very kindly said that, “most people will consider it a wishful thinking, but it is a desirable thing to do”. I have been arguing for some time that, in contemporary Indian politics, what is desirable is the most practical thing to do. Indian electorate is capable of throwing surprises, rewarding value-based politics, and punishing opportunism and unscrupulous politics. A veteran political commentator, Harish Khare, writes optimistically in the Hindu (4 April 2012) that the Congress party can still hold the Centre, meaning can remain in power if it does the house-cleaning - if its internally reorganized”. So, if a 126-year old and archaic party can stay in power by continually readjusting its posture, the Socialists with an international ideology, perennial principles of freedom and solidarity can surely come to power and provide much better governance; what they need to do is to continuously sharpen their ideology, and shrink their organizational shortcomings. Additionally, given that alliance politics has become indispensable, they have to form a broader alliance with other progressive forces who are not feudal (Congress) communal (BJP), nor authoritarian (Communists). But, in order to make such an alliance viable and cohesive, it needs to be stitched with threads of political ideology and organizing principles. That necessitates pre-alliance preparations, which is strengthening the socialist forces

across the country both ideologically and organizationally. In specific terms, how do we strengthen the socialist forces? Comrades who understand social democracy, embrace and imbibe it, are passionate about its establishment as mainstream ideology, implemented by viable and credible party(ies) or their alliance, should adopt the following formula which works well for political mobilization. Let us agree that if one is a good socialist s(he) must be passionate about it, and if s(he) has the passion, s(he) will contribute to expanding the circle of Socialists and deepening the ideological fellowship between them. So for building socialist forces through political parties, social movements, development organizations, research and policy development organizations, for that matter, any CSO (Civil Society organization) or academic bodies, student unions, and cross-section of people, the formulae could be FEMI - find, educate mobilize and involve.

Finding a Socialist

A foreign comrade once asked a group of us, “if we came to India and want to meet a Social Democrat comrade, which door shall we knock?”. Since there is no strong socialist party at a national level, it is natural for them to be lost. Also, even for us in India, we have a problem finding socialists as there is no new recruitment to the party since both SSP and PSP merged in Janata Party in 1977. The generation of pre-1977 socialists is fading away fast with age, if not by choice. So how do we find a Socialist? A Social Democrat could be known in two ways, either

by association or by professing, expressing and articulation. So, any one who is associated with a socialist party or organization is a Socialist. Such are Samajwadi Party, Socialist Party (India), Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Rashtra Seva Dal, Yusuf Meherally Centre, Lohia Foundation, Jayaprakash Foundation, Centre for Socialist Studies, Association for Democratic Socialism (ADS) and many more which cannot all be mentioned here for lack of space, and of my ignorance of them. Members of all those organizations are Socialists, simply because they belong to an organization which bears the name of socialism or that of a socialist leader of repute. There are Socialists in other parties as well: in Congress, in BJP, and regional parties, for their so-called electoral compulsion. Should they be considered Socialists? To me, the answer is no, unless they associate with a socialist body - a Think Tank, or a Foundation, an association or any organisation if they speak for social democracy openly from their party platforms and call themselves Social Democrats. So it is not difficult to find a socialist; but the difficulty lies in recognition and respect for the identity by one another. This is a major barrier to expanding the circle. Many comrades do not consider others as socialists, far instance; member of one socialist party organization mentioned above will not recognize those of another organization as socialists. This attitude is usual with ideological organizations but quite dangerous. The “holier than thou” attitude is not conducive to socialist unity or alliance. Many European

Social democrats are considered by comrades from developing countries as welfare capitalists, but they are lead members of the Socialist International. No doubt, there is room for ideological introspection, refinement, reflection, criticism and so on, but once the basic, universal and perennial values are accepted, and people call themselves socialists, we should recognize them. All socialists have to accept that none of them has the monopoly of wisdom. Many events worldwide have exposed the inadequacies in the strategies for socialism, which most of us have supported vociferously in the past. We all have to learn much all the time, in different contexts.

Educating the Socialists

Political and ideological education is an ongoing and continuous process as both politics and ideology are in constant evolution and change. It is necessary to impart regular ideological and organizational training to new recruits, update the old members through refresher courses, and keep abreast of the latest through regular study circles, discussion clubs symposiums and so on. Passion is created out of deep conviction; and ideological conviction as well as party loyalty emanate from clear understanding of the policies, principles and practices. Therefore, political education is critical to strengthening the socialists. This is an aspect which has been desperately neglected by the leadership, and needs to be rectified.

Mobilization of Socialists

Having defined and understood the ideology, the next step is to mobilize the members.. Unless members participate in activities related to policies and ideas, they would not know how those work, and such ideas will remain ideals,

abstract concepts. Gradually, the cadres will loose faith and interest, get de-motivated. A serious Social Democratic politician once said to me, "to be a good political party, we need to have a solid idea and we need to mobilize for that idea". Mobilization is an essential part of political process. If we take another analogy, any army occasionally needs to mobilize its troops, or else, the soldiers loose the skills, stamina and strategy. A political worker in a similar position needs to be mobilized from time to time in various activities like issue-based movements, public meetings, party conventions and so on. I must hasten to add that mobilization need not be a tool for grooming the socialists, there has to be a compelling cause for mobilization and there are always many such causes, given the inequality and deprivation in our societies.

Involving the Members

Finally, in order to strengthen the socialists, they must be involved in specific responsibilities. If the members do not get involved, they will not acquire the sense of ownership and belonging. Most of our organizations are leader-based, so the members are not involved in running of the organizations. That is not helpful in retaining them and consequently, the rate of attrition of members is quite high. In the west, young members are involved in major responsibilities, I met a young comrade who was handling, as the deputy director of a Foundation some 2 million Euro in projects. We need to entrust responsibilities to young people and get them involved. The trend of octogenarian leadership is not healthy, while the elders remain political patrons, the young people must be involved in day to day political affairs.

A Common Platform

There have been attempts at creating a common platform, a loose alliance of socialists, but they have not worked to satisfaction of its constituents. But, it does not really mean that we should give up the idea. It is critical for us to come together in a common endeavor in a socialist direction. An alliance amongst the socialists is a pre-condition to forming a greater alliance with others lest the socialists should be swamped by others in the larger group. Achieving socialism by hitching one's party or group to a bigger party, or to join that party as individuals has not helped. Attempts to bring about socialist transformation through using the goodwill of popular leaders like Nehru, Indira Gandhi, have also failed, but such attempts still continue to use the party like Congress party. Why that tactics will not work or is not desirable is subject of another discussion. Some foreign comrades try to court Congress party to join the socialist fraternity. Congress party has been declining such overtures as after independence staying in power became its overriding ambition, throwing ideology out of window. As I said, Congress party and Social Democracy merits a separate and fuller discussion.

There are a large number of young workers, students, and activists who are dissatisfied with the present dispensations. Some of them are keen on a basic transformation and are active in fighting oppression in some manner or the other. What is essential is to help provide a connecting, coordinating, ideological link which will help all those to form an alliance or a platform for socialist change. In order to build such an alliance at national level, Socialists have to strengthen themselves.

The Bill and the Federal Argument

Venkatareddy Yerram

The official Bill originally provided for Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the States. It also contained 'Part III' on Lokayuktas; and the Bill was rightly called "the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas Bill". It had a smooth sailing in the Lok Sabha. When it went to the Rajya Sabha, Mamata's Trinamool party which is the Congress ally led the protest and the BJP leapt to its support, claiming "Lokayukta could only be created by the legislature of each state, since only it has jurisdiction over Ministers and officers at the state level". The BJP took upon itself to move an amendment "not to make the establishment of Lokayuktas, on the lines of the Lokpal mandatory". The government rejecting BJP's, brought its own amendment giving state legislatures "the option on constituting Lokayuktas as set out by Parliament". The result is that it is not obligatory for state governments to have Lokayuktas, and Part III of the Bill which deals with them may also be deleted.

The Trinamool, the BJP and others contended that the inclusion of Lokayuktas in the Bill violated the federal division of powers between the Centre and the States. The BJP leader in the Rajya Sabha, Arun Jetley conjured up ghosts declaiming gravely: "The Bill will lead to constitutional havoc as the Centre would be encouraged to usurp the powers of the States through the provision of setting up the Lokayuktas". In fact, it is the other way round: they were denying the powers which the Constitution gave the Centre. The Division of Powers in the Constitution has the Concurrent List where both the Centre and the

state legislatures may legislate, and in case of conflict between the two legislations, the central enactment will prevail. And the first entry in the Concurrent List is Criminal Law. There is another provision, Article 253 of the Constitution, which clearly states that in order to implement an international treaty or an agreement at an international conference, Parliament can legislate for whole or part of the country, even if it transgresses the federal Division of Legislative Powers. And this Bill is made in pursuance of the U.N Convention on Corruption which India ratified on May 9, 2011. The Convention "obliges ratifying states to put in place measures to criminalize and create effective mechanism for enforcement". Thus the LP-LA Bill is completely within the legislative competence of Parliament, as per Article 253 of the Constitution.

It may, incidentally, be recalled that in pursuance of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Civil and Cultural Rights of 1966, the Parliament passed the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993, according to which the Central and the States' Human Rights Commissions were set up. So also, the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas could be set up by a Central Act in pursuance of the U.N Convention on Corruption, which India ratified in May 9, 2011.

There is still another route for the Centre to legislate on subjects not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution. That is the route of the Residuary Powers which are given to the Centre in the Indian

Constitution. Centre can legislate on subjects which are not found in any of the three Lists, known as the "Residuary Powers". Anti-corruption is not found in any List and as such can form part of Residuary entry 97 under the Union List. Parliament can make the setting up of the Lokayuktas mandatory for all states by passing an anti-corruption law like the present "Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill" which falls automatically under "Residuary Powers". When there are such obvious grounds on which the Bill on Lokayuktas could pass muster, why did the Trinamool, the BJP, etc. object and why did the Congress-led government knuckle under?

It is clear that the motives of the objectors were not entirely honourable. They have done it more to stop strong Lokayuktas from coming up in the states than to safeguard their autonomy. While that is so in general, almost all parties, striving hard to conceal their allergy to anti-corruption, had their own agendas to fulfill: the Trinamool was obsessed with trumping the CPI(M) by taking on the Congress-Goliath, if necessary, in defense of Bangla autonomy which, its supremo, the unpredictable Mamata thought, will make her the darling of the Bengali electorate. In the process, she did not mind if the coalition with Congress would break-up. The BJP was interested in driving a wedge between the Trinamool and the Congress. Normally, it would not have opposed the inducting of Lokayuktas in states by a Central law because the BJP was generally known to favour 'strong centre and small states'. But its main

interest was in drawing Trinamool closer to it, and so it moved an amendment to that part of the Bill dealing with the Lokayuktas. The BJP leader in the Lok Sabha, Sushma Swaraj later told that because the Congress did not accept their federal amendment, her party voted down the constitutional amendment meant to give constitutional status to the Bill. By moving the federal amendment and by voting down the constitutional amendment, the BJP showed that it did not give a damn to the Bill, though Anna and his men credulously believed that the BJP was friendly to the Bill while the Congress was not. The fact was that both the Congress and the BJP, in their own way, ignored the "Sense of Parliament" Resolution, which was in the nature of the word of honor given to Anna by the sovereign assemblage of the country, before he broke his fast.

BJP had one more reason to be allergic to Lokayuktas in states, and that was the bitter experience they had in Karnataka with the uncompromising former Justice of the Supreme Court, Santosh Hegde, as its Lokayukta whose six-volume investigative report exposed the mind-boggling mining scam for the country, and brought down the Yuddy's government. Then, there were the regional parties like the SP, RJD, BSP, etc. and they had a number of skeletons in their cupboards which they did not obviously wish to unravel. As for Communists, they had their own 'nuclear fall-out' in NDA-1 which they could not forget and wanted to settle scores with the Congress, besides their general prejudice that Anna team was leading a vague middle class bourgeois movement, to which they did not, somehow, feel committed from the beginning.

The point is that, left to themselves, no party had a genuine concern for creating an anti-corruption ombudsman, be it the Centre or the states - more so in the states where "corruption in high places is endemic much more than at the centre." So, to bring on board the petulant Trinamool, the government managed an amendment, leaving the implementation of the Act to the state legislatures, which virtually closed the chapter on Lokayuktas in states, thanks to the truculence of the Trinamool, the dubious attitude of the BJP towards the Bill, and the outright opposition of Lalu and his ilk.

Yet, it was the general feeling of anger and disgust with the omnipresent corruption and the complicity of the political class that made the political parties in Parliament, including the Congress, to bring the anti-corruption Bill till the stage of introduction and discussion. It is again the continuing pressure and stridency of public opinion that will place it on the statute book. In Sachar's words, without a more vigilant public outrage, things will not improve.

(Continued from Page 4)

Nawaz Sharif told me that they would all stand by the Asif Ali Zardari government if there was any attempt by the army to push it out. I believe that Zardari has got such a message from Sharif who wants the army to be like the one in America or India.

I think the killing of Osama-bin Laden at his house in Abbotabad is the watershed for the army. People's confidence in the army has been greatly hit. They find it "too flabby and too close" to America. A story openly told is that President Zardari had a meeting of top army officials

including General Parvez Kayani and some senior ministers to find out how far Islamabad could go to push America for having killed some Pakistani soldiers. The army top brass is said to have indicated that it could not withstand the pressure of Washington. Although the US drone attacks are criticized, the people admit in private that but for the drone attacks Pakistan would not have got rid of Taliban leaders like Osama and Mullah Omar.

No doubt, the anti-American feeling is stronger than it was last year. But this is primarily because of Washington's pro-Kabul policy. Islamabad still wants Afghanistan as it strategic depth and it is irritated over Washington's policy to make Kabul strong. That the latter is close to New Delhi aggravates the situation.

Kayani is no friend of India but he does not see any purpose in wearing his anti-Delhi feelings on his sleeves. He finds America pressing him relentlessly to give up hostility towards India. Kayani realizes that if Pakistan wants to get the military wherewithal he has to favour steps to lessen the distance with India. The decision to extend the status of 'Most Favoured Nation' to India had his nod. What he probably does not realize is that the peace lobby in Pakistan has expanded beyond his estimate.

Nawaz Sharif has no hesitation in saying that he won against Benazir Bhutto in 1991 on the plank of peace with India. He proposes to raise the same issue in the next election in 2013. Some elements in the ruling Pakistan People's Party too see the point. It is, however, surprising to find the emerging Imran Khan not following suit. Maybe, the army, his biggest supporter, still wants to reap some dividends by not settling problems with India once and for all.

A New Opening for Abolition of Death Penalty

Rajindar Sachar

India is persisting in retaining death penalty notwithstanding that so far 139 countries, from all regions of the world, have abolished the death penalty and 150 have put a moratorium on death penalty. UN has passed a resolution on 20th September, 2010 appealing to all nations to observe moratorium on death penalty if they are not agreeable to pass a legislation abolishing death penalty.

Recently by a curious turn of events a slight clink seems to have crept in against a look like formidable wall of opposition to the abolition of death penalty. I am referring to the case of Balwant Singh Rajoana who was awarded death penalty for assassination of the Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh in 1995. Rajoana did not appeal against his conviction nor did he file a mercy petition before the President for commutation of his sentence. High Court confirmed his death sentence in 2007.

Badal Government did not take any interest in this case nor was this an issue in the recent election in Punjab. But recently the Jathedars of the holy and universally respected Akal Takhat chose to give a Hukumnana to Badal to commute the sentence of Rajoana. From press reports it appears that Rajoana made it clear that he was not asking for mercy and wanted to be hanged. Why the Jathedars so acted is a matter which I am quite sure all well wishers and devotees of Akal Takhat will consider seriously considering that Punjab has witnessed disturbing

scenes and lot of tension and even Police have had to intervene in some places.

Obviously because of political compulsion the Punjab Chief Minister Badal met the President seeking mercy so as not to hang Rajoana and the execution has been stayed for the time being.

Another petition filed in the Supreme Court as a PIL seeking mercy for Rajoana was dismissed by the Court observing that such a petition was not maintainable.

I may make it clear that I am a confirmed believer in the abolition of death penalty. I am pointing out only the convoluted action of Badal Government in acting in this manner rather than in the straight forward constitutional manner which is open to it.

I was glad to read in the press an official statement by the Shiromani Akali Dal, the ruling party in Punjab, stating that it was against the death penalty "as it is the ultimate denial of human rights and it violates the right to life". If so I would suggest a straight constitutional method namely: the Punjab Government should have a law passed by the Punjab Assembly amending the Indian Penal Code and providing that punishment for death will be life imprisonment instead of present death or imprisonment of life as provided in the Indian Penal Code. Our Constitution has concurrent list which enables both the Parliament and the State

Assembly to pass legislation. Entry No. 1 in the list includes all matters including the Indian Penal Code at the commencement of the Constitution. Thus both the Centre and State can legislate and provide for various sentences under the Indian Penal Code. Of course if the Punjab Government was to amend the Indian Penal Code for providing only imprisonment for life it may prima facie run counter to the Indian Penal Code but for such a situation Article 254 of the Constitution itself provides a remedy namely – that in such a case the State Law may be reserved for consideration of the President and if it has received his consent, that law shall prevail in that State. The result will be that if Badal Government genuinely acts, Indian Penal Code will only provide for imprisonment for life and not death in the State of Punjab. This will serve both the purpose of Rajoana not being hanged but also set a healthy precedent for the rest of the country to also abolish death penalty.

It is thus clear that notwithstanding retention the death penalty in the Indian Penal Code, a central legislation, Punjab Government can pass a law providing for only imprisonment of life under the Indian Penal Code and send it for approval to the President. It will then be for the Centre to take the decision and if it does not approve of the Punjab Government suggestion at least Badal Government would be able to say that it not only tried to lead in the field for human rights for abolishing the death penalty but

also in the process tried to avoid the execution of Rajoana.

That states in our Constitution can take different views on the question of death penalty is not in doubt. The example of USA is apposite. The USA consists of 50 states. While at the federal (i.e. central) level, imposition of death sentence has been upheld as a constitutionally valid punishment, 13 states as also the District of Columbia, have prohibited and banned death sentence.

The vociferous opposition to abolition of death penalty springs from the myth that it can lead to increase of murders. Facts show otherwise. Thus, in 1945-50 the State of Travancore, which had no death penalty, had 962 murders whereas during 1950-55, when death sentence was introduced, there were 967 murders.

In Canada, after the abolition of death penalty in 1976, the homicide rate has declined. In 2000, there were 542 homicides in Canada – 16 less than in 1998 and 159 less than in 1975 (one year prior to the abolition of capital punishment).

A survey conducted by the United Nations in 1988 concluded that research has failed to provide any evidence that executions have a greater deterrent effect than life imprisonment.

The Punjab Government should not have any second thought about the support both on moral and legal ground for the abolition of death penalty – in Gandhi's India who said that "I cannot in all conscience agree to anyone being sent to the gallows, God alone can take life because

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Killing of Security Personnel

The ghastly killing of twelve security personnel by the Naxalites at Pistola in Dhanora tehsil of Gadchiroli on 26th March last is highly condemnable. The immediate excuse seems to be the desire of many gram sabhas in Gadchiroli district to shoulder forest management in the adjacent areas for which they have been granted pattas under Tribals' Forest Rights Act, 2006. At Mendha Lekha, the gram sabha, by exercising rights under that Act, earned about Rs. 86 lakhs as of the bamboo felled by the villagers, each piece fetched Rs.33, while the Ballarpur paper mill has been paying Rs. 2 or 3 for the last many years. Encouraged by Mendha Lekha experiment, about 400 villages had obtained community pattas. But they cannot exercise their right because the high officials of Forest Department have

- **Bhai Vaidya**, President and **Pannalal Surana**, Chairman, Central Parliamentary Board of **Socialist Party (India)**

not terminated leases granted to the Ballarpur paper mill. And the Naxalites are pressurizing villagers to allow the paper mill to take away the bamboos. It is a shocking irony that the Naxalites are hands-in-glove with the capitalists to deprive the tribal communities of their legitimate rights. We appeal to the Naxalite friends to give up such tactics and also stop killing security personnel as they also hail from poor families.

We call upon Shri R. R. Patil, Home Minister and also the minister in charge of

Gadchiroli district to devise a two-month plan of destroying training centres and arms stockpile of Naxalites and personally supervise its implementation.

Colossal loot by Multinationals

German pharmaceutical multinational, Bayer sells its kidney and liver cancer drug Nexavar at a whopping Rs. 2,80,000 per pack of a monthly dose. The case of liver and kidney cancer drug Nexavar came to light when India's Comptroller General of Patents granted on 12th March, 2012 'compulsory licence' to an Indian firm NATCO Pharma to produce the generic version (name sorafenib tosylate) of Nexavar. NATCO will produce Nexavar and supply a pack of monthly dose at Rs. 8,800/-. This sum represents steep reduction on the Rs. 2,80,000 that Bayer charges in India for a monthly dose of the drug, which is widely used to extend the lives of patients suffering from advanced kidney and liver cancers. Indian Patent Controller P.H. Kurian granted the

right to NATCO to produce the drug after concluding that Bayer had priced the drug 'exorbitantly' making it 'out of reach' of most Indian patients.

Under the patent office ruling, which is being closely watched by global drug MNCs, Bayer must give a licence for cancer drug Nexavar to Indian Company. NATCO will have to pay Bayer a 6 percent of royalty on net sales of the drug. Natco's finance chief Baskara Narayana told journalist that sales of the generic version of Nexavar, whose chemical name is sorafenib tosylate, were expected to be about Rs. 25-30 crores a year once it was launched. It is calculated that cancer treatment market in India

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People's Participation and Human Development: Challenges of Reconstructing Indian Polity - V

Ravi Kiran Jain

It is really unfortunate that the political activity in this country ignores the insertion of Part IX and IX-A in the Constitution of India. Many debates take place on issues like corruption and criminalization of politics. There is no debate on the core issue of "Governance" on the Fundamental Principles contained in Part IV. The issues like corruption and criminalization of politics is the outcome of centralized system of governance with a strong bureaucracy which works as a coordinator between the various evil forces. The debates of administrative reforms and electoral reforms etc. remain confined to the centralized politics. Now after the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment acts there are State Election Commissions in every state. Like Election Commission of India under Article 324 is constituted for the purpose of "superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to" parliament and for the State legislature of every state, State Election Commissions are constituted under Article 243-K and Article 243-ZA for the purpose of "superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to" panchayats and the municipalities.

Elections have always been a large-scale event in India. Even by these standards the panchayat and nagarpalika elections following the 73rd and 74th Amendments

of the Constitution have been an exercise on an unprecedented scale. According to the Ministry of Rural Development, there are 2,26,188 village panchayats in the country with 31,98,554 members. That works out to an average of about fifteen members per panchayat. At the intermediate level, which in some States is referred to as the Taluk, Mandal or Block panchayat, there are 5,736 such panchayats with 1,51,412 members. Additionally, there are 467 district panchayats with 17,935 members. Compared to this the number of urban local bodies and their elected representatives is rather limited. In 1998, there were 95 Municipal Corporations, 1436 Municipal Councils and 2,055 Nagar Panchayats.

The Supreme Court in *Mohinder Singh vs. Chief Election Commission* AIR 1978 SC 851 noticed Constitutional schemes of elections to the Parliament and State assemblies in the following words: "Before we proceed further, we had better have a full glimpse of the Constitutional scheme of elections in our system and the legislative follow-up regulating the process of election. Shri Justice Mathew in *Indira Nehru Gandhi*, (1976) 2 SCR 347: (AIR 1975 SC 2299) summarized in skeletal fashion, this scheme following the pattern adopted by Fazal Ali, J. in *Ponnuswami*, 1952 SCR 218: (AIR 1952 SC 64). He explained:

"The concept of democracy as visualized by the Constitution

presupposes the representation of the people in parliament and State legislatures by the method of election. And, before an election machinery can be brought into operation, there are three requisites which require to be attended to, namely, (1) there should be a set of laws and rules making provisions with respect to all matters relating to, or in connection with, elections, and it should be decided as to how these laws and rules are to be made; (2) there should be an executive charged with the duty of securing the due conduct of elections; and (3) there should be a judicial tribunal to deal with disputes arising out of or in connection with elections. Arts. 327 and 328 deal with the first of these requisites, Art. 324 with the second and Article 329 with the third requisite (see *N.P. Ponnuswami vs. Returning Officer, Namakkal Constituency*, 1952 SCR 218, 229): (AIR 1952 SC 64) (at p.68): Art. 329 (b) envisages the challenge to an election by a petition to be presented to such authority as the parliament may, by law, prescribe. A law relating to election should contain the requisite qualifications for candidates, the method of voting, definition of corrupt practices by the candidates and their election agents the forum for adjudication of election disputes and other cognate matters. It is on the basis of this law that the question determined by the authority to which the petition is presented. And, when a dispute is raised as regards the validity of the election of a particular candidate,

the authority entrusted with the task of resolving the dispute must necessarily exercise a judicial function, for, the process consists of ascertaining the facts relating to the election and applying the law to the facts so ascertained. Smt. Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain, 1976-2 SCR 347, at pages 504-505): (AIR 1975 SC 2299 at pp. 2372,2373).”

In exercise of power under entry 72 of list 1 of the seventh schedule of the Constitution the Parliament has enacted the Representation of the People’s Act 1950 and Representation of the People’s Act 1951. The Act of 1950 is to provide the allocation of seats in and the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of election to, the house of the people and legislatures of the states, the qualifications of voters at such elections, the preparation of electoral rolls, and matters connected therewith. The 1951 Act is an Act to provide for the conduct of elections to the house of Parliament, or house of legislature of each state, qualifications and disqualifications for membership of those houses, the corrupt practices and other offences at or in connection with such elections and the decision of doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with such elections. The Conduct of Election Rules 1961 providing exhaustively regarding ballot papers, voting facilities, counting of votes and declaration of results etc. have of course been enacted under the subordinate legislative authority.

It has to be noted here that the Constitutional scheme relating to the elections to the Panchayats and the Municipalities after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment acts is absolutely similar to the Constitutional scheme of elections in our system relating to the parliament and the State assemblies as noticed

by the Supreme Court in Mohinder Singh Gill’s case. The Supreme Court has noted Article 324, 327, 328 and 329 as the provisions for holding such a Constitutional scheme. We may refer to Article 243-K, Article 243-ZA, Article 243-O and Article 243-ZG to see this similarity of the Constitutional scheme. There is however one difference in the provisions of the Constitution so far as the legislative powers of making “set of laws and rules making provisions with respect to all matters relating to, or in connection with election and to decide as to how these laws and rules are to be made.”, between the matters relating to the elections of Parliament and the State legislatures on the one hand and the elections to the panchayats and municipalities on the other hand. There is a specific entry in List 1 of Schedule 7 namely Entry 72 providing as to who is the appropriate and competent legislature to make the set of laws. Entry 72 reads as follows- “Elections to Parliament, to the legislatures of states and to the offices of the President and the Vice President, the Election Commission. The formation

or Constitution of the panchayats and the municipalities is a State subject. The State legislature has the power to make law regarding the panchayats and municipalities even after the 73rd and 74th Constitution amendment acts. There has not been made any specific corresponding entry in the State list regarding the power to make law relating to elections to panchayats and the municipalities like entry 72 in list 1 about the elections to parliament and to the legislatures of states but absence of such an entry does not make any difference in as much as entry 5 of the State list (list 2) gives powers to the State legislature to make law from the Constitution and powers of local self governments, which would also include the powers to make law for elections to the local self governments. But the State legislatures have not enacted laws themselves. Most of the matters relating to elections are being made subject of delegated legislative powers i.e. the general rule making power.

(concluded)

Salient Ideas By Rammanohar Lohia
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Salient Ideas... is a compendium of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia’s views on different subjects and situations, in Lohia’s own words. Eminent scholar and writer, Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith Award winner, Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, undertook this work in a spirit of devotion to Dr. Lohia and after going through his whole voluminous writings, compiled this book as his last tribute to his mentor. He could not see this book in print because he passed away after completing the work and handing over the script to his friend Dr. Hari Dev Sharma. After Dr. Sharma’s death, this manuscript was found in his papers.

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March 27, 2012

Dear Shri Manmohan Singh:

I am writing to express my deep concern and sorrow at the recent developments in Kudankulam and Idhitikarai. While there can be vigorous debate and disagreement on nuclear energy, as a country formed with democratic ideals India surely cannot allow repressive action against a group of non-violent people who oppose the nuclear plant at Koodankulam. The use of massive police force to intimidate villagers, and the reported blocking of water and food to the village is unacceptable.

Although new nuclear plants are perhaps safer than those constructed decades ago, it is impossible to rule out a catastrophic accident at a nuclear power plant, despite the considerable attention devoted to reducing risk in such complex and large-scale engineering designs. This is tacitly acknowledged by all Governments that try to locate such plants in regions away from "large" population centers. Furthermore, the understanding of potential risk and damage is implicit in the continuing push to limit liability by corporations and countries wishing to sell nuclear power plants. It is important to note that the single nuclear accident in Fukushima is estimated to cost \$250 billion, or more. These large estimates of damage pale in comparison with the Rs. 1,500 crore (\$300 million) limit of liability in India which the foreign providers find unacceptable, and whose objections the Govt is apparently trying to accommodate.

As citizens, a group of villagers who are concerned about potential risks with nuclear power surely deserve at least the same, if not more, courtesy as foreign providers of nuclear power plants whose demands appear to be attended to with alacrity.

The concerned citizens near the Koodankulam nuclear power plant, and others near future planned plants, deserve your serious attention. Without meaningful discussion, a significant number of citizens who are directly affected by such projects are feeling left out of the democratic process. Note that several countries are now moving towards local consent-based approaches to nuclear power and related issues, and this seems appropriate also for India.

The large scale and dramatic increase in nuclear power over the next several decades envisioned by the Govt appears to have been planned without broad consultation and serious consideration of recent developments in other energy sources. The Koodankulam imbroglio, together with the Fukushima disaster, provides an opportunity to pause and initiate a greater public debate on energy needs and possible means of satisfying these needs in as benign a manner as possible, so that citizens can participate meaningfully in the process, without feeling alienation caused by policies being rammed down on their lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Atul Chokshi

Professor

Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

(Continued from Page 11)

is worth up to Rs. 3000 crores annually. Drug multinationals are eyeing this market. Another case involves Swiss drug MNC Novartis which manufactures another cancer drug, Glivec whose patenting case is pending in the Indian Supreme Court. which is expected to be heard this month.

Bayer's case is a glaring example of colossal loot by multinationals companies, by using the intellectual property regime of WTO. It can be easily calculated that when a drug multinational charges 32 times more on a life saving drug how much profit they earn. HIV/AIDS drugs are another example where prospects of earning huge profit are huge. India has one of the world's fastest growing rates of HIV and heart diseases. Widespread poverty makes many HIV and heart disease non-generic drugs unaffordable for millions. At present Pfizer and Glaxo Smithkline sell a modern HIV/AIDS drug known as Selzentry through their joint venture firm viiv Healthcare. The treatment costs more than Rs. 60,000 (\$1200) for one month dosage in India. It is also calculated to be 25 times more than its generic drugs costs.

India must act firmly to check this loot.

- Manoj Tyagi

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he alone gives it". Similarly Dr. Ambedkar said, "I think that having regard to this fact, the proper thing for this country to do is to abolish the death sentence altogether". Similarly the socialist and leader Jayaprakash Narayan said that ".....

death sentence is no remedy for such crimes."

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour called the death penalty "...a sanction that should have no place in any society that claims to value human rights and the inviolability of the person".

Will the Badal Government bring in the necessary amendment as mentioned above – if it does not it will expose it to the charge that all this drama of appealing to the President for mercy for Rajoana is a political gimmick and not any larger considerations of human rights.

-सामयिक वार्ता आयोजित-

-राष्ट्रीय सेमिनार-

२८-२९ एप्रिल २०१२

स्थान :- गांधी स्मृति एवं दर्शन. राजघाट-नई दिल्ली

विषय :- उदारीकरण के बीस साल : परिणाम, समीक्षा व कार्यक्रम

संगोष्ठी का कार्यक्रम :

- २८.४.२०१२ : १० से १ : उदघाटन सत्र स्वागत एवं प्रस्तावना : साथी यागेंद्र यादव
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साथी भाई वैद्य और मेधा पाटकर
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No closure yet in Gujarat

S.Viswam

Litigation of any kind and at any level is a time-consuming process in India and litigants are usually a disgruntled lot since they get frustrated over a period of time over the endless delays in securing court verdicts. It is ten years since the post-Godhra carnage in Gujarat, and cases are dragging on in various courts, even as supporters and opponents of Chief Minister Narendra Modi have kept up a fairly successful running campaign proclaiming or protesting against his dubious role in allowing and or abetting the massacre of the minorities. There is no finding yet by any investigating agency firmly establishing Modi's innocence or guilt, and there are as many people attesting to his innocence as there are who insist that he played a vicious role in the 2002 outrage set off by the Godhra episode. The conviction earlier this week by a Gujarat Special Court of 23 men for the pre-meditated murder of members of the minority community in Ode village must be assessed against this background. As many as 23 persons, including women and children were burnt to death while they had taken refuge in a shed. Ode was not the only village in Gujarat where such incidents occurred. In many other cases, courts have to deliver judgments. Justice

delayed is justice denied, it is said, but it seems we will have to wait patiently till closure is applied in all cases. In the Ode case, the court has ruled that the minorities were targeted following a criminal conspiracy. The general impression till now is that the conspiracy was permitted to take roots by the chief minister who failed to uphold his constitutional responsibilities. The conspiracy theory will stand or fall by the totality of the court judgments and the broad conclusions courts arrive at after scrutinizing all the available evidence. In the case of the Ode massacre, we are now in a position to say that justice has at last been done to the unfortunate victims. In another instance, another court verdict has come as a shot in the arm for Narendra Modi and his supporters. The verdict is in respect of a case in which former Congress MP Ehsan Jafri's widow Zakia had approached the Supreme Court seeking a probe against Modi and 61 others for their role in the Gujarat riots. A magistrate's court has noted that the report of the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team's (SIT) final report on a massacre in Gulbarg Society in Ahmedabad had found no evidence against Modi or the 61 other accused in Zakia's complaint. The SIT had

filed 40,000 pages (correct) before the court along with a closure report recommending that the investigation in the Gulbarg Society massacre case be closed. The verdict, which will naturally bring cheer to Modi's supporters and disappointment to his political opponents, however, is not the last word on the subject. According to Raju Ramachandran, amicus curiae appointed by the Supreme Court, Zakia Jafri and the Citizens for Justice and Peace the NGO whose secretary Teesta Setalvad has been championing the cause of the Gujarat riot victims, can still oppose the closure report by filing a protest petition in the trial court. Thus, the complainant may still get another chance to contest the closure and keep the case alive with a view to securing justice for the victims. Which also means at the same time that justice will again be delayed.

All this ties up with the oft-heard complaint that courts take an inordinately long time before delivering judgments in both criminal and civil cases. The system is to be blamed no doubt but this is a factor that makes litigation in India so expensive and frustrating. We have had cases in which verdicts have been handed down in criminal cases after 40 to 60 years and in civil cases after 100 years. A drastic overhaul of the system is called for, but the burden on the system, with around a million unresolved cases pending disposal, is indeed heavy. Even so, some way out to hasten the judicial process has to be found. Members of both the senior and the lower judiciary are aware of this severe handicap, and can be expected to cooperate in implementing any mechanism that relieves them of this onerous burden and paves the way for speedy justice.

Between the lines

Distancing from Congress and BJP

Kuldip Nayar

The communists in India have preferred strategy to ideology. The occasions have been few, but they have regretted them. At the time of independence, they supported the demand of partition. Subsequently they admitted that they wrongly backed the Muslim League which represented Muslims alone. Marxism, they woefully recalled, demanded a secular approach.

At a congress in Kerala this week, the communists have departed from their vehement opposition to the BJP and instead will support the party if the Congress faces the prospect of defeat. The communists have put the BJP and the Congress at par. They have even said that they would not side with the Congress to swell its strength to defeat the BJP which till yesterday represented the communal forces inimical to national interests.

The communists are justified in attacking the Congress for the scams which have cost the public exchequer billions of rupees. The communists are also correct in averring that the Congress has done little to improve the lot of minorities. But where they go wrong is when they put the two parties on the same footing. The Congress, with all its faults, has never propagated against secularism, nor has it accepted the guidance of a body like the RSS which stands for Hindu Rashtra.

The Congress can be apportioned blame for diluting the principles of pluralism and liberalism. But

the BJP has never claimed to be pursuing them. Its credentials have never been liberal from its very birth, when it was called the Jana Sangh. However, it is heartening to know that the communists will not have anything to do with the Congress.

Yet, they must admit that they have been guilty of giving the Congress the veneer of being progressive, whether it was the government of Indira Gandhi or that of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Communists were partners in the first UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government. The Marxists saved it from defeat in parliament several times.

What will the communists do now when the Special Investigation Team (SIT), appointed by the Supreme Court, has exonerated Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi from the charge of planned killings of Muslims in the state? True, though one member of SIT Ramachandran has not absolved Modi, the majority has given the clean chit. The state elections are due this year. Surely, the communists are not going to pull their punches because their criticism may help the Congress.

The entire strategy of communists is faulty. It cannot afford to stay silent on matters like communalism even if the beneficiary is the Congress. And how can a responsible party like that of the communists allow the Congress to get away with the murders of Sikhs in Delhi? The state

machinery was used to connive at the murders as the Modi government did in Gujarat. The communists have to stand by the victims and the minorities without caring whether the Congress is defeated or the BJP wins.

The communists are on a strong ground when they talk about a democratic alternative. But the problem with them is that they always want to dominate the formation. And seldom do they see beyond the existing regional parties which are parochial, casteist and even communal. These parties have failed to deliver justice in their own state as they have neither the cadres nor convictions to meet all-India challenges. How can they become an alternative?

The communists have to shed their pride and prejudice to work with the grassroots activists who are spread all over the country. Their ideology is also pro-left but they are not dogmatic or rigid. They find a common denominator among themselves to work together. But they do not compromise with communal casteist elements at any cost. The communists' willingness to shake hands with the BJP may come in the way of joint action which the activists are proposing to initiate.

Postmortems by the Congress and the BJP of reverses in UP

election have not made them any wiser. They are stuck to their old thinking that some rebels cut into the official candidates' votes or that the party wranglings were responsible for defeat. There are at best rationalizations by the two parties to sustain hope among their followers. The fact is that both parties have lost their way and do not know the direction.

Neither the Congress nor the BJP realizes that they are increasingly becoming irrelevant and look like the once-upon parties. Their statements and activities suggest that they have nothing new to offer. They go on indulging endlessly in the same slogans, the same exhortations and the same promises. The UP election and the one held earlier in Bihar, have proved that the voters find regional parties closer to their hearts and more familiar with their aspirations.

The biggest thing which has hit the two is the voters' doubt about their integrity. They find them mixed up with the mafias and underhand deals. Manmohan Singh's regime has been full of scams. A new one appears even before the old one recedes into the background. The BJP's corruption in Karnataka, both economic and moral, is a continuing saga. One party blames the other but both of them, more so the Congress, are mired deep in corruption and

black money. The 2G spectrum scam has reached the countryside as the Bofors gun scandal did.

Both parties need to have something like the Kamaraj Plan. In 1963, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to get rid of his critics in the wake of the debacle at the hands of China, he used Congress president K. Kamaraj's proposal to force the ministers leave their cabinet berths and work in the organization. It was like Mao's cultural revolution, to let ministers and top bureaucrats soil their hands by working in the countryside. Both parties have mostly the same faces for many years. A Kamaraj plan may cleanse the stables of the parties and throw up new faces as well as ideas.

Yet an overhauling alone will not do. The parties have to change their support to the governments' laissez faire policies. The BJP openly favours economic reforms which have been detrimental to the people of country. The communists have also extended their support to a few. The result is that the rich have become richer and the poor poorer. The criticism by the BJP on price rise or anti-poor has no meaning when the party arrays its support behind the Congress to have disastrous bills passed. What comes out is that the BJP and the Congress are the two sides of the same coin.

Visit to Pakistan

It is churlish on the part of a few Indian circles to oppose the visit by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh till Pakistan makes amends for the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai. The matter is before the courts of both countries and all have to wait till the process of justice is complete.

Similarly, I do not understand why some elements in Pakistan are making noises over an 18-hour visit to India by President Asif Ali Zardari. People should take into consideration that the ice has been broken after Zardari-Manmohan Singh meeting. There is suddenly

an atmosphere of give and take at the highest level. This will help the peace efforts.

The two words which Manmohan Singh used after the meeting have been missed in the midst of media hype and officials' caution. He said

that they discussed all problems between India and Pakistan and found “pragmatic and practical” solutions. In other words, both leaders went beyond the official and public line on Kashmir and the other pending issues to normalize relations.

Whether and how the solutions they discussed would be implemented is not possible to guess. Essentially, the steps they would take are dependent on the consensus they are able to build in their respective countries. The Zardari government has been left with less than a year before it faces fresh elections. It has many masters to placate to retain a majority in the National Assembly. And then the biggest party is the army which is the country’s third chamber.

Zardari was himself conscious of the forces he had to reckon with. Therefore, he met chief of army staff General Pervez Kayani and also Prime minister Yousuf Reza Gilani at Lahore before taking the plane to Delhi. Zardari, by now an astute politician, must have known from them the contours within which he had to stay.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is adept in compulsions of the coalition dharma. The support to Zardari’s visit by BJP leader Yashwant Sinha, former foreign minister, indicates that the party with anti-Pakistan image also backs steps for normalization. This makes things easier. Manmohan Singh’s problem will be within his own party, not without. One indication is the absence of Congress president Sonia Gandhi from the lunch in honour of President Zardari. She, who monopolizes the party, did not consider the participation important. On the other hand, she gave the message that she was far tougher than the BJP hawk, L.K. Advani.

The most charitable explanation of her absence is that Sonia Gandhi wanted her son, Rahul Gandhi, to get all the limelight when he was introduced to the heir apparent, Bilawal Zardari, son of Benazir Bhutto and grandson of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Maybe, she would have emerged better if she had blessed the scion of new generations of the two dynasties which are linked with succession.

Zardari’s visit, which began with a pilgrimage at Ajmer and developed into a political event, has made Manmohan Singh’s trip to Pakistan easier. And both sides, including Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram and Pakistan Interior Minister Rahman Malik, have discussed how to accelerate the process of prosecution in Pakistan. Yet this legal or somewhat motivated delay cannot come in the way of Manmohan Singh’s visit. At stake is missing the aperture which Zardari’s one-to-one talk for 40 minutes has provided. The trade agreement has already prepared the ground for something, not Sir Creek which Manmohan Singh has said is “doeable”.

It is apparent that the architect of the 26/11 attacks, Hafiz Saeed, who now carries a prize of \$10 million on his head, was discussed in detail. Indian foreign secretary Rajan Mathai confirms this. Zardari must have felt that action against Hafiz Saeed is a litmus test for India to measure whether Pakistan is really keen on punishing those who attacked Mumbai from its soil. Pakistan too is beleaguered by the elements which Hafiz Saeed has unleashed. This calls for a firm action.

In fact, what is needed is a joint mechanism to eliminate the Taliban. Now that the American and the

NATO forces would be leaving the region in another two years, it is imperative for New Delhi and Islamabad to think of filling the vacuum. Kabul’s sovereignty is important, more so because it is bearing the brunt of the Taliban.

Pakistan has experienced how the Taliban behaved when they took over the Swat valley. So nervous were the people that they thought of crossing into India, the enemy territory, if the Taliban ever came to capture Islamabad. Pakistan has no resources to fight the battle alone, particularly at this time when relations with America are turning sour.

India and Pakistan can fight against the Taliban who are lying low for the moment, waiting for the Western forces to quit. For any joint action, both India and Pakistan have to settle their differences which are primarily because of the trust deficit. The meeting between Manmohan Singh and Zardari has provided the two countries with an opportunity to sit across the table and find a solution to their problems. When the two can agree upon “pragmatic and practical” solutions during a 40-minute talk, why can’t both countries on the whole break the logjam? It is time now to go ahead.

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Public versus Private Schools

K. S. Chalam

The recent controversy on the role of government schools (public school) in generating Naxlites versus the Private Schools producing Swayam Sevaks is an interesting issue on which there seem to be little discussion. Most of the private schools in India are strangely called public schools. It is a misnomer. However, the debate on public education is as old as the movement for self respect and modernization. Mahatma Phuley who is credited for starting the backward classes movement was the first in modern India to apprise the British about the parochial nature of English education in India. In his memorandum to the Hunter Commission in 1882, Phuley questioned the rationale in restricting public education to dvijas and denying the same to shudra and ati-shudra farmers who had contributed to the education of others through special cess. School education became public in modern India after the implementation of the recommendations of Hunter Commission. Thus, the debate on public and private schools is not a new occurrence and has always been there to reflect a deep rooted prejudice against the universalisation of education in India.

The apathy and indifference in implementing the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education during the last five decades after independence has compelled the government to bring the RTE in 2009. The rules are prepared and individual states are asked to produce rules for the implementation of the Act. The

central government has made budget provision for the RTE through Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) with a provision of not less than Rs 20000 crores in each budget. In fact, policy makers have delayed the RTE for decades quoting that it would be difficult for the government to find funds for its execution. Now funds are available yet, the allocated money for SSA seem to have not been fully utilized, if spent - there are stories of embezzlement. What does it really indicate?

We may for a moment get back to the cultural history of this country to understand the low levels of literacy and underdevelopment. While most of the East Asian countries including Japan through Meiji restoration achieved almost universal literacy by the end of 19th century, the goal is still eluding us. There are still pockets of high levels of illiteracy (around 80 percent), while the 2011 census has estimated an average literacy of 75 percent for the country as a whole. But, illiteracy in rural areas is still a problem due to lack of schooling. It is not difficult to identify the groups and we need not spend millions on research to find out the reasons. This possibly could be attributed to our cultural ethos that invokes education as a prerogative of men and for a chosen few. This characteristic perhaps unconsciously guides our policy makers. Therefore, we cannot find fault with some of our gurus and corporate Babas reflecting the popular sentiment. In this context, we can find Andhra Pradesh as a unique state where the dichotomy of large number

of higher educational institutions simultaneously flourish with one of the lowest levels of literacy (lower than Odisha) in the country. It never pricked the conscience of policy makers and the politicians. The gap is widening due to the education market created by the policies of the government that purport to slam such tendencies particularly in elementary education. The hullabaloo of public or government school and private school is due to the well entrenched involvement of the private corporate sector in school education. Naturally, they would find ways to undermine the government schools like the statements made by some Babas in whom they have invested to create a brand value. The sentiment that government or public schools produce Naxlites would make the parents even in rural areas to withdraw their children from such schools. This would enable the private corporate sector (they have already produced a document on business possibilities in education) to enlarge its' tentacles.

Nowhere in the developed countries including the UK, USA and the OECD, is primary education left to the private sector. In the USA schooling is compulsory. The state through local governments and educational districts manages institutions with necessary funding. It is reported that the enrollment in pure private and non-profit schools in capitalist America comes to around 10 percent. Even these schools are supposed to follow certain standards laid down by the government as they are identified as denominational

with church or other such groups. The situation in India particularly after the debates on compulsory primary education and Article 45 and now the RTE has become trivial. The enrolment in private schools now stands at 25 percent of the total in elementary sector. This is not an urban phenomenon. The Economic Survey 2012 mentions that enrolments in the private primary schools in rural areas range between 30 to 50 percent of the total. This is preceded by the fall in standards where 48 to 54 percent of students in Fifth standard cannot read a text book of Second standard. In the meanwhile, it is alleged that some courts have interpreted the 25 percent reservation of seats as per RTE in corporate schools include economically weaker sections. Now, it is easy for anyone to get a certificate to admit their children in corporate schools and would get the assistance from the government. The private schools are allowed to collect their dues. This has widened the net of private corporate schools both in urban and in the rural areas as the fees would be paid by government. The policy makers would soon come out with a report saying that they have accomplished the universal target like perhaps the poverty figures?

It is disheartening to find that the situation in the school education which is supposed to produce secular and responsible citizens is totally out of focus of both the parents and the intellectuals. Most of those who are popular in public life today including the Nobel laureates were educated through the so-called panchayat or municipal school. They have learnt from each other group and appreciated the diversity

(Continued on Page 8)

Will UPA Survive this Summer

M. J. Akbar

A fall from grace is par for the course. A slide into humiliation is another discourse. Defeat is the familiar price of failure in democracy. Humiliation is retribution for a more dangerous sin, arrogance. Parties often blossom after an election victory, as Congress did after 2004; very few retain any relationship with reality after re-election. The trap of 2012 was set in 2009.

Rahul Gandhi sought to win his electoral spurs in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh on the road to the Prime Minister's office. After two years of effort and expense, he has just discovered that he has neither horse nor direction along the Gangetic belt. Family, in these egalitarian times, is an inadequate rationale for office.

Dynasties are loath to admit mistakes, since they damage their principal claim to power, mystique. Even a punctured prince must be praised, therefore, if for nothing else than hard work, as if hard work is perfectly understandable for mortals like Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati but a labour of love for a prince. Everyone works hard in an election. Defeat cannot be a prince's fault: candidates were wrong, or the party was to blame, and not a whisper about who chose the candidates, or who was in charge of building the party. A curtain of alibis becomes a tattered cloak.

Rahul Gandhi is not young. At his age, 41, his great grandfather Jawaharlal presided over the historic 1929 Lahore session and pushed through, despite the skepticism of

his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, the swaraj resolution which formally committed the Congress to complete independence from the British. Jawaharlal soared ahead in national esteem on the wing of ideas, not slogans undercooked by trainee chefs who do not know the difference between hot air and nourishment. Jawaharlal was an intellectual who bridged a formidable library with the poverty of a village, and was at home in both environments. He learnt his politics from peasant and Mahatma, as well as from the prescriptions of an ancient sage he so admired, Chanakya.

When in 321 BC Chandragupta sought to overthrow Mahapadma Nanda ['the son of a barber'], Chanakya offered some sensible advice: Remember how your mother taught you to eat a hot chapatti – begin from the edges. Rahul Gandhi's strategy, literally and metaphorically, was the reverse. He operated from the centre. From the comfort of a power perch in Delhi, he converted the chapatti into a jigsaw puzzle. His advisers thought each geographical or demographic piece could be adjusted by money, legislative illusion or emotional patronage.

From this emerged a campaign of smoke and mirrors. A cash award was assigned to Bundelkhand. The Dalit heart was meant to melt at the sight of a prince dropping in for a meal. Rahul Gandhi's problem is not that he is young, but that he continued to play with toy soldiers in his electoral war room. Gestures became a substitute for substance.

He rolled up his sleeves. He toyed with the length of his beard. I trust that Rahul Gandhi is not going to tear up any opponent's manifesto for a long time.

The biggest play was made for the Muslim vote, with promises that were tainted with compromise. The dust of reservations was thrown into the eye and pantomime paraded as drama. Second rank Congress leaders began to compete for awards in histrionics. Those with literary fantasies offered little drops of blood to fertilize seeds of future glory. The only astute player in this game was the Muslim voter: on a bulk level, he drove Mulayam Singh Yadav to office, and in constituencies where strategic voting made more sense, he elected fellow Muslims across labels. This UP Assembly will see the highest number of Muslim MLAs, 69. Every major party - SP, BSP and Congress - will have the same percentage of Muslim MLAs, between 20 to 30 per cent. After all the huff and puff, Congress has four Muslims in its total of 28. The Peace Party has three out of its four. There should be a lesson in this somewhere.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi thought the crisis was serious enough to merit that rare indulgence called a press conference. She let slip a thought that should trouble her colleagues, that the problem was too many leaders rather than lack of leadership. But we shall let the party worry about that. Her more substantive comment was that UPA still had time to correct its mistakes, since the next general elections were in 2014.

It is possible that news from Kolkata had not reached her. Her ally, Mamata Banerjee, publicly

celebrated Mulayam Singh Yadav's victory in Uttar Pradesh. This does not quite sound like a ringing endorsement of UPA as it presently exists. Long before the general elections of 2014, there will be an electoral test for UPA, in July this year, when the next President of India is elected. If the Congress fails to get its candidate through, the party might not be over, but the government will be.

During its first term, when Pranab Mukherjee was in charge of UPA's security, he played off friend, foe and the large grey mass in the middle with finesse and dexterity; he postponed any budding problem till the point where the advantage tipped in the Congress' favour. After 2009, the Congress has done everything to alienate its allies, and snub those it might have reached out to. Others have, as a consequence, created space in the middle, where even parties within the ruling alliance can occasionally rest when tired of being nice to Congress. Those who do not dare step out, like DMK, are as sullen as scapegoats. Congress has used tax authorities to blackmail partners into good behaviour, not the best way to bond. Those without any option but silence, become good at waiting for their moment. That moment could be this summer.

In straight political mathematics, association with Congress is slowly turning into a liability. Congress leaders like spokesman Manish Tiwari are beginning to admit that there is sweeping urban resentment against the party. This is, once again, a reversal from UPA1, when Congress added value to an ally's vote base. But the decisive impetus will come from the Agatha Christie question: who benefits from death in the drawing room, or, in a more

straightforward simile, the collapse of Dr Manmohan Singh's second government?

Just as the Congress, as Mrs Gandhi pointed out, needs time, others need to be in a hurry. Mamata Banerjee, Nitish Kumar, Jayalalithaa, Jagan Reddy, Chandrababu Naidu, Naveen Patnaik, Prakash Karat, Nitin Gadkari, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mayawati, Prakash Singh Badal, Om Prakash Chautala may have enough contradictions between them to confuse a doctorate in logic, but they want an election when the Congress is at its weakest. Throughout 2012 Congress will remain shaken by the UP-Punjab earthquake. By 2013, Congress could begin to recover. Why wait?

If these leaders can find a common candidate for President, UPA2 is toast. Even without April's Rajya Sabha elections, where Congress will slip further, the numbers are dicey for the UPA. Once a body starts to bleed, unsuspected pores begin to gush.

This is the weakest that Congress has been since Narasimha Rao lost the elections in 1996. UP, where the Congress vote dropped by seven per cent, is not the only tale in town. Equally lacerating is Punjab, where Congress began to celebrate long before the votes were cast. The Akali mastermind, Sukhbir Badal, read ground reality brilliantly. He turned his cousin Manpreet Badal's defection into an asset. He protected his base while Manpreet divided the anti-establishment vote. And so in a crucial segment like women, while Akalis lost five percent from their vote in 2007, they still led Congress by 43 to 39 per cent. In a string of other demographics, the Akali-BJP alliance actually increased its vote:

among Hindu Dalits, Hindu OBCs, Sikh OBCs and Sikh Dalits. It was always pompous to believe that Anna Hazare's campaign would have no impact, a view cooked up at Congress headquarters and disseminated with alarming ease by sections of the media.

Some facts will linger like a terrible, toxic cold. Dr Singh, the first Sikh Prime Minister, has lost Punjab twice to the Akalis. The first time could have been carelessness; the second time is punishment. Mrs Sonia Gandhi has lost all Assembly seats in Rae Bareilly, despite the continual presence of Priyanka Gandhi, internally touted as a bigger campaign star than brother Rahul. Earlier this year home minister Chidambaram was in Tamil Nadu, and cannot be sure of re-election in his own seat. SM Krishna, the external affairs minister, is at a dead-end in Karnataka. AK Antony, the defence minister, is at a tipping edge in Kerala. Finance minister Mukherjee may look happier, but not if he glances towards his mercurial ally in Bengal, Mamata. Rahul Gandhi has blamed the party infrastructure for the UP defeat, but has he looked at the structure at the top? Not a single Congress heavyweight is heavy enough to lift his own state, or even a part thereof. Why blame the worker at the base? Congress might claim that it has jailed a corrupt minister, but it quite forgot to arrest its chief minister in Goa, who has been sentenced by voters to long exile.

The Congress can revive, of course. But it must return to what it used to be, liberal in spirit and democratic in ethos. It can either be a national trust or family property, not both. The fact that other parties are run by families is irrelevant. There were many turning points in

the UP election. One of them was the arrival of Priyanka Gandhi's husband Robert Vadra and her still young children to Rae Bareilly. The electorate was being given advance notice for 2030. I don't know what voters will do in 2030, but we know now what they did in 2012.

In 1739, the Persian butcher-marauder Nadir Shah shrugged aside token military resistance outside Delhi, occupied the Mughal capital and ordered that the khutba

(Continued from Page 6)

of the country. In fact one of my colleagues, an enlightened Muslim lady has informed me that most of the Madarasas are run in areas that are ghettos without proper infrastructure, teachers and aid from government. I am told they are run with little support from the community sometimes by the jealous so called fundamentalists as they are ones who are coming to the rescue of the poor Muslims. Therefore, the Hindus do not have an opportunity to know how they look like and what they think. It is also true about the other communities. Some of the tensions in our society are due to the fact that we do not know enough about our own people due to sectarian schooling. Realizing the cultural diversity of the country, the Kothari commission on Education in 1966 recommended a common school for everybody. This has not been implemented and now all kinds of deviations with the sole aim of creating profitable investment opportunities in Education sector are being recommended by those who do not have adequate knowledge about our society and education.

India is not USA and not even Pakistan in terms of its diversity and plurality. It is exactly for this reason that the British had introduced

at the Friday prayers be read in his name, acknowledgement that he was overlord of the wretched Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah Alam Rangila. Persian nobles laughed and coined a doggerel: Hukumat-e Shah Alam, Az Dilli ta Palam. The translation is not inspiring: The rule of Shah Alam stretches from Delhi to Palam.

If Congress loses Rajasthan, that will be the extent of its realm in north India.

a secular grant-in-aid code for educational institutions to discourage denominational and communal orientation in education. The Indian republic stands for a secular state and the education system should comply with it through a uniform curriculum and goals. It was found in a study conducted by us about three decades ago that our education system is class oriented. A Municipal or Panchayat school is for the wretched of the earth, the so-called Public school or convent for the rich and the aided school for the middle classes. The students would perhaps never meet and share the sublime dreams of our founding fathers who wished that India should emerge one day as a single Nation and not multitudes of classes and nations through schools that promote parochialism and discordant culture.

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Considering Congress a Socialist Party!

D. K. Giri

In the absence of a viable socialist party at the national level, some people would like to regard the Indian National Congress as Socialist. Some politicians and few parties from abroad have been courting the Congress party. Our comrades from the French Socialist party have been inviting Congress party to their party meetings. The leadership of Socialist International (SI) has wanted the Congress party to join SI. It is another issue that Congress party is reluctant to join the Socialist bandwagon and to openly identify as a Socialist party.

After the disintegration of Janata Party/Dal, majority Socialists joined Congress. Most of them say it is their electoral compulsion. To be fair to them, if there was a choice between the BJP and the Congress, a socialist would prefer the latter, as, at least the Congress is “a broad church” party, whereas the BJP is close and rigid in its thinking. But the point to reflect upon is whether they have made any difference to Congress ideology or the party’s political culture, or have they been swamped by ‘Congressism’, as Rajni Kothari, so famously coined the phrase to describe Congress political behaviour in India.

In India most politicians and parties claim to be socialist. That is because socialism has been written into the preamble of the Constitution in 1976. Moreover, given the huge disparities, exploitation, oppression of the weak and marginalized, it is politically convenient and fashionable to claim the socialist platform that signifies social justice

and solidarity, equality and freedom. No politician will speak against any of those values although, it is another matter, if s(he) practices them or not. Even a rightist and obscurantist party like the BJP claimed to be “Gandhian Socialist” whatever that meant as they did not elaborate on it. All parties belonging to the centre or the centre-left call themselves socialists. Only Communists, who though practice parliamentary democracy, do not call themselves democratic socialists, as they are democratic centralists or democratic Stalinists as Lord Meghnad Desai called them. However, my concern here is to assess if the Congress party can be considered a socialist party as some analysts would like us to believe.

Nehru and Socialism

The Indian National Congress in the beginning was preoccupied with national liberation although social transformation was also in the minds of the leaders. The first step the Congress took towards socialism was in 1931, when Nehru drafted the resolution in the Karachi congress which read, “The state shall own or control heavy industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport”. Thus, Nehru was intellectually committed to socialism, but did not identify with the socialists in the Congress or with the Congress Socialist Party as an ideological caucus that was created in 1934, to push an ideologically radical line. Nehru did not appreciate the approach of the communists to Indian politics. He thought they were only interested in “internecine trouble, violence

and bloodshed”. Nehru had his own intellectual concepts which were radically different from Gandhiji’s, but since he knew the masses were with Gandhiji, he did not push his line beyond a point.

After independence Nehru became the Prime Minister. Gandhiji was gone and the Socialists had left the Congress. Nehru was at the height of his popularity as a great democrat, an intellectual, a visionary and an international figure. Many analysts feel that Nehru could have given any shape and direction to Indian politics at the time. R.C. Pillai, in his book, *Nehru and his Critics*, writes, “Nehru was such a towering Indian politician and a Prime Minister, he could have transformed Indian politics into anything he wanted to.” But Nehru was vague about any ideology. During Nehru’s time, instead of embracing the good elements of both capitalism and communism, India ended up combining the drawbacks of both - inequality and bureaucratic control. Nehru could not pave the way for socialism to grow. He was caught in his approach between capitalism and communism. His idea of a socialistic pattern of society was an intellectual reference to principles of social justice and equity, but not an ideological conviction for policy formulation.

Indira and Socialism

Indira Gandhi inherited an ideologically fractured party consisting of radicals and conservatives. However, at its annual session in 1969 at Bhubaneswar, the Congress re-iterated its faith

in the “Socialist State” based on parliamentary democracy. The same year Smt. Gandhi, then the Prime Minister, nationalized 14 major commercial banks. Her argument was that the few could not decide the destinies of many. There are several policy evidences in Indira Gandhi’s tenure that, she had a strongly pro-poor approach. In the first world Environment Congress held in Stockholm in 1972, Indira Gandhi, who was the only leader from the developing countries to attend, said, “poverty is the worst polluter”. As a result of her historic speech UNEP was created to promote environment-friendly development. The Congress under Indira continued to focus on poor, but like her father, she was ambivalent about socialism. The mixed economy with private and public sector co-existing confused the growth as well as development process. It was not clear whether the government wanted private enterprises to grow, like it happened in South Korea in 1980s, or the public sector to function efficiently. Both the sectors were confused about the commitment and thrusts of the Government. The infamous license-permit-raj throttled the economy. The veteran socialist Madhu Dandavate in his witticism used to say, “The government supports the public sector publicly and the private sector privately”. No doubt, Indira Gandhi and her government were committed to the poor, but her reliance on bureaucracy frustrated her plans and policies.

Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister after the tragic assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi. The country was aflame with unprecedented communal clashes. Unity and Integrity of the country became the paramount goal. The 1984 general election manifesto of the party dropped socialism and

Garibi Hatao (remove poverty) in favour of unity and cleaner administration. However, in 1985, in the centenary celebratory Congress in Bombay, the political resolution reaffirmed its faith in “democratic socialism”. Rajiv Gandhi focused more on technology for growth and development: new technology required new and more capital. His discontent with bureaucracy-led public sector became evident. He, in fact, admitted that out of Rs.100, of development fund only 15 paise went to the people, and that he was let down by the bureaucracy. It was like his mother Indira Gandhi whose excessive reliance on bureaucracy was the reason for her failure to implement policies. How can a bureaucracy, which was created to maintain law and order, be entrusted with the task of development which meant social mobilization and proximity with people?

Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh

The LGP - liberalization, privatization and globalization programmes started under Narsimha Rao, who allowed and encouraged his the then Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh to unshackle the private sector, open up the Indian economy and end the license-permit-raj. Thus Narasimha Rao became the architect of the economic reforms. Manmohan Singh now carries on with his “World Bank” economist supporters like Montek Singh Ahluwalia, P. Chidambaram and others. India registered impressive economic growth, attracted FDs, and found the money for development.

There is mixed reaction across the country on the economic policies of UPA I and UPA II, that were initiated by Narasimha Rao Government. A section of people would argue that reforms were inevitable, given the

state of Indian economy in 1991, and more important, this is the way to go. Without surplus money, the country cannot make investment in public goods, fight poverty and backwardness. The other section, including the socialists, contend that globalization has brought wealth, produced millionaires, but has not done much to the poor, instead generated unemployment, deprivation, displacement and marginalization. It has robbed us off the spirit and ability of self-reliance. However, the relevance and effects of globalization is a subject of another discussion. My point is, do the policies being followed by the Congress qualify to be socialistic even in terms of the current interpretation of social democracy around the world. A witty characterization of government policies made by a senior Cabinet Minister, a social democrat by conviction, and association, nicely answers this. He said, “Our government is a mix of economic right and social left”. No doubt, some of the innovative policies of government are meant to alleviate poverty and contribute to social justice.

Is the Congress Socialist?

To an outside observer studying the economic resolutions and policies of the Congress governments, the Congress party would appear to be socialist. But, for those who follow Congress politics closely, the Congress party is bereft of any particular ideology. During the freedom movement, it was pre-occupied with national liberation, and then Congress was a mass movement, not an ideological party, that is why Gandhiji suggested dissolving the Congress after independence was achieved. After independence, the Congress was

pre-occupied with the how-to stay-in power. Congress does not reveal its core ideology, if it has any. Without a distinct ideology, there can be no sense of purpose, direction, any real political vision and drive for change. Asha Gupta in her book, "Socialism in Theory and Practice: Narendra Deva's Contribution", makes this point strongly, "in the state of affairs of Congress, a set of economic policies is of little relevance, in the absence of a determined political movement bound together by a cohesive and dynamic ideology, the will is lacking to implement them".

Democracy and Socialism

Socialism is called Social Democracy or Democratic Socialism. Even if we concede that Congress party's economic policies have been close to socialism, except the debate on the current government policies, Congress fails to score at all in internal democracy. Nehru-Gandhi dynasty has ruled the roost, the party may not exist as a united party without the dynasty acting as a cohesive glue. The dynastic politics has percolated down to the grassroots. Also it is steeped in feudalism. It is a party of feudal, ex-royals and their dynasties. The Congress party fails to qualify to be a modern democratic party, with bogus membership, and not even a façade of internal democracy. It runs through the so-called group working at the behest of the mother-and-son leadership.

The Congress has no pretension to be an ideological party, let alone social democratic. But those who are eager to embrace the party as a socialist one, should do so at the grave risk of discouraging any modern democratic party to grow, and we all know that a political party is the most important institution in a democracy.

Dalits Missing from the Indian newsroom

Robin Jeffrey

The media's failure to recruit Dalits is a betrayal of the constitutional guarantees of equality and fraternity. There were almost none in 1992, and there are almost none today: Dalits in the newsrooms of India's media organisations. Stories from the lives of close to 25 per cent of Indians (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) are unlikely to be known - much less broadcast or written about. Unless, of course, the stories are about squalor and violence. An analyst once summed up the treatment of African-American and Hispanic issues in the American media: such people "rarely travel, eat or get married," if all you knew about them was what you learned from the media.

Is it a calamity that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are almost completely absent from newspapers and television? Of course it is. It's a calamity for at least three reasons. First, it means that the Constitution is not being lived up to. The Constitution promises "equality" and "fraternity." There's something deficient about "equality" if a quarter of the population is missing from the Fourth Estate. And it's hard to fraternise - to practice fraternity - with people who aren't there.

Second, a fitting presence in newsrooms, and the varied coverage that it brings, mitigates the resentment of people who are ignored and discriminated against. Recognition of tribulations and achievements combats discrimination. And if meaningful changes do not

happen, resentment will bubble up destructively - as it already does in areas of Maoist influence in eastern India. Constant probing stories about the triumphs and agonies of people on the margins help to effect remedies and turn barriers into bridges.

Third, genuine media people, who believe in the old New York Times tag about ferreting out "all the news that's fit to print," can never be satisfied with producing a newspaper, a magazine or a bulletin that robotically overlooks a quarter of the population (except when there's violence and squalor of course). Grizzled city editors (city editors are always grizzled) used to pose a single question to self-satisfied reporters at the end of the day: "What REALLY happened out there today, boys and girls?" It ought to flash in lights in every newsroom.

The Dalit absence from the media has been focused on sporadically since 1996. That's when Kenneth J. Cooper, the Washington Post correspondent, himself an African-American, tried to find a Dalit media person in New Delhi. Cooper wrote about his failure to do so, and B.N. Uniyal publicised Cooper's inquiries in the Pioneer. "Suddenly, I realised," Uniyal wrote, "that in all the 30 years I had worked as a journalist I had never met a fellow journalist who was a Dalit; no, not one."

Nothing had changed by the time I published India's Newspaper Revolution in 2000. Nothing had

changed by 2006 when a survey on the 10th anniversary of the Cooper-Uniyal inquiry found not a single SC or ST among more than 300 media decision-makers. And nothing much had changed a year ago when the Tamil journalist, J. Balasubramaniam, wrote a personal account in the Economic and Political Weekly.

Kenneth Cooper, now a media consultant and editor based in Boston, began a distinguished career on the St Louis American, an African-American daily that was commercially successful. If there are similarities between the plight of African-Americans in the past (and present) and Dalits today, then why are there no Dalit-oriented media voices like Ebony or Essence magazines or the old St Louis American or Chicago Defender?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that Dalits lack advantages that Black America enjoyed (though “enjoy” is hardly the right word) even in the 1920s. Most important was a black middle class of shop-owners and professionals. Such people could buy advertisements and put up capital to back a publication. Black America worked in a single language, English, and had networks of churches and their pastors who provided respected leaders, education and connections. Martin Luther King was one of many. Black America was also less divided internally: caste among African Americans was not a problem, though skin tone may have been.

If you're inclined to say, “Good journalists, regardless of caste, cover stories objectively” or “Quotas and reservations are the bane of modern India—only ability counts,” consider the nationalist experience. Did the old elites who confronted British rule feel they were satisfactorily

represented in The Statesman and the Times of India? They didn't. And The Hindu, Amrita Bazar Patrika, the Hindustan Times, Young India and many others were the result. Babasaheb Ambedkar said it well: “with the press in hand it [is] easy to manufacture great men.”

What might be done to put a Dalit presence into media? Two suggestions. Neither an answer, but both worth considering.

To begin with, the Editors' Guild could commit itself to carrying out an annual census of newsroom diversity of the kind that the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) began in 1978. In that year, “people of colour” were 4 per cent of people in U.S. newsrooms, though they were close to 30 per cent of the American population. The target was to reach more than 20 per cent by 2000. They missed the target. In 2011, “minorities” were about 13 per cent of American newsrooms, though they constituted 36 per cent of the U.S. population. (That includes African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Asians). The new ASNE target date has been set to 2020.

Such targets in India would be difficult. (Targets, remember. Not “reservations” or “quotas”). Caste is so raw and sensitive. But if major organisations took a lead in conducting and publishing an annual audit of diversity, and included women and Muslims in such an audit, an embarrassment factor would kick in. Lesser organisations might feel obliged to follow or be singled out for ridicule.

A middle class is growing slowly among people at the bottom of India's pyramid (BOIP). People near the bottom, most of whom are Dalits, need a publication that looks at the

world from their perspective - bottom up, not top down. A BOIP middle-class needs a first-class publication - an Ebony or an Essence, two of the glossy magazines of Black America that report achievements as well as outrages.

A slick, view-from-below magazine (English and Hindi) would cover stories from the margins in ways that people at the margins would recognise. And its journalism could be so compelling that others would want to read it for its classiness and its difference. In a tiny, budget-conscious way, the Dalit-focussed publisher, Navayana, already tries to do this in the book trade.

Such a publication would need to be run by a trust, and some of the capital would need to come from a Dalit middle-class itself. But the corpus of the trust could be built from donations from people-of-goodwill from all backgrounds and from one-off contributions from governments. Rs. 100 crore would make a realistic target - a mere \$20 million, the cost of a couple of mid-priced battle-tanks or a small slice of 2G spectrum.

What about television? For about a year-and-a-half before I first came to India in 1967, I wrote a daily television column for a small-town newspaper in western Canada. I watched a lot of U.S. and Canadian television. There were no Black people on TV. When I came back to North America in 1970, Flip Wilson, an African-American comedian, had a popular TV show. Something dramatic had happened. Thirty-eight years later, the U.S. elected a Black President.

Are there any Dalits anchoring a programme or going regularly to

(Continued on Page 15)

Starving in India

These days, Indian policymakers are debating how to create a vast new food entitlement program. There is talk of poor households struggling to cope with high food prices and malnourishment among their children.

What you don't hear much about, however, is the most tragic and outrageous consequence of India's failure to feed its people adequately: starvation deaths.

India is a nation that prides itself on having been self-sufficient in food production for decades and having leaped forward economically over the past 20 years. So it isn't surprising that public officials and even many in the media are reluctant to face up to the painful reality that hunger persists in 2012. Starvation doesn't fit neatly into the story of a "shining" India...

I set out last September with my colleague Ankita Aggarwal from the Centre for Equity Studies, a New Delhi think tank, to investigate deaths that bore the hallmarks of starvation in three Indian states: Bihar, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh—the country's "hungriest", according to the International Food Policy Research Institute, a non-partisan group that advocates policies to fight hunger and poverty.

Each state fares worse than the abysmal national averages in nearly all nutrition indicators, including height for weight and age of children and mortality rate for children under five years old.

Historically oppressed and disenfranchised lower castes and tribal populations – known as "scheduled castes" and "scheduled

tribes" — are the poorest of the poor and the most at risk. It is no surprise that most reported starvation deaths occur in these communities. In Bihar the under-five mortality rate for scheduled castes is 113 deaths per 1,000 births, compared to the state-wide average of 85 and the all-India average of 74...

Drawing clear lines between chronic malnutrition, hunger and starvation isn't straightforward. One international standard for measuring hunger is the body mass index, or BMI, which refers to an individual's weight relative to height – a proxy for body fat. The internationally acknowledged threshold for a "normal" BMI is 18.5. An individual with a BMI of 17 to 18.4 is "undernourished", someone with a BMI of 16.0 to 16.9 is considered "severely malnourished" and a BMI less than 16 signifies a person is "starving".

Based on government estimates that 35.6% of Indian women and 34.2% of Indian men have BMIs less than 18.5, the Planning Commission's India Human Development Report states, "If India is not in a state of famine, it is quite clearly in a state of chronic hunger."

Dr. John Butterly, executive director of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire and co-author of "Hunger: The Biology and Politics of Starvation," says chronic malnutrition often leads to a compromised immune system and makes a person unable to fight off organisms "that a normally fed human would barely notice."

India is a food surplus nation but according to the International Food Policy Research Institute's

2011 Global Hunger Index, it ranks 67th out of 81 countries and has more than 200 million food-insecure people, the most in the world. (The Hunger Index measures hunger based on the percentage of a country's population that is undernourished, the proportion of children under five years old who are underweight, and the mortality rate of children under five.)...

The entire debate over food security – the push by many in civil society for a universal "right to food" – has its roots in starvation deaths. In 2001, activists blamed Rajasthan state for failing to stop a string of hunger-related deaths, especially with millions of tons of unused grains in government warehouses.

That and other national woes were the catalysts for the public interest litigation filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties in 2001, which resulted in the Supreme Court's decision to convert nine food, work and nutrition programs into legal entitlements. The heart of the PUCL's case was that the Indian Constitution's right to life as spelled out in Article 21 entitles Indians to a right to food.

Eleven years and nine court orders later, the right to food case is still going and is largely responsible for pushing the government to develop food security legislation, which is expected to be debated in Parliament in the coming months. The draft bill would give 75% of rural Indians and 50% of urban Indians access to discounted rice and grains...

Trying to prove that someone died because of starvation is tricky in poor communities where a variety of health problems are

prevalent. People commonly suffer from ongoing, untreated illnesses such as tuberculosis, malaria, and chronic fever. What is clear though, doctors say, is that a lack of access to food can greatly exaggerate and complicate other health problems and put people's lives at risk.

When a poor person can't access entitlements to government food and work programs local officials

often find it convenient to attribute their death solely to a pre-existing disease. Sometimes the officials attribute those deaths to alcoholism or lifestyle choices. This isn't always the case, of course – some officials are upfront about the fact that starvation deaths are a reality and have to be confronted.

In his book "Starvation and India's Democracy," a study of

starvation deaths in Orissa and West Bengal, food security expert Dan Banik argued that those in authority "do not expect to be held accountable to persistently high levels of under-nutrition and are confident that such issues are accepted by society as a natural feature of a poor country with a large population."

- **Ashwin Parulkar**
for The Wall Street Journal
-*Aman Biradari*

Sri Lanka: Possibility of new opportunities

The successful United Nations Resolution on reconciliation and accountability should pave the way for a new period of commitment to cure the wounds of a long conflict, caused upon individuals as well as on the institutional structure of democracy and the rule of law in Sri Lanka.

A responsible approach to dealing with the past violence cannot under any circumstances damage any nation or its people. In fact the capacity to understand the past and face the problems from the past in an honest manner helps a nation and its people in the same way as it does in the life of individuals.

What is required are honesty, humility and a political will on the part of the government as well as the people to take their nation and every citizen of that nation with utmost seriousness. When legal processes are damaged such commitment cannot exist. From the point of view of basic legal and political structure of Sri Lanka, it is a deeply wounded nation. What is required is not to be looking for whom to blame for such destruction, but to seek and find ways to accept the reality and find ways to cure these wounds.

The resolution of the United Nations, the only world forum of all nations should therefore be looked upon as a moment of opportunity.

It is the duty of all the citizens to have the courage to come forward to express what has been bothering them in their deepest levels and create a genuine conversation in the country of the ways that everyone could cooperate to rebuild the nation, its institutions and also the wounded relationships between the people.

There had been a continuous lament in Sri Lanka about the failure of the political leadership of many governments that have ruled during the past decades to give the leadership that is required to face the acute problems that the country has been beset with over many decades. It is now the time for this lament to be transformed into creative and constructive cooperation for the benefit of all particularly for the benefit of the younger generations who unfortunately have to bear the sufferings for the wrongs they have never done.

The Asian Human Rights Commission hopes that the government of Sri Lanka will rise up to the moment and face the situation in a manner required from a responsible leadership. The AHRC hopes that the government will avoid a petty and small-minded approach and face the situation with large-heartedness and farsightedness. If it fails in this it will fail the nation in a very important moment of history

and perhaps of opportunities that has never existed before to improve.

The farsighted approach that neighbouring India had adopted by voting in favour of the resolution should set an example for Sri Lanka's leadership to come to terms with demands of history. The AHRC hopes that Sri Lanka will extend a hand of cooperation to all the nations and faces this situation in a manner that is required.

An opportunity has also risen to the UN through its Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to make a contribution for improving the lives of the people and also to contribute to the reconstruction of the institutions of justice in Sri Lanka. The AHRC hopes that the High Commissioner will face this historic opportunity with resourcefulness, farsightedness and a commitment, which would make it possible to respond to other situations in other nations in the future. How the High Commissioner will face up to this responsibility will be watched by all the nations.

Irrespective of whatever the manner of voting we hope that all the nations of the world will extend full cooperation for Sri Lanka as well as to the High Commissioner to ensure the successful implementation of this resolution.

-**Asian Human Rights Commission**

All India Parents Association (AIPA) (Delhi Unit) in its meeting held on 8-4-2012 at New Delhi has unanimously condemned the arbitrary fee hike ranging from 10 percent to 40 percent by almost all the unaided private schools of Delhi from the academic year commencing from 1-4-2012 despite the fact that there was no need to increase any fee. On the other hand, all the schools are required to reduce the existing fees by at least 50 percent and return to the parents the excess fee charged in the previous years.

AIPA (Delhi Unit) has also decided that all the parents of unaided private schools shall not pay hiked fees and other charges to the schools and would continue to pay fees and other charges at the old rates as prevailing on the 31st March

2012. The parents shall pay the fees and other charges, at the increased rates, only after the schools approach the Directorate of Education/ Justice Anil Dev Singh Committee on Fee Hike and obtain the approval from them on their increased fee structure.

AIPA (Delhi Unit) has further decided to stage a peaceful demonstration in front of the office of the Director of Education sometime in the month of May 2012 to protest against the inaction on the part of the Directorate of Education to take civil and criminal actions against all the erring schools which were indicted by the Comptroller & Auditor General of India in its audit report of 2010 and also to stop arbitrary fee hike by all unaided private schools.

The meeting was chaired by AIPA national president advocate Ashok Agarwal and attended by the parents' representatives of over 40 unaided private schools. "It is unfortunate that despite Hon'ble Delhi High Courts' order in favour of the parents on arbitrary fee hike, the schools are flouting the same with impunity and the Directorate of Education instead of taking action against the schools is practically protecting the mighty and the greedy managements of the unaided private schools. All the parents have to unite and fight against such injustice in order to check the menace of commercialization of education," said advocate Ashok Agarwal.

**- I. S. Gambhir,
President AIPA Delhi Unit**

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camera on a major Indian television channel? My contacts tell me there aren't. It will be a big moment when that change - and a daunting burden on the person who breaks that barrier.

Achieving "equality" and "fraternity" in India may be harder even than the path that African Americans have had to follow. There are more divisions, fewer resources and huge disparities. But until there is diversity on television screens and printed pages, the promises of the Constitution will be unfulfilled, unthinking prejudice will persist and simmering resentment will grow. Media diversity is a matter of national self-interest as well as justice.

*(The article is based on the
Rajendra Mathur Memorial
Lecture delivered in New Delhi*



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Ominous Portents for UPA

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Murder of Truth
Kuldip Nayar

**Minority Rights in
Theory and Practice**
Abdul Khaliq

**Concept of Equality
Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia**
Divyanshu Patel

Fast-food

Razia Tehsin

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Nothing substantial was achieved at the chief ministers' security conference. It would be unwise to expect that something substantial will be achieved at the forthcoming May 5 conference to discuss the Centre's proposal to set up a National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). This is not so much because the issues listed on the agenda of the meetings are either intractable or unresolvable as because the chief ministers, some if not all of them, do not want to sort out the issues and find a via media acceptable to the states and the Centre. It is not also a question of Centre-State relations being in jeopardy. What then is the problem? Union Home Minister Chidambaram attributes the Centre-States stand-off to a trust deficit between the two. Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi asserts that there is a gap in the thinking of the states and the Centre but wants the Prime Minister to fill the gap. Chidambaram may be right about the trust deficit but he is wide of the mark when he feels that the mistrust is confined to a small minority among the chief ministers. It does not take long for the minority to grow into a majority.

The situation as it obtains right now is a pointer to the shape national politics is set to assume in the coming

weeks and months as the polity moves towards 2014, the year of general elections. In the instant case, the situation has developed as it has because of two factors. First, the Centre has taken the states for granted and has acted as if the states are ready to cooperate with it on all issues of national importance. Second, the states have become emboldened to stand up to the Centre and demand their pound of flesh because the Centre is no longer in a position to negotiate from a position of strength. Indeed, the Centre's political clout has been steadily eroding and today it is a considerably weakened dispensation that is trying to call the shots from New Delhi. The states sense that this is an opportune moment to exploit the Centre's vulnerabilities to their advantage. Incidentally, it is not only the ruling coalition, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) whose vulnerabilities stand exposed. The National Democratic Alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party is no better, in fact, any objective assessment would place even the weakened UPA two rungs higher than the NDA as far political clout, cohesion and capacity to wield power effectively are concerned. Hence, it is not surprising that the states cannot resist the temptation to assert themselves and present themselves

Between the lines

to be (or pretend to be) a force to be reckoned with. In other words, the states are assuming that they can play kingmakers in the UPA versus opposition contentions in the coming months leading eventually to the Battle Royal in 2014. So, what we are witnessing is an exercise in which a grand alliance of states, led by strong regional forces supporting strong chief ministers, is in the making. The primary movers currently are the chief ministers of Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, supported by their counterparts in Bihar and West Bengal. This nucleus obviously aims to put in place a strategic alliance, call it Third Front or not, which will play more than a balancing role between the UPA and the NDA in the next round of parliamentary elections. The BJP assumes that the core group of chief ministers who unfurled their flag at the security conference will be ready and willing to project the NDA as its winning choice in 2014. It is this assumption that provokes BJP President Nitin Gadkari to say that the BJP is emerging as an alternative to the UPA.

So, where do we go from here? The outcome of the May 5 interaction will give us the first pointer to whether or not the states are willing to find common ground with the Centre in sorting out the NCTC and other contentions like the revamping of the Border Security Force and the Railway Protection Force. The second indicator will be available when the states take a unified position vis a vis elections to the two top posts of Vice-President and President. The third indicator, which will determine the future of the UPA's composition, will surface if Mamata Banerjee takes her aggressiveness towards the Centre beyond acceptable limits. Interesting times are ahead of us. And that is putting it mildly!

Murder of Truth

Kuldip Nayar

“Conspiracy is established as all those who gathered were Hindus with intention to kill Muslims and damage their property. They gathered on Friday and charged towards homes of the Muslims fully aware of the fact that it was Friday and all people would be in their respective homes. They knew that the victims keep grass and tobacco in house, so as per plan they threw petrol and kerosene first.”

This is what the judge has said pronouncing the life sentence to 18 people in the Gujberg case, one of the major events relating to the massacre in Gujarat 10 years ago. As many as 23 Muslims were burnt alive. Yet the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders say that there is no “legal evidence” against state chief minister Narendra Modi. How can there be any when his government has changed all records and files to remove even a shred of evidence against him?

The Rajiv Gandhi government did the same thing when more than 3,000 Sikhs were massacred in Delhi in 1984. Even FIRs were changed. When a political party in power decides to save the guilty, it goes to any illegal limit to ensure that nothing incriminating is found on record against them. Both the Congress and the BJP are most to blame but several regional parties too spare no effort to fudge reports. It all depends on whether the establishment wants to save the guilty.

After having thoroughly cleansed all official papers, the BJP can

safely say that there is “no legal evidence” against Modi. Still some convictions have taken place. Regretfully, it has taken 10 years to get some meaningful justice in Gujarat. It is another matter, however reprehensible, that the Special Investigation Team (SIT), appointed by the Supreme Court to look into cases like the Gurberg, has given Modi a clean chit. Still the fact remains that Eshan Jaffery, a former Congress MP, was burnt alive along with those who had taken shelter at his house.

The judge who pronounced the judgment says: “The objective of this punishment is to remind the accused that their crime was not in their welfare or of the society.” Why did SIT not take into consideration the affidavit filed by senior Gujarat police officer Sanjiv Bhatt is baffling. He has gone on record as saying that Modi had instructed bureaucrats and police officers to allow Hindus “to vent their anger” and he (Bhatt) was present at the meeting where Modi said so. Amicus curiae Raju Ramachandran too has highlighted Bhatt's testimony in his report to the Supreme Court.

Bhatt has been suspended for having made the statement and he and his family are being constantly harassed by the authorities. He has filed a complaint against this to the police but with no redress. It is not difficult to imagine the situation in Gujarat where Modi rules like a dictator and sees to it that the truth remains suppressed. State home

minister Hiren Pandey who began to spill the beans was bumped off. His family has accused Modi and feels helpless in getting justice.

The BJP and Modi are sadly mistaken if they believe that his sins can be washed away by one motivated report or the other. Even after a decade, the tragedy is fresh in the nation's mind and practically every day there is some reference to his complicity in a discussion or a writing. Something or the other crops up to remind the people of the Gujarat pogrom. Still the BJP continues to project him as a Prime Ministerial candidate in the next general election in 2014.

Similarly, the 1984 massacre of Sikhs remains fresh in the memory of the nation, although Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has offered apologies in parliament. Wounds are still raw and the country saw how the Sikh community rose, in the absence of justice against of the 1984 perpetrators, to protest against the date fixed for the hanging of Balwinder Singh who had killed former chief minister Beant Singh.

The dismal life that close relatives of those killed and uprooted lead does not allow the wounds to heal. It is still worse when the culprits are seen roaming about feely. There is no remedy other than an exemplary punishment to the guilty and those who conspired to commit the crime. Not only Modi, there are many other BJP leaders who were involved in the massacre of Gujarat. They too have to be punished so that the message goes around that anyone, however powerful, will not escape justice.

I do not know what will emerge from the Gujarat tragedy. Will there be an exposure of system which was subverted to bless the planned

killings? I found a conspiracy in the case of the Sikhs' massacre. Since the centre was itself involved I saw it putting a gloss over the system. Still some reports came near to pointing a finger at them. But the Congress government destroyed those reports.

Gujarat too has seen the murder of truth. When the people are brainwashed, they do not rise against injustice. The Soviet Union is an example. It was no surprise that Rajiv Gandhi won a massive victory after the 1984 massacre. It should not have come as a shock that Modi won the state election soon after the

Gujarat killings. He may do it again in the state election at the end of this year.

Hatred consumes people and they live in that kind of passion till something happens—the revelation of the truth—to awaken them. The truth has yet to come out either about the massacre of Sikhs at Delhi or of the Muslims at Gujarat. I am confident that the truth will prevail some day as it happened at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa to tell the full story of apartheid.

Nav Bharat Nirman Abhiyan

When Vinay talked to me some months ago about a programme we should take up on the national level and explained as to what he intended to do with the programme I never expected it to be such a great emotional experience! I had my own anxieties due to Kerala State's socio-political climate on the success of the Nav Bharat Nirman Abhiyan. But on 7th March at Thrissur while waving goodbye to the comrades of Seva Dal Kalapathak I requested all of them to stay back and let us continue for a week more singing and dancing for our motherland. It was such an enthralling experience!

Today after analyzing the Abhiyan, after the first leg of it, I feel it should go round the country – it was pilot study. We had gone and stayed in places belonging to various religious sections and of various caste orientations and everywhere people took care of us and after the programme, we had to abruptly conclude our conversations with them as the time shedule did not permit us to stay back.

Many wanted to know more about Rashttra Seva Dal. At Panchavayal villageers were yelling *Bharath Matha Ki Jai* even as the bus was rolling out of their vicinity after the programme. Young college students at MES college after one hour of the programme were reluctant to leave us. An RSS youngster told me that he wanted to work with us, leaving his organization. We found many women and also people belonging to minorities and economically backward classes responding enthusiastically after attending the Abhiyan programme. When we sang *Utho Hind ke veera suputhon* as the opening song followed by regional language song and a skit the mood of the people would become receptive to the ideas we were talking about. I found the drivers and helping boys who accompanied us in bus and jeep were singing our songs when were returning and I found teachers and students of Poornodaya who attended the programme still singing *Geeth ga rahei aaj hum*.

– George Jacob

Razia Tehsin

(July 12, 1936-January 30, 2012)

“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” Mark Twain had once said. The life of Razia Tehsin, a woman from the beautiful laid-back town of Udaipur was woven with exceptional moral courage.

Social activist, author, editor, educationist...there are many titles to define her, but not a single one that does full justice to a life spent for others, to a woman who didn't wear gold on her person but in her heart. Born on 12th July 1936, Razia Tehsin was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and became a follower of Indian socialist philosophy. Instrumental in the formation and running of many institutions and organizations, Razia never accepted any paid post. Fondly called Rajuapa and Majji (middle sister) by elders and children, she was loved and respected by all.

Since her early youth, Razia started working for women's education and emancipation. Her source of inspiration was her mother, Khursheed Banu Tehsin, who, in spite of having a severe disability herself, worked for women's upliftment. Mrs. Khursheed had started 'Bazme-Niswan' for generating awareness amongst women. She served as the Vice President of the Rajasthan Branch of All India Women's Conference in 1952. Razia's father, the then Vice Mayor Shri T. H. Tehsin, was a progressive thinker. A social worker and nature lover, he always encouraged his family to practice freedom of thought and participate in social causes. .

Razia did her Bachelor's degree from Maharana Bhupal College, Udaipur and her “Adeeb Kamil”

(Masters) in Urdu from Aligarh University's Centre at Anjuman School in Udaipur.

Social Work:

- Razia, along with her sister Habiba Banu, became active in the Udaipur branch of Branch of Rajasthan Mahila Parishad started in 1948 by freedom fighter Shanta Trivedi. Her husband, socialist freedom fighter Parashram Trivedi made Razia and Habiba his sisters and maintained this relation till the very end. Razia acted as the Joint Secretary, and then Secretary of Mahira Parishad for a long period of time.
- A student of Vidya Bhawan (founded 1931), Razia stood thick by the founder, 'Bhai Sahib.' Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta and president Kesrilal Bordia during the Society's roughest phase during 1970s-80s. She executed her responsibility as the Joint Secretary of Vidya Bhawan Society to the best of her ability during that tough period. She was a member of Vidya Bhawan's Board of control for six years.
- Razia was an active member of Vidya Bhawan Vidya Bandhu Sangh (Alumni Association). An ex-student of Vidya Bhawan was a victim of dowry, wherein she was burnt alive. The alumni of Vidya Bhawan took up the issue and fought for long until legal action was taken. After a gap of decades the publication of annual journal 'Vidya Bandhu Mukhapatra' was started again. Razia was its editor for ten years'
- The founders of Mahila Mandai, Kamra and Dayashankar

Shotriya, the followers of from Mahatma Gandhi, had close ties with Razia. She became the Joint Secretary and then Secretary of Mahila Mandal and worked for girls' education as well as economic empowerment through Grih Udyod Pratishtan (a cottage industry of Mahila Mandal)

- She was the member of Rajasthan Social Welfare Department's High Power

Committee for Women and Child Development in 1975-76.

- As a member of Kishore Kalyan Board (Juvenile Welfare Board), Udaipur Division, Razia did significant work and presided as Hon. Magistrate of Juvenile Delinquency Court as well.
- She was the Vice President of Bharat-Tibat Maitri Sangh (Indo-Tibet Friendship Society) and President of Sanjhi organization.
- She was a member of the Board of Control of Seva Mandir (founded by Padma Vibhushan Dr. M.S. Mehta to serve in tribal areas), in the Executive Committee of Lok Jumbish and General House of Bhartiya Lok Kala Mandal (founded by Padma Shri Devilal Samar).
- Razia was a member of Gandhi Peace Foundation, Sarvodaya Mandal, S. M. Joshi Socialist Foundation, Lekhika Sangh and Association for Writers and Illustrators.
- She played an active role in the camp of Gandhi Peace Foundation organized at 'Vishwaneedam' near

(Continued on Page 8)

Minority Rights in Theory and Practice

Abdul Khaliq

The most sacred of our laws – the Constitution - contains a number of articles that guarantee the rights of minorities to lead a life of dignity and equality. However, to enable us to assess the actual impact of the comprehensive legislation for an egalitarian society conceived by our founding fathers, I wish to flag certain news items that have appeared in the national press in the last two months – cases and incidents that we have read without even raising an eyebrow because they are so commonplace.

The first news item I allude to appeared in a national daily in early March. ‘Mohammed Amir Khan, aged 32, walked out of Rohtak jail after 14 years in custody. He was accused in 20 terror cases. Courts pronounced him ‘not guilty’ in one case after another. But before he was released, he had lost everything. His father died, his mother got paralyzed, acquaintances deserted them and the family was stigmatized forever.’ In this our so-called great democracy, there are hundreds of innocents like him who have been subjected to such colossal and unacceptable injustices only because of the religion they profess. Is it any surprise then that when a bomb explodes, cold fear grips the entire Muslim community? In this climate of injustice and oppression, is there any hope that the law-abiding Muslims will be treated fairly and decently which is all that he demands?

Another significant happening last month was covered by only one or two English national dailies, perhaps because it was such a routine affair.

I refer to two separate incidents involving plain clothes policemen, who barged into a building in Jamia Nagar in the dead of night and attempted to whisk away innocent families for questioning without any authorization. These incidents brought to the fore the terrible discrimination the Muslim has to contend with even in the nation’s capital. The most frightening aspect was that the perpetrators of the terrible injustice are supposed to be guardians of the law. It would appear that the Delhi police have evolved a new concept of jurisprudence in which in normal cases a person is innocent unless there is some evidence of wrong doing, whereas for the Muslim, the principle is that he is guilty until he proves his innocence beyond doubt. Ironically in both cases, it was the vigilantism of the neighbors that helped rescue these innocents from the police predators.

Next, I came to a news item that appeared about a month ago that in Bhavnagar, a doctor belonging to the majority community finalized a proposal to sell his house to a Muslim. However, the sale was not permitted by the neighbors who sat on dharna outside the doctor’s home until he jettisoned his plan to sell. In another recent case in Ahmedabad the appointment of a Muslim professor to an institution, had to be cancelled because the institute was unable to persuade anybody in the vicinity to rent out a flat to him. In point of fact, the Gujarat State Government has enacted a law preventing distress sale in areas dominated by another community,

clearly with the intention of isolating and segregating Muslims in ghettos. We should not be surprised at what is happening in Gujarat, because right under our noses in the national Capital, Muslims of all classes are essentially corralled in ghettos in Jama Masjid area, Jamia Nagar, Hauz Khas, Seelampur and a few other areas with dismal civic amenities, due to the fact that they are refused rented accommodation elsewhere. The social exclusion of Muslims in many areas makes a mockery of article 38 which enjoins upon the State to secure a “social order in which justice, social economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life”.

As the home to the world’s great religions, we in this country have always prided ourselves on our tolerance and respect for every religion. And yet, we have all read the recent media reports that 10 years after the horrible Gujarat massacre when more than 400 masjids and dargahs were destroyed, most of the structures remain broken, vandalized and defiled. It is reported that one of the pre-conditions set by the villagers in many villages for the safe return of the victims from the relief camps was that their places of worships would not be repaired or constructed again. Despite the strong recommendation of the NHRC, the State has flatly refused to rebuild the dargahs and mosques destroyed in 2002. This has further heightened the feelings of social deprivation among the Muslims.

Even children have not been spared from this all-encompassing

trap of marginalization and exclusion. I would like to draw your attention to the news report in the Hindu about two weeks ago about the discrimination against Muslim children in nursery admissions in private schools of Delhi. The educational backwardness of Muslims is seen by social scientists as one of the prime reasons for their alienation and poverty, for which the panacea is inclusive education. But paradoxically, because of communalization of the public space, Muslims are unable to access the opportunities available, leading to their continuing isolation and ghettoisation. The issue came up in Parliament, and the discussions there touched a raw nerve. The MPs of the BJP responded to this expose by stating that Muslims should first close down their madrasas if they wished to get into the educational mainstream. Little do these insensitive and hard-hearted men realize that Muslim parents desperately seek an inclusive, secular education for their children and the madrasas are actually the last resort. The tragedy for the Muslims today is that the public discourse, even in Parliament is imbued with distrust and hate.

I can go on and on about basic human rights, forget minority rights being flouted in almost every sphere – be it employment opportunities or neglect of Urdu although it represents the very best of our composite culture. However, I wish to mention only one more issue where the high principle enunciated in Article 15 of the Constitution prohibiting any discrimination on grounds of religion has been blatantly abused by the lawmakers themselves. For decades now, there has been a demand for granting S.C. status to S.C. Muslims and Christians on par with the Buddhists

and Sikhs of S.C. origin but this issue remains unresolved. This denial constitutes the very worst form of State sponsored discrimination against Muslims and Christians. The Constitutional provisions and amendments, as interpreted by our lawmakers, seem to bear an uncanny resemblance to the philosophy of our home grown, right-wing fundamentalists. The key concept propagated by the leading ideologue of the fundamentalists explicitly distinguishes between followers of indigenous religions from those religions that originated elsewhere. Just a month ago, that inveterate hate-monger, Pravin Togadia made an impassioned plea for a new Indian Constitution that allows for anyone who converts Hindus to be beheaded. He went on to assert that “we Hindus should include Budhists, Sikhs and Jains because their line of thinking is no different from Hindus.” According to the fundamentalist ideology, Muslims and Christians are foreigners in India which rightly belongs to the religions born here. Tragically, a similar mindset is evident in the denial of SC status to Muslims and Christians while granting this concession to Budhists and Sikhs. The main argument against giving SC status to Muslims and Christians is that SCs who convert to these religions no longer face any social stigma. Nothing can be more untrue. The great Mahatma, who knew this country and its people better than anyone else had this to say on the subject and I quote “whether the harijan is nominally a Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, he is still a harijan. He can’t change his spots from Hinduism so-called. He may change his garb and call himself a Catholic-harijan or a Muslim-harijan or a neo-Sikh, his untouchability will haunt him during his life-time.” Can

the Constitution of this great land be “tainted” by endorsing this totally unacceptable discrimination against these minority groups? Let me remind my audience that Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution sanctify equality on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Despite the noble intentions of our founding fathers, the lawmakers continue to endorse Pravin Togadia’s thesis of distinguishing between religions born in India from those that originated elsewhere.

The future is frightening, to say the least. The most deviant, anti-minority, right-wing ideas designed to promote bigotry and religious fanaticism are being freely aired in the public space. However, the scariest of all is the indoctrination of the young in the gospel of hate. Apart from the scores of shishu mandirs, we have nearly 30,000 Vidya Bharati schools whose declared objective is, and I quote, “to develop a national system of education which would help to build a generation of young men and women that is committed to Hindutva and infused with patriotic fervour”. It is well known that votaries of ‘Hindutva’ have infiltrated the different institutions of governance, even the army. It may be recalled that the key conspirator in the Malegaon blasts was a serving army man, Lt. Col. Purohit. The Bhonsle Military School in Nasik which was used as a training ground by the Malegaon conspirators continues to flourish, and there are plans to open similar schools in all BJP ruled States. There are more than 40,000 shakhas across the length and breadth of the country. When one considers that one of the primary missions of all these institutions is to create and breed distrust and hatred of particular minority groups, it is clear that our founding fathers’ cherished dream of

universal brotherhood and a secular, egalitarian polity is under grave threat. In fact, a few days ago, at his book launch, Shri Harsh Mander, the well known social activist and intellectual, lamented the fact that hatred and distrust of Muslims are freely aired in drawing rooms and offices, so effective and toxic has been the anti-minority propaganda.

In conclusion, I wish to state that this country, by and large, has enacted laws that guarantee the rights of minorities. But as Clarence Darrow, the humanist who fought relentlessly for the rights of blacks in America, famously observed, no matter what laws we pass, unless people are kind and decent and human to one another, there can be no justice or peaceful existence, for in the ultimate analysis, peace and freedom come from human beings rather than laws and institutions. Sadly today, the country has little of brotherhood or "the Indian spirit".

Only a strong political will can counter the insidious, toxic fumes of discrimination, hatred and unequal treatment faced by Muslims in almost every walk of life. Unfortunately, the so-called secular formation in power seems to think that by granting reservation quotas which will provide jobs for a handful of Muslims, they will have rendered justice to the community. What this country badly needs are political leaders like Jawahar Lal Nehru who famously said ;"If any man raises his hand against another in the name of religion, I shall fight him till the last breath of my life, whether I am in government or outside." Till we get such enlightened leaders, the victims will have to depend on intrepid, well meaning people like you to carry on the fight for a truly egalitarian society.

Fast-food

Fast-food meals and snacks in India contain dangerous levels of trans-fats and salt, an analysis from the combative Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has found. A single packet of potato chips can meet half the daily requirement of fats in a person; a packet of instant noodles has half the salt a human body can absorb in a day.

The CSE blames weak food labelling laws for the low consumer awareness. "Sugar, salt and fat are items that need to be regulated. This means governments have to step in to control the powerful processed food industry. But this is not happening in India. It believes the food industry has full privilege to sell anything — and kill people slowly and sweetly," said CSE in an analysis published in *Down to Earth*, its magazine, and released to the media.

In its two-month study, it analysed specific fast-food brands such as Pepsico's Lays, McDonald's Happy Meal, Haldiram's Aloo Bhujija, and KFC's Fried Chicken. And, found just one packet or one serving of these contain harmful levels of trans-fats, salt and sugar. The companies in question have, however, strongly denied these claims, saying their process of preparation does not allow for trans-fats.

The CSE has two main findings against these brands. One, of misleading consumers by quoting small servings, much smaller than in a traditional pack, which fast food companies claim do not have harmful levels of trans-fats. This is not all. The second point CSE raised is that it found trans-fats in the

standard-sized packs labelled zero trans-fats for, say, 100g servings. That is, even packs labelled zero trans-fats had it.

Illogical servings

Chandra Bhushan, deputy director of CSE, said consumers do not notice the ludicrous part of the claims by fast-food companies — the size of the serving having zero trans-fat. "The serving could be as little as 10g in the case of bhujiyas and 14g (not more than four to five pieces) in the case of chips like Lay's and its much advertised Be Dillogical brand. Does anyone eat just 10g of bhujija?" he asked. The CSE analysis said a pre-February packet of Lay's potato chips claimingd zero grammes of trans-fat in 100g was wrong and misleading; it had 0.9g of trans-fat. Similarly, a packet of Haldiram's aloo bhujija which claimed zero gramme trans-fat in 100g was also misleading because it contained 2.5g of trans-fat.

Companies defend

The companies named were quick to defend their products. Pepsico India said all its products were fully compliant with regulations prescribed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and reiterated its claims that its food brands were trans-fat free. Its spokesperson said trans-fat is produced during the hydrogenation of vegetable oils and the company does not use this process to make its products. "Since the launch of our business in India, we have not used hydrogenated vegetable oils to manufacture our food products and none of them, therefore, contain trans-fat. The range of oils currently used by us continues to

be non-hydrogenated,” said the spokesperson, who declined to be named.

Haldiram’s said storage of packets could make a difference. “Trans-fatty acids are a result of degradation of poly-unsaturated oil exposed

to severe heating conditions. This happens when the oil is heated repeatedly at high temperatures. We at Haldiram have automatic kettles wherein the oil temperature is maintained at a certain level,” said A K Yadav, vice-president of operations. “However, the status of

trans-fat in these packs is subject to the environment and keeping condition at the retailer’s place. Sometimes, we see the pack is exposed to severe sunlight and could also be stored for many days, which may affect the trans-fat level of the food inside.”

(Continued from Page 4)

Bangalore and in many other camps inspired by Gandhiji and Socialist ideology across India.

Political Work:

- Stirred and inspired by Gandhi, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan, Razia Tehsin remained an active worker of Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and Socialist Party (SP). She held different offices of responsibility in Janta Party and Janata Dal. In Janta Dal she served as the General Secretary of Rajasthan State and as member of National Mahila Sabha's (Women's wing's) Steering Committee.

Literary Work:

- Through her book Shikari Shikar Jungle Se Pyar, Razia brought to life the socio-cultural and environmental state during six to seven decades of the 20th century. The Human Resource Development Ministry's Central Hindi Directorate awarded her for this book in 1986-87. The Urdu Bureau of New Delhi had it translated in Urdu.
- She translated in Hindi the experiences of British officers in the Asian jungles. The collection was published as "Romanchkari Shikar Kathaein".
- For Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) Razia translated Richard Grimmett's and Tim

Inskipp's Birds of India. BNHS published it as "Uttar Bharat ke Pakshi." Razia's articles and stories were published in prestigious Indian magazines and newspapers like Dharmyug, Sarita, Kadambini and Saptahik Hindustan. Women’s exploitation and empowerment, educational stories for children, jungles and shikar, herbs, environment - she beautifully put her pen to paper to cover various such topics.

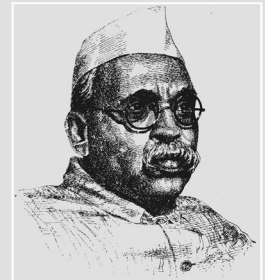
- Her talks on social issues were broadcast and telecast by Aakashvani and Doordarshan.
- She was a life-member of Lekhika Sangh and contributed regularly to its various publications.
- She worked as the editor of Angad, a magazine published from Boondi.
- Razia travelled across many states of India and captured their distinctive characters in her memoirs and snapshots.
- She shared close relations with literary figures like Krishna Sobti, Amrita Preetam, Kamla Vatsyayan, Sulochana Rangaye Raghav, Sachchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan, ‘Agyey’, Dharamveer Bharati, Laxmikant Varma and Nand Chaturvedi.
- Her unpublished works include memoirs, articles, stories, ghazals

and Urdu couplets. Her books Shikari Shikar Jungle Se Pyar and Romanchkari Shikar Kathayein will be reprinted this year.

Razia Tehsin passed away on 30th January 2012 after a long battle with cancer. Her legacies are the smiling faces of women she fought for, her beautiful words that evoke tears and laughter and the change that a single woman can bring about. She was like the fire that burns down all obstacles and leaves not a trace of itself behind, but a cleared path for others to carry on their journey.

– Arefa Tehsin

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Concept of Equality

Ideas of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia

Divyanshu Patel

Several debates, centered on the concept of equality, have been raised continuously in India. It has captivated the attention of great scholars from pre-independent as well as post-independent India. Bringing to the fore any aspect of this debate has always made the Indian society uncomfortable and ill-at-ease. Especially, there is an immense degree of insecurity registered in the attitudes of those who have been traditionally enjoying a dominant

position in the power matrix and have legitimized their position by endorsing lop-sided ideologies.

Whenever a discussion about equality is raised or an opinion is voiced, it is inevitably linked to caste based equality. Often, people give a mandate that this sort of social imbalance is the source of all kinds of inequality in society. Though it is an important indicator in the Indian context, I would

like to contend here that this is a flawed interpretation as it takes into purview only a singular facet, thus undermining the other factors that contribute to heightening the social differences. To understand the structural organization of the Indian society and learn about the nature of stratification - both horizontal and vertical - an individual must delve into the issue by taking an interdisciplinary approach.

I Concept of Equality

The idea of equality in India and the measures that have been taken to mitigate inequality are visibly manifest in the contemporary world. Also, a variety of folklore, mythical characters and events testify to the significance of this concept. Examples of the same range from Eklavya, whose indomitable spirit and incessant efforts to learn archery continue in spite of being refused "admission" on the grounds that it was a caste privilege, to the array of measures that have been undertaken to bring about social equality by means of constitutional provisions, such as Section 14-18, that seeks to make equality a fundamental right.

Despite having a long history of efforts to bring about equality in the society, till now the Indian social set-up is contingent upon a deep-rooted and stringent system of stratification; and changes in this order have

been minimalistic in spite of ardent efforts. It is still based upon the divisions that have been propagated by varna system. The basis of segregation of the communities into specific jatis still holds its sway and is strong enough. Sociologists have, from time to time, expressed their views on the weakening of this hierarchy, created on the basis of varna/caste divisions and have referred to jati as the main reason for social stratification. Besides examples such as the lingayat sect/community of Mysore or the Jat community spread over Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh (Dipankar Gupta) very few instances bear testimony to the fact that the traditional social demarcations and divisions have been challenged.

Inequality and discrimination is an intrinsic part of jati based stratification. In the past, the manner

in which the human body has been taken as the basis of generating and legitimizing the order or arrangement of castes in the society; a similar argument has been forwarded to authenticate the segregation of jatis. Srinivas (2001) has explicitly pointed out the differences between what is meant by the terms jati and varna. Jati has been linked to and is considered to be dependent on local, social, economic and political factors. Those jatis that are traditionally considered backward in a particular region tend to imitate and look up to the dominant castes. Lingayat, Reddy, Jat, Yadav and Kurmi are examples of the dominant castes that have stepped out of the conventional structures and adopted a different way of life which is deeply dependent on the power they can exert on the basis of the aforementioned factors.

Edited excerpts from an extended version of the paper presented at the International Seminar on Lohia held at Banaras Hindu University on 9-12 October 2011.

Besides focusing on the conceptualization and differentiation between varna and jati, it is essential to delve into the nature and character of stratification that is witnessed in the Indian society. It directly contrasts with that of European nations; primarily because in the West it is based on class and in India, it is based on factors such as varna and jati. Segregation on the basis of jati entailed privileges for a few and violation of the basic rights of large sections. Also, acknowledging birth as the basis of engendering social inequality, prejudices and biases is a unique characteristic that makes the social stratification in India different from that of other nations. Stratification on the basis of rituals has completely destroyed the society that was based on work. It has reduced its level to an arrangement that is contingent upon factors such as birth and caste.

As time elapsed, these boundaries became more and more rigid; but there were other factors that cast a considerable influence. These included components such as the power exerted by rapid industrialization, the context of the struggle for independence, the idea of a democratic set-up, etc. Without taking into consideration these factors, attempting an analysis of the stratification of the Indian society would be a flawed representation of the real picture. Amongst those who voiced their opinion against social inequality, often saints such as Kabir, Nanak and Namdev are named. Similarly, Buddhist thinkers from medieval period are included in this ambit. With the beginning of colonial rule, the contributions and efforts of Jotiba Phule, Savitri Phule, Periyar and Shahu Maharaj have been exemplary and cannot be overlooked.

However, I strongly believe that in India Gandhi is at the forefront for making concerted efforts to realize equality in society and to make it a nationwide concern, which was essentially required to bring about an awakening and awareness among masses. In his philosophy, like his other ideas, he continuously revisited and revised the idea of equality. The foundations of his ideas related to equality were laid down during his stay in South Africa. When he returned to India, after launching a successful protest against racial discrimination that was practiced in South Africa, he began his struggle against colonial rule. Also, he emphasized on the alleviation of discrimination on the basis of caste. While visiting different parts of India he felt that the caste based segregation had a stronghold in the Indian society. Thus the efforts that were directed against racism were put into practice by him in India in order to protest against this form of social inequality.

It is seminal that the progression of Gandhi's thought is considered in the context of the significant experiences that he had at various junctures. Though quite unselfconsciously, he undertook the task of revisiting and revising his ideas, based on the experiences that he had. That is why the persona of Gandhi that we read about or encounter in books after his return from South Africa, during the civil disobedience movement and subsequently at the time when India gained independence is markedly different in character. The change in perspective that is evident in his political thought and his manner of doing work is also visibly manifest in his efforts directed at social welfare.

Gandhi's ideas are a reflection of a particular time period. This entails that his ideas underwent refinement or that his ideas were influenced by the socio-political changes that he witnessed. It remained an essential reason why his ideas have always remained relevant and important to the political struggles and programmes which were directed at societal welfare. He firmly believed in the idea that without establishing equality, the struggle for attaining an independent nation cannot be carried forward as social segregation would be a hindrance to the fulfillment of the goal of involving everyone for a common cause. The issue of the rights of untouchables was close to his heart and he had started mobilizing public opinion on this sensitive subject since the 1920s. The social malaise of untouchability was a cause of deep concern and worry for Gandhi. He was instrumental in making this concern central to the political sphere.

Gandhi's concept of equality was not delimited to the acknowledgement and granting of certain religious privileges such as entering the temple but, rather they were intended to bring about a change by introducing parity in the day-to-day lives of individuals or those who were marginalized in the society. He linked the concept of equality to villages and even in his conceptualization of an ideal village, he highlights that the traditional demarcations in the villages should be obliterated so that it provides a conducive and congenial environment for all members of the society. Gandhi has always considered untouchability as a religious, rather than a social, predicament; but he always emphasized on the significance of a social remedy and continued to

find a solution through its medium. In his early days, he was of the opinion that the varna system was an inevitable part of the Hindu society. But later, as evidenced from the an issue of Harijan (16 November 1935), he voiced the opinion that to achieve equality in society the discrimination has to be mitigated and ultimately ended. It reflects the scope for modification and flexibility in Gandhi's thought. In order to realize his concept of equality, rather than revolting against the traditional structures, Gandhi focused upon the possibility of using village welfare, khadi, and education as instruments of bringing about change in the society. It helped in addressing the problem in a better way and aided in the task of removing the problem from its roots.

Contrary to Gandhi, his contemporary B.R Ambedkar's views and ideas were more precise and sharp. He considered caste as the sole and primary reason for social inequality in India and emphasized that only its annihilation could help in removing social inequality. He linked the idea of social rights with political rights and he considered political power as a key to salvation of the downtrodden.¹ Ambedkar segregated himself from the ambit of

Hindu religion in order to focus upon the problem of social inequality and trauma faced by those who had been treated as untouchables. It helped in giving a logical explanation and scientific basis to his argument. Ambedkar considered inequality as an inherent part of the Hindu society and considered caste system to be 'division of labourers' rather than 'division of labour.'²

He considered caste system to be responsible for propagating inequality in the society and for him untouchability was a by-product of the caste-based divisions. He advocated that political rights are quintessential for the uplift of those who had been treated as outcastes and it is reflected in the ideas that constitute the Poona Pact. In contrast to the reformist ideas, he emphasized that the Dalits must have equal rights and opportunities to have access to economic and political resources.

In the Indian context, the discussion of the concept of social equality is incomplete without referring to Lohia. He was a visionary thinker of modern India and his ideas regarding equality, like his other ideas, are multi-dimensional. Lohia linked and analysed the concept of equality from myriad perspectives,

II Equality and Education

realize this goal.

Gandhi's endeavours to dissipate caste-based discrimination in India also included the proposal of 'Basic Education,' which was forwarded by him to the Congress Conference, Wardha, in 1937. Through this idea Gandhi wanted to eliminate the psychological tendency to associate certain tasks – such as work that involved using leather or working

such as jati, dharma, class, language and gender. He too considered caste system to be the primary reason for social inequality. In order to bring about social change he gave the concept of sapt-kranti³. Amongst these, the third revolution focuses upon removal of sanskar based caste system and giving opportunities to those who are marginalized. Lohia also opposed the discrimination based on language and region and highlighted that an end to these must be brought about in order to attain equality.

Raising the question of division on the basis of language, he considered English to be a reason for promoting inequality; thus hindering the idea of achieving equality in education. Lohia wanted equality at all levels in the society and gave special significance to providing an equal status to women in the society.

He considered income as an important factor to bring about social equality and emphasized the idea of fixing an average income. In an article written in 1964 he highlighted minimum wages as a fundamental question⁴. He presented a realistic and practical explanation of the concept of equality and it included an analysis which was logical in nature.

In India, the importance of using education as the means or as an instrument to attain social equality has been emphasized by various ideologues and social thinkers - Jyotiba Phule, Ramabai, Periyar, etc. The work done and efforts made in this direction are exemplary. However, it is Gandhi who envisioned and prepared a lucid and holistic curricular framework, essentially required to

with soil - with the lower castes and untouchables. By imparting knowledge related to handicrafts, 'Basic Education' sought to fulfill the objective of transforming the sociological basis of constructing certain knowledge as relevant. In his book, Hind Swaraj, Gandhi considered the knowledge of the alphabet as a tool which can be used both in a constructive and destructive ways. To bring about

equality he supported the use of 'Hindustani' language as a medium of teaching and as a means to carry out official functions and tasks.

In contrast, Ambedkar considered the English language as a means for the welfare of the untouchables. He also adopted a dress code that was typically Western. Later this idol became a representative symbol of Dalit consciousness. According to

Elnor Zelliott, '*ye idols generally shiksha dene ya sahas aur samta ki ghoshna ko apne uthe hue hath dwara express krti hain*' (Zelliott 2001, pp. 239)

Lohia received his higher education in English but he too, like Gandhi, favoured the use of Hindustani. Instead of considering English language as feudal he highlighted that the use of English

language in the Indian context was a symbol of being captive to a feudal mindset, since it distanced a large majority of the population from the possibility of attaining knowledge. In a letter written forty five years ago, he emphasized it is essential that the quality of education that reaches out to masses is an important factor that should be taken care of.

III Context and differences

With respect to equality, certain degree of similarity is noticeable in the ideas of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia. However, a nuanced study reveals the small yet important differences are present in their ideas. All three thinkers belong to different regions and social backgrounds; and the impact of these factors on their thinking is evident. While Lohia and Gandhi hailed from Baniya families of U.P. and Gujarat; Ambedkar, on the other hand, belonged to the Mahar caste, one of the lowest castes in Maharashtra. In order to protest against caste-based discrimination and untouchability, Gandhi mobilized public opinion by fasting and named it *aatmashuddhi*.

While Gandhi looked for a solution to the problem of caste divisiveness by remaining within the framework of the system, Ambedkar and Lohia stepped out of the binding precincts of the system and suggested a solution that involved doing away with caste based organization of the society. While Gandhi was liberal towards the idea of caste based hierarchy, that is the harmonious division of labour embedded in the Hindu

religion, Lohia, on the other hand, firmly protested against it. This is the primary reason why, Lohia, in opposition to Gandhi, was able to put forward a more accurate and broader understanding of the steps to be undertaken to annihilate caste based divisions.

Drawing from the discipline of anthropology, Ambedkar constructed his views on the origins of caste and etched out the reasons why it gained prominence and further developed his argument on how it can be rooted out. Ambedkar held both upper castes and Dalits responsible for the position of the latter. Lohia, on the other hand, urged Dalits and backward castes to participate in the political realm. He was amongst the first ones to demand reservation for backward classes, along with Dalits. This is the basic difference between philosophies of Ambedkar and Lohia.

It is pertinent to note that Lohia's conception of equality lays importance on the role of women. This differentiates him from the other two thinkers. He argues that it is impossible that an equal

and just society can be achieved without according equal status to women. Lohia, in his article, '*Varna aur Yoni ke Katghare*'⁵ states that women have been denied status and considered to be equal to shudras in the society.

He cites the example of Draupadi in order to emphasize the importance of the idea that women must be given an equal status in society. By giving the example of Draupadi he wanted to establish the fact that there should be a relationship of parity between men and women. In July 1960 he wrote '*Nari ko garibi ke saman nhi bnana hai, balki nari itni shaktishali honi chahiye ki vakt par purush ko gathari apne saath le chale*'

To sum up the argument, I would like to state that Lohia's construction of the concept of equality encapsulates myriad concerns, related to power, that characterize modern contemporary India. These include caste, class, gender, language, etc. And the multiple perspectives incorporated in his ideas are reflective of the ingenuity and creativity of the visionary.

IV

The efforts directed at achieving social equality, in India, have yielded positive results; but still a lot needs to be done in order to achieve this goal. In order to attain equality in society, there has to be adequate and active representation of the Dalit and backward classes, from the grassroot level, that is the Panchayat, to the highest representation of political power, the parliament. This is the reason why the ideas of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia - on four main factors that determine attainment of equality, that is, caste, class, gender and language - hold relevance and are significant even today. According to Prof. Anand Kumar, we cannot talk about equality, until and unless, our feudal mindset changes and allows us to vote for and elect OBC, Dalit, and women candidates on unreserved seats.

Conventionally, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia have been seen as separate on the issue of equality. In a very dramatic way, their endeavors directed at achieving social equality have been accorded separate political affiliations. This has happened in total negation of the fact that there might be a certain degree of basic similarity in their thoughts! This is replicated and manifested even in the school textbooks. Also, pertinent to consider is the fact that often the most imaginative amongst the three pioneers, Lohia, is mentioned only in a few textbooks.

Therefore when we talk about equality it is necessary to consider the fact that the ideas of these three thinkers on equality are complementary to each other. According to D.R Nagraj 2008,

'Gandhi aur Ambedkar ne ek doosre ko roopantarit kar diya tha. Gandhiji ne Harijano ke

uthan ko keval untouchability ke dayre se bahar nikal, jabki Ambedkar ne jativad ke ant me dharma ki bhoomika ko sweekar kiya.'

Lohia was close to the ideological constructions of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Like Ambedkar, he protested against the caste based discrimination and wanted that the unjust system must be ended. However, the latter also considered it necessary to give special rights or opportunities to the backward castes. The link between Gandhi and Lohia was that of guru-shishya. Though Lohia was in agreement with the ideas of Gandhi but he forged an opinion of his own that was distinctive in nature. Though he disagreed and differed from Gandhi on the issue of caste, he supported Gandhi's ideas on education and language. In an issue of Dharmayug (1967), Lohia wrote,

'... bharat ko ek karne wali do hi shaktiyan rahi hain, ek Gandhi ji aur doosri film.'

In the present scenario, it is essential that the ideas of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia are actively used to for democratization, social equality and upliftment of those who have been suppressed and exploited by the dominant in the power matrix. Only then the constitutional provision of right to equality can be implemented in its right spirit.

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A House or a Home

Is it a house or a home? A temple to the new India, or a warehouse for its ghosts? Ever since Antilla arrived on Altamont Road in Mumbai, exuding mystery and quiet menace, things have not been the same. “Here we are,” the friend who took me there said, “Pay your respects to our new Ruler.”

Antilla belongs to India’s richest man, Mukesh Ambani. I had read about this most expensive dwelling ever built, the twenty-seven floors, three helipads, nine lifts, hanging gardens, ballrooms, weather rooms, gymnasiums, six floors of parking, and the six hundred servants. Nothing had prepared me for the vertical lawn—a soaring, 27-storey-high wall of grass attached to a vast metal grid. The grass was dry in patches; bits had fallen off in neat rectangles. Clearly, Trickle-down hadn’t worked.

But Gush-Up certainly has. That’s why in a nation of 1.2 billion, India’s 100 richest people own assets equivalent to one-fourth of the GDP.

The word on the street (and in the *New York Times*) is, or at least was, that after all that effort and gardening, the Ambanis don’t live in Antilla. No one knows for sure. People still whisper about ghosts and bad luck, Vaastu and Feng Shui. Maybe it’s all Karl Marx’s fault. (All that cussing.) Capitalism, he said, “has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, that it is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells”.

In India, the 300 million of us who belong to the new, post-IMF “reforms” middle class—the market—live side by side with

spirits of the nether world, the poltergeists of dead rivers, dry wells, bald mountains and denuded forests; the ghosts of 2,50,000 debt-ridden farmers who have killed themselves, and of the 800 million who have been impoverished and dispossessed to make way for us. And who survive on less than twenty rupees a day.

Mukesh Ambani is personally worth \$20 billion. He holds a majority controlling share in Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), a company with a market capitalisation of \$47 billion and global business interests that include petrochemicals, oil, natural gas, polyester fibre, Special Economic Zones, fresh food retail, high schools, life sciences research and stem cell storage services. RIL recently bought 95 per cent shares in Infotel, a TV consortium that controls 27 TV news and entertainment channels, including CNN-IBN, IBN Live, CNBC, IBN Lokmat, and ETV in almost every regional language. Infotel owns the only nationwide licence for 4G Broadband, a high-speed “information pipeline” which, if the technology works, could be the future of information exchange. Mr Ambani also owns a cricket team.

RIL is one of a handful of corporations that run India. Some of the others are the Tatas, Jindals, Vedanta, Mittals, Infosys, Essar and the other Reliance (ADAG), owned by Mukesh’s brother Anil. Their race for growth has spilled across Europe, Central Asia, Africa and Latin America. Their nets are cast wide; they are visible and invisible, over-ground as well as underground. The Tatas, for example, run more than 100 companies in 80 countries. They are one of India’s oldest and largest private sector power companies. They own mines, gas

fields, steel plants, telephone, cable TV and broadband networks, and run whole townships. They manufacture cars and trucks, own the Taj Hotel chain, Jaguar, Land Rover, Daewoo, Tetley Tea, a publishing company, a chain of bookstores, a major brand of iodised salt and the cosmetics giant Lakme. Their advertising tagline could easily be: You Can’t Live Without Us...

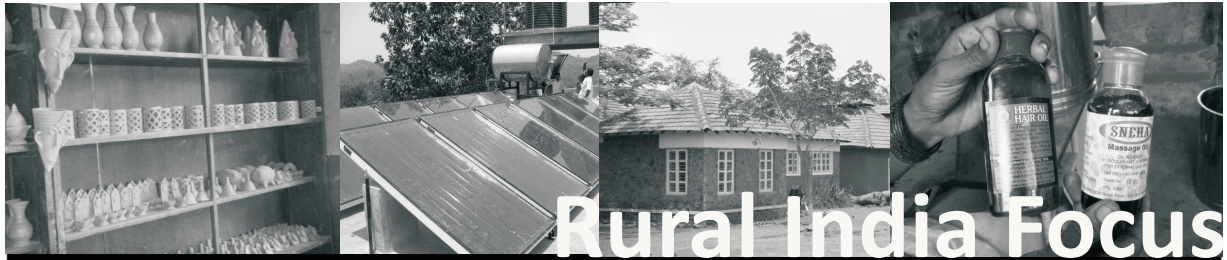
...Why did the Ambanis’ choose to call their building Antilla? Antilla is the name of a set of mythical islands whose story dates back to an 8th-century Iberian legend. When the Muslims conquered Hispania, six Christian Visigothic bishops and their parishioners boarded ships and fled. After days, or maybe weeks at sea, they arrived at the isles of Antilla where they decided to settle and raise a new civilisation. They burnt their boats to permanently sever their links to their barbarian-dominated homeland.

By calling their tower Antilla, do the Ambanis hope to sever their links to the poverty and squalor of their homeland and raise a new civilisation? Is this the final act of the most successful secessionist movement in India? The secession of the middle and upper classes into outer space?

As night fell over Mumbai, guards in crisp linen shirts with crackling walkie-talkies appeared outside the forbidding gates of Antilla. The lights blazed on, to scare away the ghosts perhaps. The neighbours complain that Antilla’s bright lights have stolen the night.

Perhaps it’s time for us to take back the night.

—Arundhati Roy in *Outlook*



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Thaw: Genuine or Deceptive?

S.Viswam

India-Pakistan bilateral relations have improved in the last few weeks in a “too good to be true” manner and pace. Tensions have eased substantially. The bilateral atmosphere is certainly more relaxed. The Indian initiative to put bilateral trade on a more mutually rewarding phase seems to have paid off. Prospects on the trade front have brightened to the extent that businessmen in the two countries are in a celebratory mood. On the political front too, the bilateral scene is much more relaxed, although some tensions persist. On the whole, the prospect of the two nations talking to, rather than at, each other, seems significantly near.

This is not the first time in the six-decades-old relations that the political atmosphere has all the signs of a breakthrough. Often enough there has been euphoria to be followed only by disappointment and disillusion. Just as anything trivial has the potential of triggering tensions, even some minor but positive developments have the potential of setting off euphoria. Has such a scenario repeated itself again? There is a thaw in the atmosphere, we can see. But is the thaw deceptive or genuine? Has the ground been firmly laid for a breakthrough? Has the trust deficit been wiped oven marginally? Is the stage set for the clearance of all outstanding issues? The answer

to these questions has necessarily to be in the negative. Prudence, based on experience, suggests caution in assessments. The time seems to have come for investing the dialogue with more flesh and meat, but not yet for hopes to be raised on achieving durable solutions.

The first signs of a thaw came with President Zardari’s visit, the first by a Pakistani President in almost a decade. The interaction between him and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh set off speculation that the nitty-gritty of the intractable bilateral issues were about to be addressed. That hope fell by the wayside, but a beginning has been made in intensifying the process of promoting understanding and cooperation in place of conflict. That hope was raised largely because after sustained intransigence on trading with India for so many decades Pakistan suddenly announced its decision to give India the most favoured nation status in trade. India has been goading Pakistan to take the plunge and start active trading with India for so many years. Hence, that gesture by itself was a signal for euphoria.

However, the thaw acquired some meaning and positiveness after April 7. That was the fateful day when 138 Pakistani troops perished in an

avalanche in Siachen. That tragedy obviously provoked the Chief of Pakistani Army Staff General Kayani to call for a relaxation in India-Pakistan relations not only on the ground that wars had become irrelevant but because it made sense for the two countries to co-exist in peace. This was a welcome development since Gen. Kayani is or was, hitherto, an acknowledged “hawk” where India was concerned. His point that defence without development was meaningless was well taken and struck a chord in India which has been advocating a similar line for long. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sheriff took the proposal a step further by suggesting that Pakistan be the first to withdraw troops from Siachen. President Zardari, while welcoming the idea of demilitarization of Siachen, insisted that only joint withdrawal would work and Pakistan would not act unilaterally. While such articulation of peaceful intentions and motivations was a unexpected development in the bilateral scene, Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani joined the debate with a significant input. He said that his government believed in finding solutions through dialogue, that the era of wars was over, and that Pakistan was keen on sorting out issues through talks even on contentious issues like Kashmir, Terrorism or Siachen. Meanwhile a number of businessmen and industrialists in the two countries hailed the breakthrough on the trade front and began envisaging a situation where investments would begin to flow in both directions when trade channels opened up.

Against this background, the people of the two countries may be forgiven for hoping that the repudiation of wars as problem-solvers would lead to a dramatic era of peace. But it is here that the

(Continued on Page 3)

Between the lines

A Window for Peace

Kuldip Nayar

India and Pakistan are seldom on the same page. Partly, it is because they carry the baggage of tragic history and partly because they have no trust in each other. Above all, there is a general perception in India that since the army is a decisive factor in the affairs of Pakistan, it is not possible to foster any meaningful relationship until it becomes a democratic polity in the real sense. In fact, from the time General Mohammad Ayub Khan took over the reins of Pakistan in 1958, India has assumed that no normalcy between the two countries is achievable.

After becoming the Martial Law Administrator, General Ayub offered even a “joint defence pact.” India’s then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru spurned the offer with the remark: “Joint defence against whom?” The leaders of the two other military regimes in the seventies and later - General Zia-ul Haq and General Pervez Musharraf - were never taken seriously because New Delhi believed that the say from the military point of view would never allow any exercise for peace to succeed.

Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff Pervez Kayani has jolted India’s past thinking by advocating “peaceful coexistence” between the two countries. But his suggestion that the civil and military leaderships should discuss ways to resolve the issue is a bit confusing. He should know that the military leadership in India is not part of the decision-making process which is primarily in the hands of the elected representatives.

General Kayani’s proposal does not stop at the Siachin Glacier. He has hinted at a follow-up and has thus belied the impression that peace between India and Pakistan is a hostage to the army’s hawkish thinking. He has given a window of opportunity which the governments on both sides should grab with both hands to normalize relations.

Unless there is a back channel working on Kayani’s suggestion, New Delhi is not reacting officially. The media has by and large welcomed Kayani’s proposal but otherwise the comment has been guarded. The question is whether the Indian forces would withdraw from the Siachin Glacier because President Asif Ali Zardari has rejected the unilateral withdrawal as was suggested by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

However, if Pakistan were to do so, it would put India under a lot of pressure to reciprocate. Morally, New Delhi’s position would be so untenable that it would have to withdraw the forces. Even if we rule out this line of thinking, Pakistan would have to assure India that Islamabad would not try to occupy the vacant area if and when New Delhi withdraws. After all, when India sent its troops to Siachin Glacier in 1984, it suspected that Pakistan was going to do so. (Indian intelligence agencies found that Pakistan had ordered high-altitude mountaineering gears from a London trader who used to supply the same to New Delhi).

Whatever Pakistan decides, it has to have the nod of General Kayani. He cannot go against the wishes of

the Pakistani people who want peace with India.. General Kayani can neither be oblivious to the fact that a military takeover in Pakistan is well-nigh impossible when all political parties have now joined hands to uphold the dictum of democratic change.

I wish the reaction in India had been more forthcoming. There is a long dreary period of mistrust. But it has to be dispelled by sitting across the table and not putting any conditions before doing so. General Kayani has mentioned all outstanding problems between the two countries which need to be put on the table for solution.

The starting point can be the Siachin Glacier as General Kayani's remarks indicate. After visiting the sites where 180 Pakistani soldiers were buried in snow he was moved and saw the futility of perching his forces at the height of some 23,000 feet. The same is the case with India which too had lost hundreds of soldiers at the Siachin Glacier over a period of time. But the main worry is that what happens when its forces withdraw from the glacier?

The solution to Siachin Glacier should present no problems because both sides have gone over the details in the last several years. There was a time when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had initialed a settlement, agreeing to a no-man land status. But the signatures could not take place because some Indian army commanders had a different point of view. They saw some strategic advantage which some others commanders disputed. If the Line of Control could be delineated after the Shimla Conference up to the area near the glacier, the same line can be extended right up to the end. Otherwise, the two sides will continue to pay a heavy price in terms of soldiers and logistics. Once again it is distrust which rules out an

agreement.

The climate for a dialogue on all problems is conducive. People on both sides want it. General Kayani said that the army understood well the need to bring down the defence budget, adding, "we would like to spend less on defence" because ultimately "security doesn't only mean secure border but the welfare of the people." This means that the army is ready to take cuts. This also means the reduction of troops on the border.

The solutions to Siachin Glacier and that of Sir Creek, which Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said are "doable," will create an atmosphere of give and take and it

is quite on the cards that some way out may be found to solve Kashmir. Most important is that the aperture of peace should not be allowed to be shut without both sides going to the maximum limit in accommodating each other. If General Kayani - a soldier and not a politician - can talk of permanent peace between the two countries why not the rulers?

There are voices which may say 'Can we trust them?' By not trusting, both have fought three wars, apart from the Kargil incursion. Let them, for a change, trust each other. Otherwise, history will hold the present governments responsible for letting the opportunity for peace go by.

(Continued from Page 2)

need for extreme caution comes in. The track record of Pakistan in promoting an atmosphere of peace and sustaining it over time has not been flattering. There is an unstated but patent element of unpredictability in Pakistan's

policies and actions where relations with India are concerned, and hence wisdom demands a cautious and step-by-step approach in resolving issues. As military men are fond of saying: "Oil your guns and keep your powder dry.!"

Abduction of Sukma Collector

PUCL urges the MCC to immediately release Alex Paul Menon, the District Magistrate of Sukma in Chhattisgarh as the politics of abduction and ransom in the form of release of their comrades is not compatible with justice and fair play. The fact that the State has been indulging in the inhuman act of implicating thousands of innocent persons in false cases and killing in fake encounters does not justify their act as their declared objective is to create a society free from exploitation and oppression, and as such they cannot afford to be as bad as the government they condemn if they want to carry conviction with the people. PUCL also urges both the government and the Maoists to come to an understanding that neither the government will indulge in fake encounters and implicating innocent persons in false cases nor the Maoists will indulge in abduction and killing for the fulfillment of their demands. It may be added that had both the parties been belligerent nations at war, they would have been guilty of war crimes and crime against humanity. PUCL urges the central government to initiate concrete steps for coordination with the affected state governments aimed at creating an atmosphere of confidence building in which negotiations are possible amongst the fighting parties for a lasting solution of the problem.

Pushkar Raj
General Secretary

Prabhakar Sinha
President

Peoples Union of Civil Liberties

Food Taboos and Nutritional deficits

K. S. Chalam

Two important events that took place in Hyderabad during the week made us to reflect on issues that are contemporary. K. R. Venugopal retired Civil Servant in the rank of Secretary to Prime Minister got his book 'The Integrated Child Development Services: A flagship Adrift' released in Hyderabad. K. R. Venugopal is one of our very few conscientious civil servants who stood for certain values in the system, has conducted a social audit on the flagship programme of the government in the area of child development in Andhra Pradesh and published the results in the book. He has examined the quality of supplementary nutrition food like the *upma*, *kichdi* and *halwa* in place of modified therapeutic food (MTF) powder and related it to the health status of the child and mother, early childhood education, caste discrimination in the supply of food and several other issues in a select district of Andhra Pradesh. He found how the package of services in the programme is inadequate, ill conceived, remised, vandalized and conspicuous by its failure to meet the stated objective- providing nutritious food supplement to children. The striking feature of the study is that he has related the study with the NFHS-3 survey on infant mortality rate, morbidity rate, maternal mortality rate, etc that have bearing on malnutrition and push outs in pre-school education in Andhra Pradesh. The special focus on the scheduled caste children and their nutritional status brings us to another very emotional issue relating to our food habits. Most of the children from the

disadvantaged families are found to be wanting in nutritious food due to non availability or may be social taboos in our society.

This takes us to another very interesting event of a food festival in Osmania University that became a newsworthy with headlines. Food and drink are evolved in each society over a period of time and has long history behind every festival that involves special food preparations. Food taboos are universal in all ancient societies due to either a custom or a religious sanction often without any valid reason. Interestingly, the taboos are socially accepted. In a country like India where there are several ethnic, social, religious and may be racial and cultural groups, each group has evolved its own norms, taboos or styles of living. But, the most contentious issue in our society is that a small minority of the so-called settlers have been trying to impose their values on the majority of the native Indians just to exhibit their hegemony and constrain a democratic right to choose food. This is seen in recent debates on Telangana movement also. We may look at the problem from the point of view of the contemporary issue of lack of nutritional values in the food intake of children in certain families may be due to the change of habits or the restrictions imposed on them by certain vested interests. It is difficult to examine why someone has chosen to be a vegetarian and how one cannot force him to accept a non-vegetarian food simply because it is the norm of the majority. Though the

Constitution has not guaranteed any type of food as universally accepted, it is possible and competent for our apex court reasonably to give that guarantee under Art 21 (protection of life). In the normal course of life, this cannot become an issue.

The 'pedakurapandaga' or beef festival in university campuses is not new in the state. In the early 1970s students and others at Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and other places have executed a similar programme. It was reported only in obscure pages of some news papers. But, cow has become a holy issue in the 1990s when it became a political subject for sections of a party and an identity problem for some. A few of the champions refer to the constitution for cow protection. But, the constitution has not referred to the so-called holy cow alone. In the directive principles of state policy under Art 48, it is said that "the state shall endeavour to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other *milch* and draught cattle." Unfortunately, some states have given importance only to cow and passed Acts to prohibit its slaughter and endured lynching of humans to protect it. It was in Haryana a few years ago that five dalits were lynched on the alleged killing of a cow that made some religious leaders to comment that the life of a cow is more sacred than the life of an untouchable. This led to heated debates and perverted

discussions on the issue and the 'holy cow' has become a phrase now. It is in this connection, one can refer to the noted historian Prof D. N. Jha's book "The Myth of Holy Cow" (proscribed in some states!) to understand the historical facts behind beef eating and also D. D. Sankalia for archaeological evidences. It is distressing to note the parochial and intolerant attention paid to an issue without understanding its context and particularly the Art 47 where the state is directed to raise the level of nutrition and bring prohibition of intoxicating drinks. Those who are conscious about the animals have paid scant attention to the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. May be some of the fundamentalist activities of the parties are carried with the willing cooperation of the same clientele who are ignorant about their cultural identity. Neither the stake holders like the farmers nor the victims are ever consulted in making such laws on a vintage issue. It shows the command of the orthodox few on state policies in India

Apart from the religious sentiments and hegemonic maneuvering in the area of food habits of people, the issue of providing nutritious food to the poor whose original sources has disappeared due to modern techniques of farming and vanishing of common property resources is relevant. The nutritional values of the intake of the poor and the disadvantaged has drastically gone down due to the use of pesticides and the extinction of mussels, crabs, fish, etc and green leafy vegetables that were freely accessible once. Now the threat of lynching of humans for the sake of cow has further dented their entrée to nutritious food traditionally available (they were categorized as

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Manufacturing a Riot

Ram Puniyani

In Saidabad and Madannapeth areas of Hyderabad (April 1st week, 2012) violence was unleashed against the local Muslims. In this violence several houses were damaged, many a people were injured and women were raped. Just before the incident Praveen Togadia had given an inflammatory speech in the area. There was news that fundamentalists (read- Muslims) have thrown beef and green color in the Hanuman temple. This news was enough to instigate the violence. The police succeeded in arresting the culprits, who turned out to be those belonging to Hindu communal outfits.

On the New Year eve, 1st January (2012), In Sindagi town of Bijapur Pakistan flag was seen on the government buildings. The news spread with rapid speed and violence which followed led to the burning of six state transport buses and many other vehicles. As it turned out it was the activists of Sri Ram Sene of Pramod Mutallik, an ex-RSS Pracharak (Propagator), who first hoisted the Pakistan flag and then went about telling people about the same.

There are many more dimensions of both these acts of violence, brought in by using religious identity, symbols and emotive appeals. Communal violence is a cancer which has spread in to the body politic of our society. The very foundation of communal violence is the 'social common sense' the 'hate-other' ideology build around the myths and biases prevalent against the 'others'. As such communal violence is the superficially visible

part of the communal politics, a politics deriving its legitimacy from the identity of religion. To begin with the hatred for 'other' community' started getting consolidated around the communal projection of history, supplemented by aspects from the present social life of a community, exaggerated and put forward in a derogatory way. In pre-partition period the violence was emerging from both communal streams and British were a sort of neutral umpires.

With partition process Muslim communalism got deflated, violence changed its form and started assuming different trend leading to rise of conservatism and orthodoxy amongst Muslims. The minority communalism promoted more conservative values amongst minorities and also gave provocations to the majority communalism. After the quiet period after the ghastly post-partition riots, violence started surfacing after 1961 with Jabalpur violence, in the wake of which Pundit Nehru, the then Prime minister of the country, constituted National Integration Council, which has been playing some insignificant role in promoting national integration. It is more of a debating club, meeting once a while, forgetting about the issue in the intervening period.

The communal violence, where two communities are made to pitch against each other has been changing its character and now communal groups, who are on the provoking and attacking spree have a clear goal of intimidating and subjugating the religious minorities. At the same time the pretext is

manufactured that Muslims are violent or Christians have attacked, 'they' begin the violence and then get the 'deserved' punishment. This again is a totally make believe construct. The two incidents which have taken place amply show the anatomy of manufacturing a riot. The majoritarian communal streams have built up their strength by polarizing the communities along religious lines. Founded on the deeper biases against minorities, the rumors played the role of triggering the violence, or rumors play the role of the precipitating factor in the concentrated solution of 'Hate other'. Many rumors have been used, killing of the cow, abduction/rape of Hindu women, cutting of the breast of women, desecration of the holy place/book etc. Adding on the list has come in this Pakistan flag, which is a quite an innovation during last some time.

The violence by and large is a planned one and is made to look a spontaneous one, that too sparked by the minorities. The Hyderabad and Sindagi incidents are new pointers to this. Earlier in the Kandhamal, violence was triggered on the pretext of the death of Swami Laxmananand, who as such was killed by Maoists. Swami Laxmananand's dead body was taken in a procession through Christian minority areas, and the rivers of blood followed. The Gujarat violence was undertaken in a pre-planned manner on the pretext of the burning of train in Godhra and the merchants of death followed. In Mumbai after the demolition of Babri Mosque, some Muslim youth threw stones on the police station, the Shiv Sena activists threw Gulal (Orange color of celebration used mostly by Hindus) on a mosque and Bal Thackeray gave the call for 'teaching them a lesson'. So far many inquiry commissions and

citizen's tribunals have pointed out the role of the majoritarian communal organizations. Starting from the report of Bhivandi riots (Madon Commission) to Mumbai violence (Srikrishna Commission), their conclusions are similar to a large extent. The riot instigation is done in a way, it is orchestrated in such a fashion, as if the Muslims have thrown the first stone or Christians have precipitated the violence.

Dr. V.N. Rai, a police officer did his doctoral work on the theme of riots between 1968-1980 (Combating Communal Conflicts), and a longish quote from this book will enlighten us on the issue, "very often the way in which the first stone is thrown or the first hand is raised in aggression, suggests an outside agency at work, an agency that wants to create a situation in which members of the minority community commit an act which ignites severe retribution for themselves. In order to guard them against external criticism and to preserve their self-righteousness, violence is projected to be started by Muslims. It is as if a weaker person is pushed into the corner by a stronger, forcing him to raise his hand so that he may be suitably punished for his 'attack'. Before the punishment is meted out a suitable hue and cry can be made about the fact that because the person cornered is naturally wicked and violent, he is bound to attack first" (Pg. 56-57)."

Now there is some change in the trajectory of the riot instigation; there is a continuity and change in the issues used to manufacture the riots. Now the communal elements are becoming bolder to hoist the Pakistan flag or to throw the piece of beef and green color more boldly. The other change is in the relative increase in the percentage of victims belonging to minority community.

By 1980s 65 percent of victims were Muslims (V.N.Rai) in 1991 it was 80 percent (Union Home ministry data) and by 2001 this percentage has further gone up. These data tell their own tale. The communal violence has polarized the communities along religious lines, and has given flesh and blood to the communal politics. It has laid the foundation for identity related issues coming to the fore and marginalizing the core issues of society.

While large number of measures are needed to curb the communal violence and to snub the organizations deliberately playing mischief, it is imperative that multi-layered approach is taken up to bring peace and harmony in the society. We need to battle against the stereotypes and biases at all the levels, amongst the people and amongst the administration. At the same time a major step of setting up inter-religious committees in all the areas can combat the rumors or find the truth as to who has hoisted the flag or thrown beef, and this may prevent the violence in many a situations.

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untouchables due to this}. It is noted that 100 grams of beef has 30 grams of protein, 56 grams of sodium and other nutrients and the milk of a water buffalo has more energy than cow milk. Getting a patent for cow urine distillate (CUD) is possible for other cattle also is not pertinent here. Advanced countries like USA in whom some of our Hindu, Christian, etc, patriots look for succor and guidance lob the highest amount of beef of 80 pounds per capita do also produce the largest number of Nobel laureates. Should they tell us how to overcome the deficit in nutrition of the poor while protecting the cow?

French Socialists in Round II

D. K. Giri

The French presidential elections took place on 22nd April. Many around the world are watching these elections for various reasons. One, France has been a world power in the past, and at present, a major European power. Second, France and Germany are the architects of the European Union. When several member countries like Greece, Spain, Portugal and a few others are in serious economic crisis, and the euro-zone is in danger of disintegration, France and Germany are expected to pull them off. Third, the socialists in France had their last president, Francois Mitterrand in 1981, who laid down office in 1995. So the socialists have been out of power for 17 years. Fourth and more important, France also is caught in several challenges; immigration, national integration, debt, unemployment - although economy is not as bad as that of many others in the EU members.

There were as many as 10 candidates in the fray. Francois Hollande, the former first secretary, the chair of the Socialist Party, and member of parliament came first with 28.63 percent votes, Nicolas Sarkozy, the incumbent president of France, from the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) was second with 27.18 percent, Marine Le Pen, president of the rightist National Front party and member of European Parliament (MEP) had the surprising third position with 17.9 percent, Jean-Luc-Melenchon, MEP, and co-president of the Left Party, Front De Gauche, got 11.1 percent,

Francois Bayron, the president of the centrist MoDem,- Democratic Movement got 9.13 percent, Eva Jolly, MEP, representing Europe-Ecologic-the Greens, (EELV) got 2.31 percent, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, Mayor of Yerre and MP, of DLR-Debout La Republique, (Arise the Republic) got 1.79 percent, Philippe Poutou of NPA-Nouvean Party Anticapitaliste, (New Anti-capitalist Party), 1.15 percent Nathalie Arthand, of LO-Lutte Ouvriere, (Workers Struggle), 0.56 percent, and Jacques Chemirade of SP-Solidarite et Progres (Solidarity and Progress) got 0.25 percent. A record 80 percent French people voted in the election. As per the French election rule, since no candidate got the majority of 50 percent plus, the first and second candidates will fight it out in the 2nd round on the 6th of May. Before we discuss the prospects of each candidate - Francois Hollande of Socialist Party and Nicolas Sarkozy of UMP - in the second round, let us reflect briefly on the campaign and the results.

Nicolas Sarkozy

Sarkozy, the incumbent president is seeking a second term in the office. He is inclined to the 'right' of French politics. In the last elections in 2007, he beat his nearest rival Sagolene Royale of Socialist Party by projecting a stronger and more decisive profile. He appeared to be energetic and flamboyant. The same qualities let him down this time around. His hobnobbing with the rich, his abrasive and reckless personal life became too much

for French peoples' comfort. His reforms in the first term included reform of the universities, of retirement age, enabling citizens to question the constitutionality of law, and reduction in public sector employees. Furthermore, he threatened to pull France out of Schengen Treaty unless stricter border controls were put in place, and opposed gay marriages. However, Sarkozy was consistently behind the socialist candidate in the opinion polls, and stood second in the first round on 22 April.

Francois Hollande

In comparison, Francois Hollande presented himself as a moderate and balanced person without airs and exuberance. He was the leader of the French Socialist Party for 11 long years and withdrew from the position for the last five years after his ex-life partner Sagolene Royale lost the election in 2007 to Sarkozy. Francois Hollande has been in politics for about three decades climbing fast the leadership-ladder. He has been a sound manager of the party and an impressive orator. He had unveiled his detailed programme for the presidency on 26 January that contained 60 items. His major reform proposals include absorbing French national debt by 2017, by cancelling tax cuts and tax exemptions, raising the income tax to 75 percent for income above 1 million euros, bringing back the retirement age to 60, and recreating 60,000 jobs cut by Sarkozy. He promised better housing for the poor and making public lands available for housing. Francois

Hollande roared, "I am running for president to restore confidence to the French and restart progress". He came as a more secure and confident personality than Sarkozy who had a controversial personal behavior.

Marine Le Pen

National Front put Marine as its candidate. She succeeded her father Jean-Marie Le Pen who fought five presidential elections and even went to the second round in 2002 by beating the socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin to the third position. To the extreme 'right' of French politics, Marine appeared to be a diluted image of her father who spewed xenophobic and anti-Semitic venom. Marine's agenda included "national preference" (French nationals over immigrants) in access to jobs and social services, protectionism, withdrawal from European Union, reduction of immigration by 95 percent. Her targets were five million Muslims living in France; the Muslim population is highest in France in Europe. It is a big surprise for many that Marine could garner 18 percent votes and come third, beating the 'charismatic' far-left candidate.

Jean-Luc Melenchon

The Left Front consisting of the French Communist Party and the Left Party put up Melenchon as their presidential candidate. Melenchon's rise in the opinion polls has been surprisingly phenomenal; he rose from 5 percent in the beginning of the campaign to 17 percent at the end. Melenchon, a former teacher is known for his eloquence and oratory as also for his combative style; he commented that Marine was half-demented. His programme was public sector-driven enterprise and development. He advocated for a green and sustainable economy

with a "green rule" inscribed in the constitution, enhancing the power of the parliament, diminishing those of the president, and holding all elections on the basis of Proportional Representation

Francois Bayrou

Bayrou was the candidate from the centrist party-Democratic Movement, founded in 2007. In 2007 elections, Bayrou became third with 18.5 percent of votes, but slipped to fifth position on 22 April. Many had hoped that he would come third again and play a decisive role in the second round. Bayrou has suggested both cuts to tax exemption and tax raise in VAT etc, debt reduction through cuts in public spending. The other candidates did not secure significant size of votes to merit a discussion of their programmes, but all of them fought a political battle.

The Significance of Results

The significant result is the rise of National Front in the French politics. No doubt, there has been, of late, shift to the 'right' in politics all over Europe. In a country like Sweden, dominated until eight years ago, by Social Democrats, the rightist Sweden Democrats crossed, for the first time, in 2010, the 4 percent threshold to get parliamentary representation. They secured 5.7 percent and won 20 parliamentary seats. The increase in their popularity can be compared to similar anti-immigrant movements in Europe, like National Front in France. This is worrying. The European societies have been mono-cultural, but the integration in Europe, strife in the Middle East, globalization, etc have caused the influx of migrants to Europe, but the European politics and societies are yet to embrace with conviction

and confidence multiculturalism. The socialists in Europe will have to lead on it, or they will continue to politically suffer from xenophobic extreme right-wing backlash.

Another point to note is that no incumbent president has lost in the first round since 1958. So this is a historic defeat for Sarkozy. A bad combination of politics and personality let Sarkozy down. He was accused of undignified behavior which the French normally do not condone in public life.

The Second Round

Since the margin of victory for Francois Hollande is so thin, many commentators would argue that it is still an open contest. Sarkozy is a fighter and would fight till the last. Will he be able to pull out an ace from his sleeve?

A note from a comrade from French Socialist Party suggested that "Hollande is in a good position to win since he will get 90 percent of Melenchon's vote, 50 percent of Bayrou's, 75 percent of Le Pen's plus about 4 percent miscellaneous. He should win with 52/48 percent on May 6, but we face another two weeks of campaign and Sarkozy will fight till the last minute". Others would argue that it is really not over.

It is said that the French vote with their hearts in their first round, but with their heads in the second. So the campaign will be more on policies, rather than style or personality. But Sarkozy's personality is such that the campaign will be around style as much as substance. The style has dominated Sarkozy's five years in presidency. Immediately as the

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Brij Bhushan Tiwari

Samajwadi Party leader and Member of Rajya Sabha, Brij Bhushan Tiwari (71) passed away in New Delhi on Wednesday, April 25, 2012 morning. Brij Bhushan had taken oath as Rajya Sabha member a day earlier on Tuesday, 24th April. He was admitted to Delhi's Babu Jagjeevan Ram Hospital after he complained of uneasiness and severe pain in chest but could not survive. A large number of party leaders and MPs rushed to the hospital to pay their homage. Later his body was flown to his home town in Siddharth Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh where he was cremated.

Brij Bhushan Tiwari, Vice-President of Samajwadi Party was born to Ram Surat Tiwari and Gayatri Devi on October 13, 1941 at Jamuni. He was married to Nirmala Tiwari and had two sons and two daughters. He was educated at Shivpatti Inter College, Shohratgarh, St. Andrew's College, Gorakhpur and Allahabad University, Allahabad. Brij Bhushan Tiwari did M.A. and LL.B. from Allahabad University. He was Vice-President, Students' Union, St. Andrews College, Gorakhpur in 1957-58; Secretary Students' Union, Allahabad University in 1961-62 and President, Allahabad University Students' Union in 1964-65. He was very dear to Dr Rammanohar Lohia, who appointed him All India General Secretary of Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha, the youth wing of then Socialist Party and Samyukta Socialist Party. He actively participated in social, cultural and literary activities during his student days and took active part in the struggle for the upliftment and welfare of the youth, farmers, women, backward and minority

groups and against atrocities committed on them. He was jailed number of times in connection with various Socialist movements and Kisan Andolan and Satyagrahas and also during the Emergency of 1975-77. He was District Secretary, Samyukta Socialist Party, Basti, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) in 1967-68 and District President, Lok Dal, Basti, U.P. in 1973-75.

An agriculturist, an advocate by profession and political and social worker by choice, Brij Bhushan Tiwari began his legislative career by getting elected to the Lok Sabha in 1977 for the first time, as Janata Party candidate. He was elected to the Lok Sabh again in 1989 and also 1996. He represented Uttar Pradesh in the Upper House (Rajya Sabha) from December 2006 to July 2010 and was re-elected again for a second term on April 3 this year.

Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, M. Hamid Ansari, while paying tributes in the upper house said that "In the passing away of Shri Brij Bhushan Tiwari, the country has lost a veteran parliamentarian and a noted social worker. We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri B.B. Tiwari. I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed soul". He also asked the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha to convey the members of the bereaved family "our sense of profound sorrow and deep sympathy". As a mark of respect to the memory of Shri B.B. Tiwari, Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day without transacting any business on 25th April.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh, accompanied with senior Congress leaders, visited Samajwadi Party's Delhi office and laid a wreath on the departed leader's body. Senior leaders and MPs such as Ram Vilas Paswan, Rasheed Masood, Sitaram Yechury, Devi Prasad Tripathi and Forward Block leader Debabrta Biswas also paid there condolences.

Brij Bhushan Tiwari was Samajwadi Party's national vice-president and the brain behind its manifesto and cadre training. As the news reached the SP headquarters in Lucknow, the party flag was lowered as a mark of respect to the departed soul. Later, at a condolence meeting, which was attended by party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, rich tributes were paid to the leader hailing his life of simplicity and dedication to socialist movement. In his condolence message Mulayam Singh Yadav hailed him as great socialist leader who always stood for the rights of the students, farmers and downtrodden. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav said that despite being a senior leader Tiwari was always available to him.

Tiwari had visited party office two days ago before leaving for New Delhi to take oath for his second stint in Rajya Sabha. "We had a very lively discussion. We congratulated him for his Rajya Sabha membership and he even offered sweets to us," remembered party spokesperson Rajendra Choudhary. In his condolence message, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar described "Tiwari as a renowned politician and a social activist", whose "death has caused irreparable loss to politics".

– **Qurban Ali**

The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster Is Far From Over

Robert Alvarez

More than a year after the Fukushima nuclear power disaster began, the news media is just beginning to grasp that the dangers to Japan and the rest of the world are far from over. After repeated warnings by former senior Japanese officials, nuclear experts, and now a U.S. Senator, it's sinking in that the irradiated nuclear fuel stored in spent fuel pools amidst the reactor ruins pose far greater dangers than the molten cores.

Nearly all of the 10,893 spent fuel assemblies sit in pools vulnerable to future earthquakes, with roughly 85 times more long-lived radioactivity than released at Chernobyl

Several pools are 100 feet above the ground and are completely open to the atmosphere because the reactor buildings were demolished by explosions. The pools could possibly topple or collapse from structural damage coupled with another powerful earthquake.

The loss of water exposing the spent fuel will result in overheating and can cause melting and ignite its zirconium metal cladding resulting in a fire that could deposit large amounts of radioactive materials over hundreds, if not thousands of miles.

This was not lost on Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), who after visiting the site on April 6, wrote to Japan's U.S. ambassador, Ichiro Fujusaki, that "loss of containment in any of these pools... could result an even larger release of radiation than the nuclear accident."

The urgency of the situation is underscored by the ongoing seismic activity where 13 earthquakes of magnitude 4.0-5.7 have occurred off the northeast coast of Japan between April 14 and 17. This has been the norm since the first quake and tsunami hit the Dai-Ichi site on March 11 of last year. Larger quakes are expected closer to the power plant.

Spent nuclear fuel is extraordinarily radioactive and must be handled with great care. In a matter of seconds, an unprotected person one foot away from a single freshly removed spent fuel assembly would receive a lethal dose of radiation within seconds. As one of the most dangerous materials on the planet, spent reactor fuel requires permanent geological isolation to protect humans for thousands of years.

It's been 26 years, since the Chernobyl reactor exploded and caught fire releasing enormous amounts of radioactive debris - seriously contaminating areas over a thousand miles away. Chernobyl revealed the folly of not having an extra barrier of thick concrete and steel surrounding the reactor core that is required for modern plants, in the U.S., Japan and elsewhere. The Fukushima Dai-Ichi accident revealed the folly of operating several nuclear power plants in a high consequence earthquake zone while storing huge amounts of highly radioactive spent fuel in vulnerable pools, high above the ground.

What both accidents have in common is widespread

environmental contamination from cesium-137. With a half-life of 30, years, Cs-137 gives off penetrating radiation, as it decays and can remain dangerous for hundreds of years. Once in the environment, it mimics potassium as it accumulates in the food chain. When it enters the human body, about 75 percent lodges in muscle tissue, with, perhaps, the most important muscle being the heart.

Last week, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) revealed plans to remove 2,274 spent fuel assemblies from the damaged reactors that will probably take at least a decade to accomplish. The first priority will be removal of the contents in Pool No. 4. This pool is structurally damaged and contains about 10 times more cesium-137 than released at Chernobyl. Removal of SNF from the No. 4 reactor is optimistically expected to begin at the end of 2013. A significant amount of construction to remove debris and reinforce the structurally-damaged reactor buildings, especially the fuel-handling areas, will be required.

Also, it is not safe to keep 1,882 spent fuel assemblies containing ~57 million curies of long-lived radioactivity, including nearly 15 times more cs-137 than released at Chernobyl in the elevated pools at reactors 5, 6, and 7, which did not experience meltdowns and explosions.

The main reason why there is so much spent fuel at the Da-Ichi site is that the plan to send it off for nuclear recycling has collapsed. It was supposed to go to the incomplete

Rokkasho reprocessing plant, just south of the Fukushima nuclear site, where plutonium would be extracted as a fuel for “fast” reactors. This scheme is based on long discredited assumptions that world uranium supplies would be rapidly exhausted and that a new generation of “fast” reactors, which held the promise of making more fuel than they use, would be needed. Over the past 20 years the Rokkasho’s costs have tripled along with 18 major delays. World uranium supplies are far from depleted. Moreover, in November of last year, Japan’s “fast” reactor project at Monju was cancelled for cost and safety reasons - dealing a major blow to this whole scheme.

The stark reality, if TEPCO’s plan is realized, is that nearly all of the spent fuel at the Da-Ichi containing some of the largest concentrations of radioactivity on the planet will remain indefinitely in vulnerable pools. TEPCO wants to store the spent fuel from the damaged reactors in the common pool, and only to resort to dry, cask storage when the common pool’s capacity is exceeded. At this time, the common pool is at 80 percent storage capacity and will require removal of SNF to make room. TEPCO’s plan is to minimize dry cask storage as much as possible and to rely indefinitely on vulnerable pool storage. Sen. Wyden finds that that TEPCO’s plan for remediation carries extraordinary and continuing risk and sensibly recommends that retrieval of spent fuel in existing on-site spent fuel pools to safer storage... in dry casks should be a priority.

Despite the enormous destruction from the earthquake and tsunami, little attention was paid to the fact that the nine dry spent fuel casks at the Fukushima Da-Ichi site were unscathed. This is an important lesson we cannot afford to ignore.

Kabhi Haan Kabhi Na

Comrades were for establishing a Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) at Haripur, West Bengal. Mamta Banerjee and the local people of Haripur dashed their dream. Later the Left parties opposed the French assisted Jaitapur NPP. But they are now for the Kudankulam NPP in Tamil Nadu. Comrades want us to believe that the radiation from the Russian reactors in Kudankulam would be proletariat-friendly like the one in Chernobyl.

On 19 March, when thousands of police were mobilised by the state against the protestors, the CPI state secretary D Pandian said, “if you don’t want the nuclear plant to run, please come take your compensation and run out of this place”. Not a gram of arrogance has diminished since getting beaten black and blue in Nandigram and Singur.

Here is the record of their treachery: On 22 February, A. Raja said, “if America-based NGOs are playing a role in Kudankulam, then they should be isolated and action should be taken against them”. 1st March - Based on Dr Kalam’s recommendations, comrades wanted the Centre to ensure the safety of those in and around Kudankulam and allocate Rs.200 crore for development activities. On the same day, they announced their support for commissioning the Kudankulam NPP because power cuts were increasing, affecting all sections of society. Accusing anti-nuke protesters of “holding the country for ransom” D.Pandian on 13 March demanded the immediate commissioning of the nuke plant. On 23 March, they called upon anti-Kudankulam NPP protestors to give

up their agitation, as panel of experts appointed by the Centre and the State governments had vouched for the safety of the plants. On 24 March, Marxist state secretary welcomed the state decision to go ahead with the commissioning of the plants. On 25 March, demanding immediate commissioning of the nuke plant, D.Pandian said: “The apprehensions are borne out of ignorance. It cannot be cleared.”

Joke of the century from Comrade Karat: “The CPIM stand was that they were pro nuke vis-a-vis the first reactor in Kudankulam as that was a contract between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union. We would oppose the other 3 phases which are about to come up in Kudankulam as they were signed by agreements with the new government in Russia which has a Capitalist character and these were pure business deals”.

– Sankara Narayanan

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Statehood for Telangana

B. Sudershan Reddy

One of the mischievous arguments often propagated, and repeated ad nauseam without much thought, by opponents to the formation of Telangana as a separate state, is that formation of such a state would violate the federal character of the nation-state, and thereby violate the Constitution. This is far from the truth. It is indeed true that Article 1 specifies that India shall be a Union of States. However, that expression needs to be understood in the context of the very first line of the Preamble, in which the phrase “We the people of India” is used. Consequently it is to be understood that we, the people belonged to one nation, and constituted ourselves into a nation-state, with one citizenship and not into pre-existing sub-national politico-administrative units. As explained by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar,¹ the word “union” was chosen to indicate that (i) the Indian federation is not the result of any agreement of the units; and that (ii) the component units have no freedom to secede from it. While the definition of India as a “Union of States” indicates the important role that states, i.e., local politico-administrative units, have to play in governance of the people living in different regions of the Country, the Union itself not being the result of an agreement of units (i.e., states or any other politico-administrative units), and the Union having preceded the formation of such states, the power to create new states or alter the boundaries of existing states vested in, and

continues to vest in, the Union of India. The word “union” was deliberately selected by the Drafting Committee from the Preamble to the British North America Act to make it clear that the type of federation that the Constitution was creating was more akin to the Canadian type and not the type in United States. The Supreme Court has explained this very well:

“In a sense, therefore the Indian Union is federal. But, the extent of federalism in it is largely watered down by the deeds of progress and development of a country which has to be nationally integrated, politically and economically coordinated and socially, intellectually and spiritually uplifted”.

From the above, one could confidently state that how the geographic regions within the boundaries of our country are organized into local politico-administrative units below the level of national government is dependent upon the assessment of the Union of India as to whether the constitutional project is being best served by existing demarcation of states, or whether further or new demarcation is necessary. The sustenance of the hope that Union of India will always pay anxious attention to whether groups of people residing in different parts of the country are receiving appropriate levels of constitutional attention, and the benefits of proper constitutional governance, in various states is thus

an important and essential aspect of the structure of our Constitution.

It is in light of the above that one needs to read and understand the purport of Article 3 of the Constitution. In particular, it reads as follows:

Formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States: Parliament may by law:

- a) form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State;
- b) increase the area of any State;
- c) diminish the area of any State;
- d) alter the boundaries of any State;
- e) alter the name of any State;

Provided that no Bill for the purpose shall be introduced in either House of Parliament except on the recommendation of the President and unless, where the proposal contained in the Bill affects the area, boundaries or name of any of the States, the Bill has been referred by the President to the Legislature of that State for expressing its views thereon within such period as may be specified in the reference or within such further period as the President may allow and the period so specified or allowed has expired Explanation I. In this article, in clauses (a) to (e), State includes a Union territory, but in the proviso,

State does not include a Union territory Explanation II The power conferred on Parliament by clause (a) includes the power to form a new State or Union territory by uniting a part of any State or Union territory to any other State or Union territory.

The text of Article 3 clearly indicates powers of widest amplitude that have vested in the Union of India. Such powers are necessary to effectuate a better pursuit of the constitutional goals, and to assure to the people living in various regions that the Union of India has the constitutional capacities to discharge its responsibility of being the primary or ultimate protector of constitutional rights. The exercise of such power would be imperative where the people of a region have been denied the benefits of constitutional governance within the boundaries of an existing state, and instead been subjected to widespread injustices and discrimination. Such an imperative, within the constitutional schema, has to be seen as a command for urgent action, when attempts by the Union to mitigate the conditions of injustice and discrimination within the existing state have failed. When numerous attempts have been made, over decades, to ensure the benefits of constitutional governance to the people of a region, and they have failed, no reasonable government, functioning in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution, ought to shirk from its responsibility to come to the conclusion that denial of statehood to the people of such a region would be to perpetuate conditions of injustice, inequality, bondage and a social order not marked by fraternity or conducive to human dignity. The failure to act in such circumstances would

be to ignore the Constitution, and undermine its very moral authority. That would be tantamount to a clear fraud on the face of the Constitution.

One of the falsehoods propagated by those opposed to grant of statehood for Telangana has been that the demand for Telangana constitutes a threat to national integrity, especially the territorial integrity of the country. This is not merely a dubious proposition, but also an attempt to deny to the people of Telangana the solicitude of Parliamentary action to safeguard their constitutional rights. In a democracy, which we believe we are, the wishes of the people are essential elements of what is considered by Constitutional functionaries, such as the President, and institutions of constitutional governance, such as the Parliament. To declare, as a knee jerk reaction, the very demand for Telangana as even remotely anti-national is to deny the opportunity to the people of Telangana to express their views regarding how the promise of constitutional governance, and the hope of achievement of the goals of fraternity and human dignity, marked by conditions of justice, liberty and equality, are being denied to them, within the politico-administrative unit called Andhra Pradesh. When such a knee jerk reaction translates into brutal action by the apparatus of the State, against protagonists of statehood of Telangana, it would be reasonable to conclude that the Constitution is being denuded of the sanctity of democratic participation of the people, and also its moral content. For a body, allegedly functioning as a committee of inquiry on behalf of the Central Government, to recommend measures to squelch the voices of the people of Telangana, by

means unholy and unconstitutional, is to demonstrate the willingness on the part of many of those opposed to the grant of statehood to Telangana to defile the Constitution, and hence the nation itself.

The history of the struggle for statehood of Telangana is itself a testimony to the denial of constitutional governance in the region. The unification of certain provinces of the erstwhile state of Hyderabad with districts of the State of Andhra was itself opposed by the people of this region. This was so, on account of the fears of the people of this region that on account of their relatively lesser degree of progress on the political and economic fronts, they would become victims of exploitation by politico-business classes of the other regions being fused with Telangana districts. These fears were clearly recognized by the States Reorganisation Commission. This was also recognized by no less a person than the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was the spirit of patriotism, coupled with a belief in the promises being made by "gentlemen" from the other regions that made the people of Telangana accept the formation of Andhra Pradesh. There is also the not so small matter of the promise, by Panditji himself, that if the fusion worked to the detriment of the people of Telangana, then the only morally acceptable course would be to grant statehood to Telangana. For decades thereafter, notwithstanding the repeated protests by the people of Telangana, about injustices and discriminations perpetrated against them, and imploring the Union for assurances of constitutional governance that can come about only through the formation of a separate state of Telangana, the

people of this region have been subjected to horrific discriminations, and perpetuation of injustices on a vast and unfathomable scale. All political compromises, and even constitutional amendments, have been systematically frustrated at the very first opportunity by the ruling elite from the other two regions, the loot and plunder of resources of Telangana were allowed to continue unabated, and very few benefits allowed to reach the people of Telangana.

It is clear from the kind of constitutional analysis that I have engaged in, and appreciation of the history of the injustices wreaked on the people of Telangana, and their struggle for the promise of constitutional governance that statehood would imply, that not forming the state of Telangana for so long a period itself ought to be viewed as a constitutional failure of very grave purport. In as much as the Union of India has the primary responsibility to ensure that the benefits of constitutional governance reach the people of all the regions of this country, its failure to act for so many decades has to be discerned as a continuing fraud on the face of the Constitution.

On December 9, 2009, after another decade long struggle and articulation for statehood, it seemed to the people of Telangana that the Union of India was finally ready to undo the historical and continuing injustices. The statement issued by the Union Minister for Home Affairs, on behalf of the Government of India, categorically asserted that “the process of forming the State of Telangana will be initiated” and “an appropriate resolution will be moved in the State Assembly.” We rejoiced because it seemed that at

long last the Union of India has correctly assessed, as indeed the people of this region have been saying for decades, that the only way of assuring the people of Telangana the full measure of the benefits of constitutional governance is by the grant of statehood to Telangana.

In fact the second statement of the Home Minister, in the first week of January 2010, clearly underscores the fact that the Government of India had arrived at the decision to carve out the state of Telangana based on both the reality of historical injustices as well as the prevailing conditions of the people of Telangana. It is worth citing that statement in extenso:

“There are a number of misconceptions surrounding the issues that have brought us here today. There is a misconception that the Central Government acted in haste; that the political parties were not consulted; and that I, as Home Minister, acted as an individual. As you are well aware, none of these misconceptions is supported by facts.... You are all aware of the long history behind the demand for a separate State of Telangana. It is sufficient to refer to the report of State Reorganisation Commission; the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1956 and the amendment of Article 371(1) of the Constitution; the Six Point Formula of 1973; and the introduction of Article 371D in the Constitution..... You are aware of the proceedings of the Business Advisory Committee of the Andhra Pradesh State Assembly on December 7, 2009 followed by the proceedings of the all party meeting convened by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh later in the evening of the same day.”

(To be concluded)

(Continued from Page 8)

results were out, Sarkozy challenged Hollande to three televised debates. Hollande has been wise to decline it, although both face each other in the main debate on 2 May. Hollande has decided to “stick to his own lane”. Sarkozy started off well; was rated as the second most popular president since Charles de Gaulle, but then his approval ratings plunged low and remained so for the last four years. Just before the election started, 70 percent of the French thought negative of him. In a place called Bayonne, he was jeered and jostled so badly by the protesters that he had to hide in a bar until the riot police cleared the road for his safe passage.

But Sarkozy will attack Hollande as feeble and untested. In a post-election discussion, a socialist panelist however countered this by saying, Barak Obama in USA and David Cameron in UK did not have ministerial experience before they came to head their respective governments. Much will depend on the debate on 6 May. Both candidates are of the same age, 57, and entered the parliament on the same day, in 1988, and have faced each other before. Sarkozy has a formidable reputation in debates, aggressive and overconfident; Hollande, unflappably calm and quick-witted. On the other hand, the French have a lot of issues to grapple with and may not be swayed either way by a debate. Sarkozy looked tired and glum in the first round, but promises to give everything to it until the end. He echoes Obama’s “yes, we can”. Hollande’s campaign has been consistent and cautious. He is wary that the battle is not over, but tells his supporters, “yes, we will”. We will return to it here, in these pages, after 6 May again.

हार्दिक शुभेच्छा !

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तो दुःखांना आनंद देण्यात”

-कवी वर्डस्वर्थ

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Well-deserved snub

S. Viswam

Kettle calling the pot black
Kuldip Nayar

**Socialists and Communists
in India**
D. K. Giri

Statehood for Telangana - II
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**Vindictive Cases
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**Remembering
Gauri Shankar Rai**

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Those who have been watching the arrogant “holier than thou” postures of the Bharatiya Janata Party in regard to the election of a presidential candidate will draw a wee bit of vicarious pleasure in the publicly-administered snub to the BJP leadership by its alliance partners. Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj has taken upon herself the role of party spokesperson and electoral strategist for determining the choice of the presidential candidate. In that capacity she has been rushing to the press with pointers about the BJP strategy, and in the course of that exercise allowed herself to do some flip-flops. The BJP was the first party to talk about choices and options while all other parties maintained a dignified silence. Patently, Sushma Swaraj rushed in where others feared to tread. Initially, the party struck a pose of extreme reasonableness and amiability. In informal briefings to the press, Sushma Swaraj took the position that in case the Congress chose Pranab Mukherjee, the BJP, as indeed the entire opposition would not oppose his candidature. This line made the chances of the emergence of a consensus candidate brighter. Within 24 hours, the BJP position was to change. Even as the Congress, in its capacity as the dominant partner in the UPA initiated consultations among its

colleagues, the BJP was canvassing a new line, namely that no candidate sponsored by the Congress was acceptable. What is more, Sushma Swaraj, again speaking for the entire BJP leadership and on behalf of the NDA, said while Pranab Mukherjee was unacceptable because he was a Congressman, Vice-President Hamid Ansari was unacceptable because “he does not have the stature to be President.” By way of explanation for the sudden display of anti-Congressism, she said that accepting a Congress candidate would portray the party as lacking in aggression. “We are looking,” she said “at the 2014 elections and we do not want to give the impression that we have any truck with the Congress.” The Congress, she implied, was an untouchable so far as electoral contests were concerned. However, she suggested that should any other party, like the Samajwadi Party for instance, nominated former President Abdul Kalam, with the vice-presidential nominee being a NDA candidate, the BJP would be open to the idea. Heads we win, tails we do not lose!

Those who have been perusing media reports with a great deal of interest were dismayed not so much by the quick change in the BJP position vis a vis the presidential

*Between the lines***Kettle calling the pot black****Kuldip Nayar**

poll but by the kind of language resorted to by Sushma Swaraj in describing a leader who holds an important constitutional office. One's assessment of the stature or lack of it of any political leader is always subjective, but decency and courtesy demand that any public articulation of the assessment is avoided as far as possible. Hamid Ansari has a distinguished record of national service which by no means can be dismissed as insignificant. To talk of his stature or the lack of it in pejorative and unflattering terms does not behove any politician, least of all Sushma Swaraj who it can be argued with equal justification does not have the stature to be appointed leader of the opposition, bearing in mind the stature of personalities who have held that position in the past - her own party leaders like Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, for instance. Indicating that Sushma Swaraj had exceeded the margins of established norms of public conduct, the Janata Dal (United) leaders Sharad Yadav and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar snubbed her for her unedifying remarks. Hamid Ansari, said Nitish Kumar, has had a distinguished life, and Pranabda has spent decades in public life. The implication of his statement was that Sushma Swaraj had overstepped limits. Both Sharad Yadav and Nitish Kumar criticized Sushma Swaraj and the BJP making public pronouncements without prior consultations with the allies. Both pointed out, politely but firmly, that the BJP had chosen to "take a unilateral call." The JD (U) president went a step further. He said that the country was passing through a bad time. Everybody needs to exercise caution on this issue. Meaning that there was need for circumspection even in articulating anti-Congress theories. To add to the BJP's

Had corruption been the yardstick to judge, I would find no difference between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the two political parties which occupy the largest space in India. Both have been disfigured by too many scams, too many times. Still there is no end of them and their involvement. Both parties live in glass houses and they should not, to use George Bernard Shaw's words, change clothes with the lights on.

The Congress has been revisited by the Bofors gun deal payoffs after 25 years. The BJP has been exposed by the conviction of Bangaru Laxman, who once headed the party, in an arms deal. Yet the Congress and the BJP remain deficient in sensitivity. One rationalizes that the case has been "closed" and the other argues that the BJP has not, at least, put a gloss over the corrupt deal.

The reference is to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who covered the tracts so well that he left no evidence on the kickbacks, worth Rs 65 crore. Still the fact remains that both parties during their rule used the government machinery and intelligence agencies to serve their purpose and squeezed out in the process even the last drop of legal or moral decency in the system.

BJP leader Jaswant Singh has demanded a judicial commission on Bofors gun scandal. But he should go beyond and include Bangaru Laxman's case as well to find out who were the people or

the organizations behind him. Even if the commission is appointed, it may fail to get at the truth because the records have been fudged and proofs destroyed. However, the findings may serve as a guide for the future to know how those in power manipulate the system to plug evidence.

Bofors gun scandal takes the cake. It would not have seen the light of the day if it had not been disclosed by a deep throat, a person who, in media parlance, gives information from within the system without coming out in the open. When the story about the Bofors howitzer deal was broken some 25 years ago, it shook the nation because the deep throat alleged that the commission was given by Bofors, a Swedish firm, to the then Rajiv Gandhi government to secure the deal.

The deep throat has again jolted the nation, this time by revealing his own identity - he is former Swedish police chief Sten Lindstrom - and accusing Rajiv Gandhi of doing his best to cover up the scam, although he did not take bribe himself. I have no doubt that he is telling the truth. In contrast, see the lies by Rajiv Gandhi who had the innocent hauled over the coal to shield the bribe recipients. Why he did so is obvious. He used the middlemen to channelise the money to the party or the family he wanted to reach. That the middlemen too pocketed a part of the bribe as their commission is understandable because they took the risk. In any case, Rajiv Gandhi

(Continued on Page 3)

saw to it that no harm came to them.

I think the biggest casualty in the Bofors scam is the credibility of the investigation agencies, particularly the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The Congress may be right that Rajiv Gandhi did not take any bribe. But there is no running away from the fact that a determined Prime Minister can mould the system, as he did in the case of CBI, like a wax in the hands of candle makers.

The CBI has no face to say that there cannot be a re-look at the Bofors payoffs because it was the main agency which whitewashed the scandal. It does not take long to understand why. The CBI is only a department of the central government. Several CBI heads, after their retirement, have written books and given lectures to admit that the government puts pressure on them to go this way or that way. The present CBI director may also spill the beans after his retirement.

The exoneration of Ottavio Quattrocchi, an Italian national, by the CBI is a black mark which will be difficult for the agency to awash. It helped Quattrocchi to escape from India and to rub off the connivance in the Bofors case which had become synonymous with corruption. Without any doubt, a few government officials, particularly in the External Affairs ministry, were aware of the scam but they looked the other side when there was an opportunity for someone to speak out. True, the Congress is more to blame for hiding the truth. But the Vajpayee-headed government cannot escape the blemish. Why could it not find any evidence although some of its trusted men visited the Bofors plant and talked to its officials endlessly?

Regarding the other case, a former union minister and a member of the BJP national executive, Laxman was convicted of taking bribe from a fake arms dealer for helping him win a fictitious army contract. He was forced to quit as BJP president immediately after Tehelka magazine made public the videotapes shot on March 13, 2001.

The real story is that the bureaucracy has become so malleable that the party in power can mould it in the way it likes. One adverse fallout is that the bureaucracy does not now follow any rules because there is no accountability. The Congress government obviously will not take any action against the officials involved. Nor would the BJP do so. Probably, the next government, whether that of the Congress or the BJP, may.

(Continued from Page 2)

discomfiture, the Shiromani Akali Dal, which has developed a vested interest in the presidential poll, also snubbed the BJP for articulating the BJP position as the agreed NDA position. The Akali Dal is reportedly sponsoring Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal for the vice-president's post.

To return to the presidential polls and the search for a consensus candidate. The message inherent in the modified BJP position is that the situation is heading towards a contest unless the BJP co-operates in building consensus behind Hamid Ansari and/or Pranab Mukherjee. Significantly, when A.K. Anthony canvassed the support of DMK leader Karunanidhi he had clearly indicated that the Congress was backing either Ansari or Pranab. At one time, Kalam had a good chance of securing the backing of all parties minus the Congress,

The press too has a lot to explain. Lindstorm says that he leaked the information but he could not do a journalist's job to probe and follow it up. Chitra Subramaniam did when she published stories with the information she got from Lindstorm. The media is a watchdog of the society, he says, but who watches the media?

The same question stares us in the Bangaru Laxman's case. The Tehelka magazine exposed the corruption through a sting operation. But it had to face the wrath of the government. The undercover journalist, posing as an arms dealer, was harassed and hounded. So was the entire Tehelka team. The weekly's office was raided and a series of income tax records opened. No journalist came to Tehelka's help because it is not a done thing.

but the latest BJP line has virtually eliminated him from the race. Thanks to Sushma Swaraj's line that the former president was eminently acceptable to the BJP, he will be stamped as a saffron lobby choice and thus unacceptable to non-BJP elements.

It may be too early to conclude that the ensuing race of succession to Pratibha Patil will witness a contest. It is still possible to build consensus over a good candidate, but as of now such a candidate is to be located. The position will achieve more clarity in the coming weeks. What is clear now is that the Congress may be able to install its nominee in Rashtrapati Bhavan if it can ensure the support of a handful of parties like the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the JD(U) and the Akali Dal apart of the UPA allies. The pre-poll climate seems to favour the UPA.

Socialists and Communists in India

D. K. Giri

In the first death anniversary of veteran socialist, Surendra Mohan on 17 December 2011, Sitaram Yechuri, the CPM politburo member said to a hugely crowded gathering in Delhi that socialists and communists need to “come together” for the sake of left unity and progressive politics. I was told by socialist comrades that he had made that suggestion twice before, although he had not spelt out what coming together meant.. Interestingly, Surendra Mohan also had written a fairly longish piece called, “Socialists-Communists: Need for a Continuing Dialogue.” Given that, in the present political context, communists have been decimated losing both Kerala and West Bengal, and socialists are scattered, although having greater political base, it is worth our while to explore if they could form an alliance, or even merge to form a broader and stronger national left party.

Past Steps and Mistakes

The dialogue between the communists and socialists had begun way back in 1967 after the general elections when the socialists initiated it in the interest of “democratic stability and peaceful social transformation’. The dialogue was disrupted when CPI made an alliance with the Congress in West Bengal against CPI-M. In June 1973, a three-day joint meeting between CPI-M and the Socialist Party was held and a co-operation agreement was signed. After JP launched the total revolution in 1974, the Socialist Party called a joint meeting of the Left parties for support. It was

followed by another meeting the same year in Patna. A joint statement was issued calling for consolidation of people’s opposition to the policies of Congress party. However, CPM did not support the JP-led movement. In the General elections in 1977, electoral adjustments were made with all left parties except CPI. Then the Left Front supported the breakaway group of Janata party led by Charan Singh which brought Indira Gandhi back to power. In 1984, the Janata Party president Chandra Sekhar tried to forge unity with the Left parties and seat adjustments across the country followed. Subsequently, the Leftists generally supported the policies of the National Front government led by VP Singh. Then, as a reaction to the new economic reforms initiated by the Congress government led by PV Narasimha Rao, the NF and the Left parties came together and the United Front governments were formed. In the wake of developments in Eastern Europe in 1990s, socialists resumed the unity dialogue with the communists. In fact, Madhu Dandavate and Indrajit Gupta were thinking together of creating the base for a broad democratic left party. A three-day seminar to discuss the new economic policies was organized by S M Joshi Socialist Foundation, Joshi-Adhikari Socialist Foundation and the Social Scientist, three outfits belonging respectively to socialists, CPI and CPI-M. Not much happened since although the need for a broad based left and democratic platform if not a united party has been expressed by comrades from both sides.

George Santayana had said, “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” And many mistakes have been made by communists and socialists in the past, especially in unity and alliance building. Any talk of future unity should be preceded by honest and thorough introspection. Such self-introspection must cover political tactics, ideology, policies, personalities, organization and mobilization. If the leaders rise above their ego and self-righteousness in reflecting on the past, a fresh beginning can be made to start a new progressive politics, and to build a viable left alliance and a platform.

The Alliance Tactic

The alliance tactic of both communists and socialists has been a matter of mutual suspicion as well as aversion by the public; both lack public trust, socialists on their party loyalty and the communists on alliance record. Communists follow the united front tactics which their partners are wary of. To recall, the united front tactics was first developed by the *comintern*, an international network of communist parties, created in the wake of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. According to the thesis of 4th World Congress of the *comintern* in 1922. “The united front tactic is simply an initiative whereby the communists propose to join with all workers belonging to other parties and groups and all unaligned workers in a common struggle to defend the immediate, basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie”. This allowed the communists to make alliance with

like-minded groups and parties. This tactic has been replaced by politics of entryism applied by Trotskyites in mid-1930s. Entryism was more sinister as it sought to capture the host organization. Patrick Webber defined entryism as seeking to (i) identify support for its own cause, and (ii) to provoke and exploit division within that group to its own political ends and in order to achieve power. This tactic was first employed in France when Trotskyites debated and engaged in entryism. In June 1934, Trotsky himself declared that his followers in France should try to infiltrate the French Socialist party. In India, the communists have sought to destabilize the centre by sneaking into a position of influence in an alliance, and then, capture the centre stage. This tactic of communists has been evident throughout the Third Front politics, the constituents of Third Front innocently falling prey to it. The split in the Janata Dal, the major constituent in the Front was caused by abetting the leadership tussle between Lalu Yadav and Sharad Yadav. Pulling down Gujral's government is another example - the former Prime Minister Gujral revealed this in an informal meeting at S.R. Bommai's house. No wonder they had succeeded in overtaking Janata Dal and getting their WB Chief minister Jyoti Basu as the PM candidate - it is another matter that they made a self-goal by withdrawing him. The Left Front became ally of the Congress-led front in 2004. They tried a similar tactic with the Congress party by suddenly withdrawing their support but the Congress party was too astute to cave in. During the freedom movement, communists had penetrated into the socialist party until they were exposed and removed. Such tactics will no longer work; the communists have to be more

consistent and reliable. Communists are suspicious of socialists' link with the Socialist International. According to Surendra Mohan, this was because in 1990s, SPD government of Germany, after the break-up of Yugoslavia, a communist state, quickly recognized Croatia as a separate state. But this suspicion is unfounded, as unlike *comintern* or its successor *cominform*, the Socialist International does not lay down policy lines or force them down the throats of its member parties.

But the socialists have had another problem which not only communists but the socialists themselves should be wary of. Socialists have a self-righteous holier-than-thou attitude, and have been consumed by big personal ego. Consequently, they have been notorious for splitting parties, so much so that socialists in India have been equated with anarchists. As a matter of fact, almost all parties in India have suffered splits, but socialists have had more splits and mergers than anyone could remember. Even at present, except the spectacular victory of Samajwadi party in U.P., socialists are not in power in any state, but there are very small socialist parties in existence; one wonders why they cannot become one party although they have worked together in one in the past. This socialist trait of 'split' has to be studied, understood, and removed as a political tactic in future.

Ideological Issues

Ideology in any country should be formed out of the existing social and economic conditions and the principles a party adheres to as ideology is a combination of principles and policies, former guiding the latter. Socialists have

sung the right tune in formulating their ideology; it is their leadership and organization that have let them down. In 1934, Socialist Party (Congress Socialist Party-CSP) was created within the Congress in order to radicalize the organisation. The Socialists preferred national liberation to social transformation as a priority. After independence, when CSP found that socialist policies were not implemented by the Congress government, it broke away from the party. Socialism has been internalized in India and written into its Constitution. Much of Indian culture and traditions of pluralism, secularism, diversities, synthesis contribute to socialism which is based on two main pillars - democracy, and social justice.

Communists have a major ideological challenge in India. They stayed away from freedom movement because of its bourgeois leadership, wanted a violent overthrow. They joined the socialists and sought to capture the party, but failed. Later, the communists took the parliamentary route, but continued with Stalinist violence in West Bengal, and Trotskyite entryism elsewhere. Lord Meghnad Desai, after the Left Front defeat in West Bengal, called them "democratic Stalinists". Although, they participate in parliamentary politics, communists have not evolved in their ideology, retain the name communist, which is long dead elsewhere in the world, and was never born in India. Communism is alien to Indian ethos and culture. Although, Marx was by far the greatest advocate of the poor, and against their exploitation, Marxism, interpreted and implemented by Lenin, Stalin, and others in the Soviet Union have proven to be unacceptable and impractical. Some

of those elements like, economic determinism, violent revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, theory of states based on classes and eventual withering away of state have proved to be utopian. It is time for the communists to seriously rethink on their ideology. They have taken a step in that direction in their recent congress in Kerala, and have talked of finding native route to their ideology. Good start indeed. But they need to come out openly and frankly that their ideology needs a thorough revision and their party a new incarnation. Elsewhere in the world, it has already happened, as seen in euro-communism, fall of soviet communism, and dropping off the clause of “public ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange, by socialist parties like Labour Party in Britain, removing any vestige of communism. No wonder, the Labour Party won three historic consecutive elections. Communists can no longer delay the revisiting their ideology they have to be true to themselves as a political party.

A deeper discussion on ideology, policies, personalities, organization, mobilization, the new left, and irrelevance of ideological divide between socialists and communists will be carried on in the second part of the article.

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The two-day conference of Bangladesh-Bharat-Pakistan People’s Forum (BBPF) was held in Delhi on 26th and 27th April 2012. Members of Parliament, social activists, academicians, historians, etc. from all the three nations attended the conference.

The inaugural session of the conference was held in Speaker’s Hall, Constitution Club, which was presided over by Debabrata Biswas, Chairman of the tri-national committee. Sitaram Yechury, M.P (Member, Polit Bureau of CPM), Moinuddin Khan Badal MP from Bangladesh and General Secretary of the tri-national committee, Dr. Barun Mukherjee M.P, G. Devarajan (Secretary All India Forward Bloc), Danish Ali (Secretary Janata Dal Secular), Dr. Sunilam (Kisan Sangharsh Morcha), Sheikh Rehaman, Bhauranjan Chakraborty, Manik Samajdhar, Sudha Reddy and others participated in the deliberations.

Sitaram Yechuri said that the British imperialism had succeeded in dividing the sub-continent but no force can divide the culture and the minds of the people of these three nations. He said it is a reality that three nations came into exist and having diplomatic relations. But the need of the hour is to strengthen the people-to-people relations.

In a declaration adopted in conference, the BBPPF urged upon the governments of Bharat, Bangladesh and Pakistan to take immediate and sincere measures to resolve the issue of exchange of enclaves, visa relaxation including introducing country oriented visas instead of city oriented one, rights of citizenship, rights and protection

for refugees, migrated labour, human trafficking and cross border terrorism. The BBPPF is committed to play its role for achieving these genuine demands of the brothers and sisters of Bangladesh, Bharat and Pakistan. The stoppage of arms race and disarmament should be the pre-condition for development.

The BBPPF is a socio-political platform of the people of these three countries, which believes that apart from diplomatic relation, the people to people relation of three countries is a must for sustainable development of this sub-continent. The BBPPF is for strengthening and developing solidarity and people to people relation, developing patriotic, secular and democratic people’s movement, strengthening democracy and anti-imperialist struggle, preventing any fourth country interference on the matters of the three nations and to assist to resolve all outstanding issues between these three nations through mutual understandings and dialogue. The BBPPF will make all efforts to unearth the real history of our independence struggle and the real cause and conspiracy behind the partition.

A 65-member committee was elected. Debabrata Biswas was elected as the Chairman of BBPPF again. Manik Samajdhar is the General Secretary. G. Devarajan, Dr. Sunilam, as Vice Chairmen and S.B. Choudhury, Sheikh Rehaman, Prof. Daler Singh, Prof. Chaman Lal, Gopa Mukherjee, Vijay Pratap, Brahma Prakash, Dr. A.K. Arun, Haripada Biswas were elected as secretaries of the committee.

Withdraw vindictive cases against Dr. Sunilam

The CBI in late March filed challan against 82 people including Dr. Sunilam in the CBI Court (Jabalpur) in an old case of eviction, burning of the houses of the Pardhi community, a denotified tribe, in Chothia Village, Multai, M.P. on September 11, 2007 by locals including politicians in the presence of the police and administration. The charge-sheet surprisingly leaves out the names of the police and civil administration officials who were present at the scene of violence since morning that day. Dr. Sunilam, then MLA from Multai, reached the venue at 12 noon nearly after 5 hours of the incident, even then he is charged with participation in the crime. We feel it is a vindictive move on part of the corrupt nexus between bureaucracy, political forces and the administration whose political and economic interests are being hurt due to Kisan Sangharsh Samiti's (KSS) active opposition to the Adani Thermal Power Plant and Pench Water Diversion Project in Chindwara District. In May 2011, Dr. Sunilam, Advocate Aradhana Bharagava and other members of KSS were attacked by the goons of Adani, where he sustained severe injuries and many of the villagers were later arrested without any

charges on the attackers. We demand strict action against these incidents after thorough investigation rather than harassing the members of KSS.

The resistance in Chindwara is against the vested interests of the state government and elected representatives from the region, so every attempt is being made to implicate the KSS leadership in other cases and this seems to be the reason for implicating Dr. Sunilam in this case too. It remains to be noted that after the police firing on farmers in Multai on January 1998 in which 24 farmers were killed and many injured, 67 cases were slapped on Dr. Sunilam. Till today hearings in nearly 16 cases are ongoing and in the rest he has been exonerated by the court or police has withdrawn the cases after they could not produce sufficient evidence.

We believe the cases of the violence against Pardhi Community must be investigated and culprits be put behind bars but in the name of seeking justice for a denotified tribal community, villagers and those not involved in the crime should not be harassed. It will only serve the interests of the capital and regressive elements conspiring to take away

the land, water and forests in the name of development and securing power and irrigation and break the resistance. There have been allegations of the involvement of the Pardhi community in criminal activities and necessary action should be taken against them as per law. However, it is unfair and highly unjust that the whole community was targeted and the administration connived in perpetrating the crime. It is also unfortunate that the evicted families have not been rehabilitated yet and they continue to live in camps bearing the stigma of being a criminal tribe. We demand that the Government of Madhya Pradesh rehabilitates them at the earliest and help them lead a dignified life and livelihood.

We have known Dr. Sunilam for years and stand in solidarity with Dr. Sunilam of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, a socialist, at the forefront of the resistance against the corporate takeover of natural resources and someone who has always fought for the rights of the landless peasants, farmers and adivasis. We are sure the truth will come out soon and he will be exonerated of the false charges and allegations against him in the ongoing case.

—Medha Patkar, Gabriele Dietrich, Prafulla Samantara, Sandeep Pandey, Roma, Suniti S R, Anand Mazgaonkar, P Chennaiah, Ramakrishnan Raju, Gautam Bandopadhyay, Geetha Ramakrishnan, R Leelavathy, Bhupendra Singh Rawat, Vimal Bhai, Mukta Srivastava, Rajendra Ravi, Madhuresh Kumar

Resist Globalisation

Indian government today is far more committed in aiding the corporates to plunder the natural resources at the cost of lives and livelihoods of the people. In its pursuit to promote globalisation, the government has allowed the unfettered abuse of the law and institutions to silence all those who resist this plunder.

Madhya Pradesh (MP) has witnessed the gravest wide-ranging of corporate plunder and genocides. Be it the Bhopal genocide by Union Carbide or the attack on people and natural resources by S. Kumars, Mahan Coal (of Essar & Hindalco) and many others, more recently by Adani. From firings on struggling people to fabricated cases and attacks

on activists, the saga goes on. In response the region is witness to the most powerful peoples movements, which have inspired movements all over India and are known in many parts of the world.

Dr. Sunilam, farmers' movement leader and founder of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti was falsely

arrested and imprisoned for three months in the farmers' struggle at Multai, M.P. where 24 farmers were shot dead and 250 injured by police firing in January 1998. The government lodged 66 false cases against Dr Sunilam and his associate farmers in one single incident of police firing in Multai. In May 2011, he and his associates were badly injured by company goons while protesting against Adani Thermal Power Plant and Pench Water Diversion Project.

Recently on 30th March 2012, the CBI has produced a challan against him in a case on the brutal attacks and evictions of Pardhis (denotified tribe) in 2007. Even in this case the High Court had ordered a CBI investigation in 2009. The CBI, infamous for it being an instrument in the hands of the ruling parties took three long years and deliberately implicated Dr. Sunilam in the said case.

We strongly feel that Dr. Sunilam is being set-up in a vendetta by the State for his fearless anti-corporate struggles and has unleashed this weapon to silence him and allow Adani and such corporates to flourish. We can all come together and debate his role, connivance or silence in the 2007 massacre, but cannot afford to play into the hands of ferocious corporates like Adani.

We are pained to note that certain activists from our own fraternity have launched a campaign against Dr. Sunilam at such a crucial juncture and are unwittingly helping the powers that aspire to single out Dr. Sunilam and silence the dissenting voice. Hence we appeal to all friends and supporters in the movements to bury the differences and join in solidarity with Dr. Sunilam to defeat this design of the corporate-led Indian State.

–Indian Social Action Forum

Remembering Gauri Shankar Rai

Rich tributes were paid to veteran freedom fighter, renowned socialist leader and a great parliamentarian, Gauri Shankar Rai at a function in New Delhi on 28th April 2012.

The meeting, organized by Gauri Shankar Rai Memorial Committee, was presided over by senior socialist leader Saghir Ahmad. Governor of Sikkim, Balmiki Prasad Singh, was the Chief Guest. A large number of his socialist colleagues and friends attended the function. Notable among them were Capt. Abbas Ali, Doctor Mastram Kapoor, Reoti Raman Singh MP, Ramjilal Suman, Harikesh Bahadur, K C Tyagi, Vikrama Rai, Sohan Veer Singh Tomar, Saulat Ali, Ram Bahadur Rai, Prof. Anand Kumar, Sardar Devendra Singh and Manju Mohan.

Speakers after speakers paid rich tributes to Gauri Shankar Rai and hailed him a true Gandhian socialist and a great parliamentarian, who was dedicated to the cause of common man.

Capt. Abbas Ali, while remembering Gauri Shankar Rai, revealed that both of them had worked together in Socialist Party soon after its formation in 1948, and they met in 1949 during the Kisan March in Lucknow led by Acharya Narendra Deva and Dr Rammanohar Lohia. Later they worked in Praja Socialist Party and Janata Party. He appealed to all those who believe in socialist movement to unite against the current challenges facing by the country and said that that would be a befitting tribute to the late Gauri Shankar Rai. He also called upon young generation of socialists to launch a movement against

economic policies of the Central Government.

Dr. Mastram Kapoor remembered Gauri Shankar Rai as a true socialist. He said that “today Indian politics has become by-polar led by either Congress party or by BJP”. He appealed all the socialists of the country to unite and establish a new alternative of progressive forces to establish Socialism in real sense.

A book containing Gauri Shankar Rai's famous speeches and articles by his many close friends on him was also released. He was very close to late Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and was his leader during his student days.

A veteran freedom fighter, Gauri Shankar Rai was born in June 1924. He was educated at Satish Chander College, Ballia, (Agra University), Kashi Vishwa Vidyalaya and Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad. He was married to Ram Dulari in June 1943 and had three sons.

Gauri Shankar Rai was associated with the Congress Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Congress Party, Congress (O), Bhartiya Lok Dal, Janata Party, Lok Dal (Ajit) and Janata Dal.

He was arrested for taking part in the Quit India Movement of 1942 and suffered imprisonment. He was also expelled from school for participating in the freedom movement. Gauri Shankar Rai was President, District Students' Congress, Ballia, Member, Executive Committee, State Praja Socialist Party, Secretary, State Praja

(Continued on Page 11)

May Day

Every year the May Day is celebrated by millions of workers around the world commemorating the the hard earned workers' rights after years of struggles. It is a celebration but also a time to remember the victories, defeats and challenges in front of the workers' movement even as we move ahead. Workers of the world unite! The slogan has assumed much importance and the meaning of work and labour has also gone through significant changes over years. Today nearly 93 percent of the workers are in the unprotected and unorganised sector who are still having to fight for their basic rights : social security, job security, pension, health and education facilities, eight hour working day, mandatory leaves, fair wages, minimum wages, right to unionise and others.

A hard fought right to form independent unions by the workers is under threat and so are other rights in the era of global capital pushing for maximum exploitation of labour and complete privatisation and contractualisation of work in neo-liberal reforms era. Millions of agricultural workers, NREGA workers, construction workers, fish workers, forest workers, hawkers, and many other non-traditionally recognised forms of workers remain outside the social security net and face problems with the authorities in forming their own unions across the country. In the same way millions of workers working in manufacturing sector face the same problem most recent being Maruti factory in Gurgaon, Rockman and Satyam in Dehradun and elsewhere.

Various studies, surveys and reports have accepted the fact that

this group of workers contributes more than 60 percent to the GDP. From road construction crews to domestic help, they work long hours for less than the minimum wage, receive no compensation for work-related injuries; and they receive no social security. About 44 percent of all unorganised urban workers are construction workers but they have no social security or job security, most of them migrants who stream in from remote villages where agriculture can no longer support their growing numbers. It is unfortunate that even though nearly 60 percent of the population is engaged in the agriculture, fishery and forestry but their total contribution to the GDP has come down to nearly 16 percent, indicating worst agrarian crisis fuelling large scale farmers' suicide and migration.

These issues and others were discussed at Rashtriya Jan Sansad held in New Delhi (March 19 – 23), attended by nearly 7,500 people from 20 States over five days. Members of People Parliament agreed that time has to demand rights and justice for the working class people who are running the economy today but remain unprotected and unorganised. Some of the significant resolutions from the discussions on the subject are following :

The honest producers of this country – workers, artisans, fisher folks, hawkers, and others in unprotected and unorganised sectors continue to be oppressed and often victimised. The 93 percent of workers who have been denied social security pensions should be given protection equivalent to the organised and secured sectors. There

should be access to food, water, shelter etc. to everyone equitably. Every service, every resource or development benefits should be equitably distributed.

The Provisions for pension must be extended to the 93 percent workers in the informal and unorganised sector workers, the current provisions are not at all adequate. The inequality in various pension schemes in different states must be removed.

There should be an end to inequality in the country. The politicians are working only for the interests of a handful of people, not for the interests of the masses. There shouldn't be a difference of more than 1:10 in the income of the people and a *ameeri rekha* should be determined. Tax should be levied on property and assets, not on small productions or incomes.

Right to Unionise is a fundamental right and it must be respected irrespective of the sector, work, etc.

All forms of forced labour must be stopped effectively. There is need of comprehensive social protection for all unorganised sector workers and fair wages must be given to them. The minimum wages must be raised to a living wage level and it must be ensured that these are remitted on time. Minimum wages should be as such that the whole family is provided for by the income of one. The below poverty line families' list should be enumerated by the members of the gram sabha or the electorate of the urban areas.

There must be provisions for Rain Basera (shelter homes) for

daily wagers and migrant workers. The migrant workers in cities who have faced eviction must be duly rehabilitated.

Under NREGA, work must be provided throughout the year. Corruption must be stopped in NREGA and different pension schemes must be introduced.

The ambiguities and contradictions in central and state labour laws must be removed. The labourers must be adequately represented in the labour boards.

The use of machines in PMGSY must be stopped and manual

labour be implemented so that the employment can be provided to workers and their skills can also be upgraded.

There is a need for changes in the hawkers policy and provisions must be made for them to be allotted shops and given rehabilitation as per requirement.

The domestic workers must be brought under the sexual harassment act and be provided protection and security under various acts.

Many other issues were discussed during the Jan Sansad which will take forward the struggle for the

development with justice and equity. The programmes emerging from the Jan Sansad will be carried forward in coming days by the movements and community groups in their regions and areas through struggles, mobilisations and advocacy.

On this Mazdoor Diwas on May 1st our constituent groups organise to demand the rights, dignity and security for the 93 percent of the working force of this country and pave the way forward for a most just and humane society. We hope you all will join us in taking forward the struggle for a life and livelihood of dignity for millions of working class people of the country.

—Medha patkar, Prafulla Samantara (Orissa), Sandeep Pandey (Uttar Pradesh), Dr. Sunilam (Madhya Pradesh), Gautam Bandopadhyay (Chattisgarh), Suhas Kolhekar, Vilas Bhongade, Subhash Lomate, Sumit Wajale (Maharashtra), Shaktiman Ghosh (National Hawker Federation), P Chennaiah, Ramakrishna Raju (Andhra Pradesh), Gabriele Dietrich (Tamilnadu), Vimal Bhai (Uttarakhand), Rakesh Rafique, Manish Gupta, Rupesh Verma (Western Uttar Pradesh), Prof. Ajit Jha, Rajendra Ravi, Bhupendra Singh Rawat, Vijayan M J, Madhuresh Kumar (Delhi), Gurwant Singh (Punjab), Anand Mazgaonkar (Gujarat), Mahender Yadav (Patna, Bihar), Nizam Ansari (Bokaro, Jharkhand), Geo Jose (Kerala) and others

May Day Started Here

Noam Chomsky

People seem to know about May Day everywhere except where it began, here in the United States of America. That's because those in power have done everything they can to erase its real meaning. For example, Ronald Reagan designated what he called, "Law Day"—a day of jingoist fanaticism, like an extra twist of the knife in the labor movement. Today, there is a renewed awareness, energized by the Occupy movement's organizing, around May Day, and its relevance for reform and perhaps eventual revolution.

If you're a serious revolutionary, then you are not looking for an autocratic revolution, but a popular one which will move towards freedom and democracy. That can

take place only if a mass of the population is implementing it, carrying it out, and solving problems. They're not going to undertake that commitment, understandably, unless they have discovered for themselves that there are limits to reform.

A sensible revolutionary will try to push reform to the limits, for two good reasons. First, because the reforms can be valuable in themselves. People should have an eight-hour day rather than a twelve-hour day. And in general, we should want to act in accord with decent ethical values.

Secondly, on strategic grounds, you have to show that there are limits to reform. Perhaps sometimes the system will accommodate to needed

reforms. If so, well and good. But if it won't, then new questions arise. Perhaps that is a moment when resistance is a necessary step to overcome the barriers to justified changes. Perhaps the time has come to resort to coercive measures in defense of rights and justice, a form of self-defense. Unless the general population recognizes such measures to be a form of self-defense, they're not going to take part in them, at least they shouldn't.

If you get to a point where the existing institutions will not bend to the popular will, you have to eliminate the institutions.

May Day started here, but then became an international day in support of American workers who

were being subjected to brutal violence and judicial punishment.

Today, the struggle continues to celebrate May Day not as a “law day” as defined by political leaders, but as a day whose meaning is decided by the people, a day rooted in organizing and working for a better future for the whole of society.

(Continued from Page 8)

Socialist Party, Member, Executive Committee, District Congress Committee, General Secretary, State Unit of Congress in U.P., Member U.P. Legislative Assembly, 1957-62, U.P. Legislative Council, 1967-76. Chief Whip of Opposition, in U.P. Legislative Assembly. He was Leader of Opposition, in U. P. Legislative Council, 1974-76 and was elected to Lok Sabha in March 1977. An agriculturist by profession, Shri Rai took keen interest in focusing the attention of the House on agrarian problems and issues regarding rural development. He also served as a member of the Public Accounts Committee of Lok Sabha.

Shri Gauri Shankar Rai passed away at Ballia in U. P. on 2nd May, 1991 at the age of 67.

—Qurban Ali

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Statehood for Telangana - II

B. Sudershan Reddy

Even though the meeting in which the above statement was necessitated by the volte face of political parties on their previous categorical support for forming a state of Telangana, and the stage managed agitations in the other regions, we were hopeful, maybe naively, that on account of the Home Minister acknowledging the historical truths that the Union of India would not backtrack on its decision. It seems that we had forgotten the admonition of Babasaheb Ambedkar that if constitutional promises are not kept, and constitutional provisions fail, it is not because the Constitution was bad, but because of vileness of man. The powers that be in Delhi have turned out to be as vile as the leaders of political parties in Andhra Pradesh.

It is now well over two years since the announcement by the Government of India, on December 9, 2009, that the process of forming the state of Telangana would be initiated. A statehood that every reasonable person, with a sense of justice and acutely aware of the possibility of injustice, had recognized was the moral and constitutionally right course of action in 1956, a statehood that was denied even as every experiment to make the fusion with other two regions work was scuttled by the political leadership, constituted mostly by the politico-business class from those regions – that statehood has been again put on hold, and the promise of the Constitution reneged upon. When the Constitution vests

certain powers in an organ of the State, it so vests it with the intent that it be exercised when the necessity arises. The necessity of a Telangana state had arisen way back in 1956 itself, when the state of Hyderabad was being split up; and had continued to exist through long decades of discrimination and injustice perpetrated against the people of Telangana in Andhra Pradesh. To delay grant of statehood to Telangana, any further, is to unambiguously pervert the values of the Constitution.

In order to cover up the constitutional fraud the powers that be, at both the national and state levels, have engaged in a series of steps and discourse that clearly indicate an unwillingness to heed constitutional imperatives and commands. The first step was the formation of a so called commission to examine the issues of Telangana. The report of the said commission, ostensibly comprising of people with knowledge of the Constitution, has been justifiably condemned by people of Telangana and various scholars as full of lies, and twisting of facts. One would have thought that truth was the platform on which fraternal feelings are built, except of course when it comes to the alleged “family called Andhra Pradesh”, in which case Telanganites are expected to summon fraternal feelings for the people of other regions even as the truth of injustices committed against them are denied. Not stopping there, the said report went so far as to recommend, in a secret chapter, that

Excerpts from Justice Reddy's (Former Puisne Judge, Supreme Court of India) Prof. B. Janardhan Rao Memorial Lecture on 27th February, 2012 at Warangal

the movement, news and leadership of Telangana be “managed” such that the people of Telangana are deprived of news of the actions of their fellow Telanganites in their struggle for statehood, their capacity to organize themselves politically decimated, their leadership given inducements to not pursue the just cause of the people, and above all even deny the people of India the necessary information to form a correct assessment of the situation in Telangana. In addition to all of the above, the said commission has also recommended action by the State, both unethical and unconstitutional, to suppress the voices demanding a Telangana state. The soul of our Constitution has been brutally gouged out.

As if all of the above were not enough, a pernicious argument has been put forward that, in order for the Union of India to exercise the powers vested in it under Article 3 of the Constitution, there needs to be unanimity and consensus amongst all political parties regarding Telangana, both at the national level and at the state level. This stance sets a dangerous precedent that would truncate the powers of Union of India to pursue the constitutional project and protect the constitutional interests of people residing in various regions in the event they are denied the benefits of proper constitutional governance in existing states. The requirement of unanimity and consensus among political parties to form a new state in order to ensure better constitutional governance for the people in a region would be tantamount to enactment of a constitutional amendment without the operation of Article 368. Such a position, leading to the truncation of powers of Union of India to effectuate better constitutional governance by

formation of new states or altering the boundaries of existing states, would be a violation of the basic structure of the Constitution.

The speciousness of the posited requirement of unanimity and consensus amongst all political parties can be assessed by analysing three aspects of the text of Article 3: (i) the meaning of the phrase, “Parliament may by law”, (ii) the implications of the phrases “expressing its views”, with respect to state legislatures, of the states whose area, boundaries and name(s) would be affected by a bill recommended by the President to the Parliament; and (iii) purport and implications of the phrase “within such period as may be specified in the reference or within such further period as the President may allow and the period so specified or allowed has expired.”

A written constitution sets forth, inter-alia, the permissible modes of conduct in analytically differentiable, but overlapping and intertwined, spheres of political, economic and social action. While the drafting of the constitution is a result of political negotiation and compromise, regarding how the people in a nation-state ought to govern themselves, once the constitution comes into existence, those compromises are etched as normative and legal guidelines for the conduct of the affairs of governance. One such etched feature of the Constitution are the powers vested in Union of India pursuant to Article 3. If one were to choose legal positivism as the principal constitutional attitude, then one could look at the Constitution, and its provisions such as Article 3 as the grund-norm in almost Kelsian terms of the pure law. In

a similar fashion, Justice Mathew recognized and articulated in his separate opinion in *Keshavananda* the powers in Article 368 to be such an element in the constitutional grund-norm. However, the majority in *Keshavananda* did not take the content of the grund-norm to be Article 368 read in isolation, but as being limited when read in the context of the Constitution as a whole. The majority conceived certain features of the Constitution to be beyond the pale of powers of even the amending bodies mentioned in the Constitution, and held that the identity of the Constitution of India can be changed only by the people of India as a nation, and not transient majorities. However, when a constitutional amendment does not alter the identity of the Constitution, i.e., does not alter its basic structure, then the courts have to necessarily accept a constitutional amendment as valid. This is so, even in instances where a constitutional amendment were to partly truncate some of the fundamental rights assured to all the citizens. Let it be clear that such constitutional amendments do not require unanimity or consensus of all political parties. Certainly it must then be agreed that the requirement of consensus and unanimity amongst all political parties, as being sought by Government of India, to enact a law to form the state of Telangana, pursuant to Article 3, is not a constitutional requirement. It would appear that the Government of India has concocted that requirement out of wholly fictitious cloth. However, it does not appear that the Government of India is really bothered by the damage it does to the constitutional schema by creating such excuses to give political protection to the party heading the coalition government in Delhi.

Article 3 is a comprehensive code, both in terms of unambiguity of its text, and also when read holistically with other parts of the Constitution, such as the Preamble and the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Supreme Court of India has clearly explained, in *Re: Berubari Union*, that where the case does not involve cessation of territory to a foreign power, the Parliament to effectuate any of the actions and consequences enunciated in Article 3 may do so by ordinary law. The exercise of powers vested in Union of India under Article 3 is ultimately within the exclusive domain of the Parliament, the reorganization of a state or states cannot be taken to mean it would violate fundamental rights of any citizen and further, the law enacted pursuant to Article 3 cannot be treated as a constitutional amendment. Clearly, the reticence on the part of Government of India to act upon the conclusions that it had arrived at, as of December 9, 2009, that the formation of state of Telangana is necessary to ensure constitutional governance for Telanganites, on the specious requirement of consensus and unanimity of political parties is nothing but a smokescreen to cover up its abdication of constitutional responsibility in this matter.

Indeed, a bill introduced in the Parliament pursuant to Article 3 requires the recommendation of the President; and where such a bill affects the area, boundaries or name of any existing state, the appropriate legislatures are provided an opportunity to express their collective views on the same. The phrase in Article 3, “expressing its views” is important. Expression of views cannot be transmuted into the requirement of assent. In fact it is of a lesser purport than even

the requirement to “ascertain”, which had been amended in 1955. Moreover, Article 3 permits the Parliament to proceed on the bill, even in the absence of an expression of views, as for instance the failure of state legislature to act within the time period specified. Even where views are expressed by a State within the time frame prescribed, the Parliament is not bound to accept such views.

The stance taken by powers that be in Delhi, that unanimity and consensus is required amongst all the political parties stands in stark contrast with the width of the powers of Union of India assured in Article 3. It is this stark contrast that gives us a measure of the degree of constitutional mischief brought into the discourse about statehood for Telangana. As a matter of constitutional provisions, when even the process of expression of views by the state legislatures can only be time bound, and the views of the concerned state legislature, if expressed, can be ignored by the Parliament in its wisdom (because it represents the entire nation), the stance of Government of India, in the case of Telangana, that unanimity and consensus is required amongst political parties is clearly an abdication of its constitutional duties and surrender of the powers of the Union of India.

The powers enumerated in Article 3, have been so vested in the Union of India to effectuate the project of governance of the entire country within the four corners of permissibility, and in accordance with the values enshrined in the Constitution. This includes the responsibility of ensuring that people living in various areas, who have been hitherto subjected to

constitutional neglect, are provided the opportunity to access the benefits of proper constitutional governance in a new state. Even though the purpose of protection of the constitutional project will be served by the forming of Telangana, and is in fact necessary, the excuses being made by Government of India are tantamount to curtailment of the width and amplitude of the power of the Union of India. By setting a wrong precedent, for pure political gains, the Government of India is actually truncating the powers of the nation-state itself. This is a de facto alteration of the basic structure of the Constitution. To deny the people of Telangana the right to a consideration of their constitutional status by the national Parliament, even after the Government of India had formed the opinion that forming the state of Telangana is constitutionally desirable and necessary, given the history of injustices suffered by the people of Telangana, is to undermine the democratic project in India.

To be sure the admonition to seek unanimity and consensus, where probable, may some times have both ethical and utilitarian justifications. However, the requirement of unanimity and consensus, as a necessity, for exercising the powers of Union of India as enumerated in Article 3 would necessarily be a curtailment of the flexibility that the Constitution itself provides in order to secure the constitutional project. It is not without reasons that the Constitution does not require unanimity and consensus in order to exercise the powers granted by it. No aspect of human affairs could be reasonably be expected to lead to a unanimity of views, and consensus, by all the stakeholders – the requirement of unanimity and consensus, ab-initio, is to foreclose

the possibility of collective action by the State. The stance by Union of India, that unanimity and consensus is required amongst all the political parties with respect to formation of Telangana state, strikes a blow at the very notion that the State would have to act to protect the interests of the people, of the entire country as well as in different regions, and afford them the protections of the Constitution notwithstanding political opposition. In as much as it strikes at the capacity of the State to transcend politics, even when the necessity to act exists, the stance taken by the Government of India with respect to formation of Telangana indicates an incapacity to govern the nation in accordance with the principles of the Constitution.

We must address the issue of damage that the retreat by Government of India with respect to its December 9, 2009 statement on Telangana issue does to the national institutions of governance. Our Constitution is a finely wrought balance between power to accomplish the goals of the nation enunciated in the Preamble, and the limitations on manner and modes of exercise of power that would undermine those very goals. Our Constitution was written by one of the greatest generations of Indians who had ever lived, and indeed arguably amongst the finest human beings in the history of mankind. What they poured into it was the collective wisdom of entire mankind, forged through the fire of the struggle for freedom. To upset that finely wrought balance in that Constitution, on the anvil of vile political opportunism, should surely count as a violation of the text and the spirit of the Constitution. The deliberate delay in formation of the state of Telangana, on

specious reasoning of requirement of unanimity and consensus, is to now set the grounds to shackle the Union of India from exercising its powers under Article 3 with respect to other regions, under new and exigent circumstances that may arise in the future.

Let us assume that for now, by following the unethical, undemocratic and unconstitutional recommendations of the hitherto alluded to commission on Telangana, the powers that be succeed in suppressing the movement demanding statehood for Telangana. What exactly would be the message sent to the people of Telangana? That the next iteration of the movement, which surely will come, would need to be far more intense? Where would such heightened intensity lead the people of this region to? Where would it lead the people of the other two regions to? And, indeed the country, to? What message does it send to other people, in other parts of the country, who are being denied the benefits of proper constitutional governance? That they need to start their movements at a level of intensity far above what mostly peace loving Telanganites have achieved so far?

Constitutional identity can be altered beyond recognition by abdication of constitutional responsibilities. Our Constitution is not merely a document that sets forth negative limits on exercise of powers by instrumentalities of the State; but it is also one that casts affirmative obligations on instrumentalities of the State to achieve the welfare of the people – all the people, and such welfare necessarily includes conditions for realization of justice – social, economic and political for individuals and the groups in

which they belong to and reside in various parts of India. Constitutional wisdom can be a razor's edge – of demanding the sacrifice of temporary political gains for the protection of constitutional values. To refuse to walk that razor's edge, even though the hope of constitutional governance would be lost for many crores of people, is the worst form of moral abdication. The precedent that the political sphere is setting, by delaying the process of debate on a bill for the formation of Telangana in the Parliament, is to deny the people of Telangana the protections of democratic deliberations guaranteed by the Constitution. This undermines the authority of the Parliament as the final institutional arbiter in the political sphere. We have seen the people of India respond to the appeals of respect for Parliament's authority to frame laws to combat corruption. Such respect is what sustains the constitutional project, because it still leaves hope amongst people that such constitutional institutions will provide the platform for their grievances to be heard, at some point or the other. To undermine the powers of such an institution, especially the powers that are explicitly granted by the Constitution and tied to a duty, is an extremely dangerous move.

In the end, I must express my fervent hope that there are still reasonable people at the helm of affairs who care about the constitutional values and proceed to act on the repeated promises made to people of Telangana. I am no soothsayer; and I cannot give you any assurances as to whether that will happen in any foreseeable future. All I can say is this: the struggle for statehood for Telangana must go on. To accept the argument that proper constitutional

governance is possible, with respect to people of Telangana, within the integrated state of Andhra Pradesh would be a betrayal of the people of Telangana, and also a suspension of all foundations of reasoned thought and action. Indeed, it would be an abdication of our responsibility as citizens of India, and a defilement of the values enshrined in our Constitution to not continue to struggle for the formation of the state of Telangana. The worst sufferers on account of the non-extension of benefits of proper constitutional governance in this region have been the socially and economically disadvantaged. To stutter in our struggle for Telangana would be an act of moral abandonment of our brothers and sisters, a denial of our responsibility to further the constitutional project, and a denigration of our own humanity, and indeed the humanity of the people of India. For nearly six decades we have waged a peaceful struggle placing hopes in the constitutional machinery. Ultimately constitutions fail or succeed on the strength of support of the people as a nation. Even as politicians betray the constitutional project, trust the people of this country – they are a great people who will not allow injustices and discriminations against Telanganites to be continued for long. As long as we adhere to the four corners of constitutional permissibility, we will always be moral claimants on the nation. The history of the people of this nation has been that they have always made good their moral debts.

(Concluded)

1. Hans Kelsen, *Pure Theory of Law*.
2. (1973) 4 SCC 225.
3. *The doctrine of basic structure*

was placed beyond any doubt by a unanimous nine judge bench decision of the Supreme Court in *I.R. Coelho v State of Tamil Nadu*, (2007) 2 SCC 1.

4. (1960) 3 SCR 250
5. *In re: Berubari*, supra n. 6; *Mullaiperiyad Environmental Protection v. Union of India*, (2006) 3 SCC 643; *Director of Industries and Commerce v. V. Venketa Reddy*, AIR 1973 SC 827;

Mangal Singh v Union of India, AIR 1967 SC 944; and *Babulal Parati v State of Bombay*, AIR 1960 SC 5.

6. See for instance the *States Reorganisation Bill, 1956*, in which the opportunity was given to the legislatures of the states to express their views within one month.
7. *Babulal v. State of Bombay* (1960) 3 SCR 250.



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India under dire pressure

S. Viswam

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**Police atrocities
on the rise in Madhya Pradesh**

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Emboldened by the steady improvement in India-United States bilateral relations, Washington is maintaining sustained pressure over New Delhi to force Iran to abandon its nuclear programme. India has had to suffer a great deal of flack both domestically and at the global level for sacrificing its traditional ties with Tehran in order to please the US. However, after its last anti-Iran vote in the United Nations, New Delhi has gone out of its way to maintain good relations with Iran. India-Iran relations have been built over the years on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests. Largely because of this, it has been possible for New Delhi to restore the cordiality in bilateral ties that were jeopardized by the anti-Iran vote. Just when the relations have again been placed on a sound footing, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton came visiting, armed with the proposal that New Delhi should drastically reduce the volume of its oil imports from Iran. According to Hillary, a similar suggestion has been made by Washington to China, Japan, and many European countries that purchase Iranian oil. This, ostensibly, is the latest American ploy to pressurize Tehran to give up its nuclear programme. The latest American strategy to push Iran into

a corner is to be tried out on India once again when another American emissary, the Special Envoy for global energy issues, Carlos Pasgat, will come calling on New Delhi later this month.

Washington's demands are usually accompanied by blackmail threats. In the instant case, the demand for action against Iran is accompanied by the warning that American companies might withhold co-operation to India in either building nuclear reactors or offering nuclear supplies under the Indo-American civil nuclear co-operation programme. Also, the US strategy for isolating Iran includes rewarding countries that reduce the quantum of their business with Tehran consistent with the US policy. Under a law enacted last year by the US, countries that reduce the amount of crude oil from Iran are entitled to some special benefits in trade with the US, and under this law Japan and a handful of European Union countries have been accorded the benefits. India has sought an exemption from this provision. The rationale for seeking the exemption was provided to Hillary by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he explained that India was aligned with the international community

*Between the lines***Babri masjid in the fore****Kuldip Nayar**

on checking the spread of nuclear weapons but would be guided by its national interests on securing its energy supplies. External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna asserted in his talks with Hillary that Iran is a key country for India's energy needs and New Delhi would have to bear in mind this fact while responding to Washington's pressures. There was also a consideration beyond the issue of energy trade: India has a vital stake in ensuring the security and stability of the Gulf region and hence had a strong interest in a peaceful and negotiated settlement of issues relating to Iran's nuclear programme. The implication of the remarks of both the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister is that persuasion rather than pressurization was the better option. Washington had to ensure that Iran pursues a peaceful and not military-oriented nuclear programme.

New Delhi has thus made its position clear both in regard to using the Tehran route to get its oil supplies and persuading Iran not to mount a confrontation with the West over its nuclear policies and programmes. However, the US pressure will be unceasing. New Delhi will come under pressure again when a team of US experts led by Mr Pasqat arrives in the third week of May to assess the trade-off between India's growing energy needs and reducing imports from Iran. The size of such imports is governed by the assessment of Indian refineries based on commercial considerations. Whether India agrees to reduce the volume of purchases of Iranian oil under US pressure or it steadfastly maintains its current levels may well depend on the outcome of the India-US interaction. As of

The demolition of the Babri Masjid, which did the greatest harm to India's secular ethos, has suddenly come to the fore after nearly 20 years. It indicates the intrinsic strength of the system which otherwise has been beaten because of indelible corrupt deals and the weak, faltering governance. It was such a deliberate defiance of law and morality that the destruction could not have been in oblivion for a long time.

Top BJP leaders like L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, linked with the demolition, have been accused of conspiracy. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has done a meticulous job to charge them with plotting and executing the demolition. True, the CBI has doubtful credentials and its control in the hands of government makes it still more suspect. Yet its work in ferreting out the truth in certain cases cannot be minimized or rubbished.

The Babri Masjid's demolition was not a hush-hush job. It was shown live on television networks across the country with hoary details of vandalism instigated by the Hindu crowd; the ladders and ropes used to bring down the masjid's domes and the joy of BJP leaders over the removal of the last brick are still etched in the memory of people. Uma Bharti jumped into the laps of Joshi, celebrating the destruction of the mosque which had become over the years a structure that stood as a testimony to the country's pluralistic philosophy.

The BJP leaders' defence is not on the demolition of the masjid but on the timing of the CBI report. The agency may be playing politics at the instance of some ruling party members. Yet, how does this lessen the crime of those who demolished the mosque or those who enthusiastically watched the spectacle? Whether the conspiracy of Advani and seven of his party colleagues is proved in a law court or not - the Liberhan Commission said something like that in its report three years ago - is not what matters at present. The issue today is that who are the culprits? The biggest relief is that those whose hands are soiled have not got away with it. The real worry of the nation has been that the whole matter would be effaced because of the Herculean efforts by the BJP and its ally, the Shiv Sena.

Even if the conspiracy to pull down the mosque is not proved, the fact of demolition cannot be denied, nor the glee of the BJP leaders that the cameras have recorded. It is well known that before the masjid's demolition, Advani undertook a rath yatra in northern India to prepare the ground and he, indeed, drove a wedge between the two communities, Hindus and Muslims. The killing of Muslims in the wake of demolition confirms the polarization.

In fact, the Muslims who after the partition were gradually joining the mainstream began standing back and wondering whether their entity was safe. The Babri masjid's destruction was a watershed in the relations

(Continued on Page 4)

between Hindus and Muslims and it made many Muslims hark back on the division and think that Pakistan was not such a mistake as several among them had considered. One top Muslims leader said after the demolition: I felt for the first time that I was a Muslim.

The BJP may have built its vote bank in the Hindu community or may have refurbished the image of Hindutva. And the party's success at the polls in UP shows that. But what the party demolished for a few seats was Muslims' implicit trust in India's secular polity. The common man realizes, if not the BJP, the harm it caused to the country's integrity.

Were the guilty to be punished, the loss of faith can be restored to a large extent. But the CBI's report may well be only a storm in a tea cup. The Manmohan Singh government has neither the will nor the strength to take on the BJP which may get away with the murder of India's secularism.

After all, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, who was behind the happenings in the state in 2002, may also be getting away with all that he did. The Supreme Court appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) has exonerated him completely. What made the SIT give Modi a clean chit may come out one day as the complicity of Advani and other BJP leaders has in the case of the Babri masjid demolition. It would be too late by then, but what one can do when political considerations have scrambled the entire system.

In the case of Modi, amicus curie Raju Ramachandran strongly disagreed with a key conclusion of the SIT that IPs officer Sanjiv Bhatt was not present at a late-night

meeting of top Gujarat cops held at the chief minister's residence in the wake of the February 27, 2002 Godhara carnage. It has been Bhatt's claim - made in an affidavit before the apex court and in statements to the SIT and the amicus - that he was present at the meeting where Modi

said Hindus must be allowed to carry out retaliatory violence against Muslims.

Raju Ramachandran has suggested that there is sufficient material to "proceed further against the Gujarat chief minister." Ramachandran

Prabhu Narayan Singh

Veteran socialist and trade union leader, former Member of Lok Sabha and former Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Prabhu Narayan Singh passed away on 9th May 2012 at his native place Varansi. He was 93. The leader, who was not keeping well for the last one month, was admitted to a private hospital in Varansi on May 3rd after he complained of chest congestion. His condition worsened on May 8th and he went into coma, following which his family brought him back to their house in Kashipura area, where he breathed his last at around 10:00 am, according to his eldest son Arvind Singh, ex- MLC. He is survived by his wife, three daughters and three sons. Prabhu Narayan Singh was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1959 in a by-election on Socialist Party ticket and was also power, health and labour minister in Uttar Pradesh Government in 1967 and 1974 respectively.

Prabhu Narayan Singh, born in Kashipura, Varanasi in 1919, was educated at Varansi, and did B.A. L.L.B. He participated in the 1942 "Quit India Movement" while he was a student at Banaras Hindu University along with veteran Socialist leader Shri Rajnarain. He was arrested and sentenced for three years' rigorous imprisonment. He was in jail for almost two and

half years and was released in May, 1945. Prabhu Narayan Singh was Premier and Vice-President of BHU Parliament. One of the founders of BHU Students Union, Prabhu Narayan Singh was associated with Congress and Congress Socialist Party. He resigned from Congress party in 1948 and joined Socialist Party. Prabhu Narayan Singh was member of Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, 1948-70, and later joined Congress party. He was elected to the UP Legislative Council as Socialist member in 1952. HYE got elected to the Lok Sabha from Chandauli in 1959 as Socialist Party candidate in a by-election. He was again a member of UP Legislative Council in 1964-70. Prabhu Narayan Singh was Cabinet minister of Labour and Industry Department in first SVD Government of UP led by Charan Singh, 1967-68. Later he joined Congress party and was Cabinet Minister with Health portfolio in 1974-77 under Chief ministership of H N Bahuguna and N D Tiwari in UP. He was associated with trade union movement and HMS. He was President UP Hind Mazdoor Sabha, member of Working Committee, HMS and later on it's President during 2002-2004.

India's many Eklavyas

Harsh Mander

too was appointed by the Supreme Court and there is no reason why the case against Modi be closed. Ramachandran concedes that "there is no proof that Modi's diktat was implemented by ministers or police officers who participated in the meeting. But making the statement was in itself an offence."

It is true that Ramachandran did not investigate and relied on the documents prepared by the SIT. But this is the job which was entrusted to him by the Supreme Court. So how can it be argued that the amicus curie's statement does not have any locus standi? The case may take long because there will be day to day hearing in the lower court, but the details of Gujarat riots will be in the public domain.

The BJP should realize that the two blemishes, one about the demolition of the Babri masjid and the other about the carnage in Gujarat, will not go away until action against the culprits is taken. Quotas will not give confidence to Muslims but what they want to be assured of is that they will get justice. A pluralistic society can do this at least to prove its credentials.

(Continued from Page 2)

now, there are pointers to suggest that New Delhi will not bend all that readily and easily to external pressures. While refusing to yield to American pressures India has also sent a message to Iran. The message, inherent in Mr. Krishna's statement, is that Tehran needs to be a little more resilient and shed its prolonged obduracy in negotiating a settlement with the West. This, Krishna hinted, had a bearing on the environment in the Gulf region where any turbulence, minor or major, had an unsettling effect on India's national interests.

In a country which has blocked educational opportunities to millions of children for centuries only because of the accident of their birth, a recent piece of innovative legislation offers a rare opportunity for civilisational atonement. The Right to Education (RTE) Act reserves a quarter of seats at the entry level in all private schools for poor and socially disadvantaged children.

But the antique story of Eklavya has painful contemporary relevance to an India in which elite educational schools continue to stubbornly resist entry to children born in disadvantaged families. Eklavya, a tribal youth, became a finer archer than the most accomplished Pandava prince Arjuna, merely by watching from behind the trees as Dronacharya tutored the princes. But when Eklavya revealed himself, he was commanded by Dronacharya to sacrifice his right thumb, so that he could never surpass any prince.

India's elite schools employed a battery of the country's most expensive lawyers to challenge in the Supreme Court the constitutional legality of the law which mandated compulsory admission for deprived children. They argue that it is the State's duty to provide public goods like education to the disadvantaged, and it should not shift its burden on to private enterprises. They enjoy the right both to run private educational institutions, and to preserve the 'special' (read 'exclusive') character of their schools. This, they claim, would be violated if they are forced to admit children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. Their

entry, they allege, would also dilute quality because of the poor merit of these children. The government will reimburse the private schools for every disadvantaged child, at an estimated Rs. 10,000-20,000 per child per year. The elite private schools claim that these amounts are too low, and would force them to raise fees, lower standards or reduce profits.

The Delhi government has implemented for some years reservation of 15 percent seats for poor children. But most elite schools, by opening separate afternoon classes for poor children with much poorer standards, have evaded their responsibility for creating more inclusive classrooms. Technically, they fulfil the letter of the law, but subvert its spirit entirely by keeping the disadvantaged children segregated.

The majority decision of the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of reserving private school seats. Many commentators immediately expressed alarm that this will fuel fee hikes, dilute merit and standards, and reduce the seats available for fee-paying children. Several principals spoke of apprehensions that the policy would affect class dynamics. "How will a student from an economically weaker section adjust to a school in an affluent area?" asked a South Mumbai school principal. "A child living in the slum will find it difficult to adjust to his peers from well-to-do families. He will remain a misfit in the bigger group... There will always remain a cultural difference,"

declared educationist Basanti Roy. The principal of Rishi Valley voiced similar concerns.

In its affidavit to the apex court, the Union government eloquently explains the rationale of the new law. A private school is not just a for-profit 'occupation'. As an education centre, even if unaided, it is integral to its social responsibility to contribute to "the development of more heterogeneous and democratic classrooms, where children of all social groups and categories learn to interact with each other, develop respect for diversity and differences, and move towards building a more tolerant and humane society". It affirms evidence that heterogeneous classrooms provide better learning to all children, both privileged and disadvantaged. My colleagues and I work with around 300 Eklavyas in Delhi, and a larger number in Hyderabad. These are girls and boys we found begging, picking rags or pockets for survival on pavements and railway platforms. With just a couple of years of care, they came to terms with their abuse and trauma, healed, forgave, gave up drugs, and entered regular schools. In these private and government schools, they have blossomed, studied hard, displayed many talents, and been found to really value education. Recently, 10 of them passed their Class 10 board examination. For children who had spent most of their childhoods on pavements or children's jails, it was a formidable achievement. I wonder how many children from elite private schools could match this. I do not understand how private schools claim that entry of disadvantaged children would dilute merit; all that it would do is to breach the complacency and conceit of privilege.

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Police atrocities on the rise in Madhya Pradesh

Farmers and those dependent on the land and other natural resources are constantly at the receiving end of the police violence these days. Land conflicts are the order of the day and it seems they are here to stay given the corporates' hunger for the land, water and forests for commercial exploitation and profit. We strongly oppose and condemn any such forceful acquisition of these scarce resources from people by the government and corporations. NAPM has demanded and continues to struggle for the repeal of the Land Acquisition Act and enactment of a national Development Planning Act. The proposed Bill, which is now with the Parliamentary Standing Committee, doesn't address all the concerns raised by us, hope the Committee will take note of the suggestions given by us. India as a nation can only have a healthy growth and development if we look after the interests of the farmers, peasants, landless workers, dalits, Adivasis and those living on the margins of the society.

Firing in Raisen

We strongly condemn the death of Harisingh, 35-year-old former sarpanch, on May 7 while a group of farmers blocked traffic in Raisen protesting the suicide by another farmer a day before and shortage of gunny bags. Bhagwan Singh Rajput, a farmer who was not able to sell his wheat for past several days, committed suicide in Barni Jagir village of Raisen on Sunday. It is ironic that while the farmers continue to die the state and central governments rather than providing relief and taking action are blaming each other. Farmers have been agitating since April 16th on this

issue but finally it is the death of farmers which has nudged the governments to act. It is extremely unfortunate that the dead body of Harisingh was not handed over to the relatives after post mortem and police, in their presence, burnt it on their own. The situation is tense in the villages since police is making arrests and has imposed curfew in the region.

Police Action in Jaithari

In another instance on May 5th, farmers protesting against the forceful land acquisition and demanding higher compensation and jobs for the land acquired for the 1200 MW Moser Baer Thermal Power Plant in Jaithari Tehsil were lathi charged and arrested. Nearly 27 people have received serious injuries and many more are injured. Farmers here have been agitating against the land acquisition for a long time under the banner of Bhartiya Kisan Union. The land was acquired from the farmers at the rate of Rs. 65,000 per acre, whereas, the farmers have been demanding a much higher compensation rate. There have been ongoing negotiations but the company has failed to keep the agreement. Jagdish Singh, Rampal Singh and 16 others have been slapped with serious charges under Section 307 and others, while more than 150 people have been arrested.

Mose Baer is currently developing the first phase of 1200 MW (2X600 MW) for which it has acquired 996 acres of land including 93.6 acre of forest land. In the second phase they intend to add 1320 MW additional capacity. It needs to be noted that Anuppur district has a high tribal population (36.4%) and as per the

J&K Committee of Socialist Party

clearance given they need to seek forest clearance under EPA, settle the rights if any under FRA. The Environmental Clearance was also challenged in the High Court citing irregularities and non-compliance with the PESA provisions since the land is in 5th Schedule. Anuppur is a water stress region but even then a thermal power plant of this magnitude has been sanctioned. The EIA report mentions that the 290 families will be displaced by the project but the status of Resettlement and Rehabilitation is also not known till date.

Government claims to be bringing in prosperity for all but the farmers and nature based communities continue to suffer due to large number of thermal power plants coming in Chhindwara, Singrauli, Jhansi and the dams on the Narmada and other rivers. It is high time that Chief Minister, Shivraj Singh Chauhan listened to the people and not sacrificed their lives for the needs of 'development' of the other regions. The attack on farmers and commons, and we believe there is a need to do a thorough review of the project, resettlement and rehabilitation, settlement of rights of the adivasis, if any, and pay adequate compensation to the farmers and others who have lost their livelihood due to the project.

Even as we denounce the heavy handedness and the police action against protesters we demand action and a judicial enquiry in both the instances and adequate compensation to the victims and stop harassing the farmers and unconditionally release all those in jail. It is unfortunate that while MP's pursuit of neo-liberal policies will only severely impact the food security of the nation and also is a worrying sign for the shrinking democratic spaces for

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A meeting of the Socialist Party was held in Nagrota on 22 April 2012. Party's national General Secretary Dr. Prem Singh attended the meeting as the chief guest and Balwant Singh Kheda, member, national executive committee, as the special guest. Rakesh Kumar Dubey of Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS), Delhi, was also present in the meeting. Dr. Prem Singh, in his inaugural address, threw light on the history, ideology, programs and relevance of the Socialist Party. He reminded the cadres present in the meeting that socialism, democracy and secularism are the basic values enshrined in the Constitution of the country. However, the mainstream political parties and their leaders are more eager to facilitate the corporate capitalism dictated by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation and profit hungry MNCs against the spirit of the Constitution. The Socialist Party has been revived to check this onslaught going on for the last 25 years in the name of new economic policies, economic reforms, liberalisation and globalisation. The so-called Shining India which emerged out of these policies is not only anti-poor but anti-national. He urged the audience to join the Socialist Party in order to establish a socialist, secular and democratic India by following the legacy of JP, Dr. Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev, Yusuf Maheraly and S. M. Joshi and strengthen the same in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Regarding the Kashmir issue, Dr. Singh said that problem became complicated because the media (including world media) and the political elite focused on the plight and fate of Kashmiri Pandits or on the excesses of the security forces. Should they have given due

focus on the killings of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership at the hands of militants the terms of discourse on the Kashmir problem would have been different. The traditional Kashmiri Muslim leaders, mainly in National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), killed as pigeons by the militants, were not only opposed to the separatist line but were rooted and nurtured in the composite, secular and pluralistic ethos of Kashmir. This tendency of ignoring their killings has benefitted the terrorists and hardliners only in their goal. Dr. Prem Singh expressed concern on the the plight of the common people, including Kashmiri Pandits, in and out of the valley. He suggested that there should be a people to people dialogue to reestablish the mutual trust and the composite, secular and pluralist culture.

Balwant Kheda explained the international aspect of the socialist movement and emphasised the need to relate Socialist Party's programs and activities with various socialist parties in the world. He made an earnest appeal to every body present to subscribe 'Janata', a pioneer magazine of socialist ideas.

After due deliberations, an ad-hoc committee comprising eight members was formed to do the spade work for the formation of a state unit of the party and the SYS. Tarsem Pal was nominated as the convener and Mohammad Faoq, Vijay Kumar, Surendra Kumar, Shyam Singh, Pooja Devi, Chaudhary Devraj and Devender Kumar as members of the committee. The convener of the committee has been authorised to include more members in the

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Good News for Socialists

D. K. Giri

Is the Socialist tide rising across the world? Some of the recent victories in elections, against popular perceptions, indicate that Socialists are beginning to occupy or regaining central positions in their respective national politics. Also, with the death of Communism and decline of Capitalism, Social Democracy is the only viable approach to organize societies and polity.

Let us look at some of the political developments. Of course, the most significant development is the spectacular victory of Francois Hollande as the President of France on 6 May, this year. The other is the victory of Socialist Party in Denmark. The victories of Socialists in Europe are heartening and promising for Socialists as Europe has been considered the bastion of Social Democratic movement in the world. When Europe is going through one of its worst economic crisis, a Socialist victory signifies that Socialists are no more suspect in managing the economy: balancing growth and distribution. The third development is rise of Socialism in Asia, which is supposed to be the natural habitat for Socialists. Akbayan Party joined the government in the 15th Congress (2010-13), and Samajwadi Party won a massive mandate last April in the most populous State of India, Uttar Pradesh.

Out of these three developments, the French Presidential elections is the most important and may have far-reaching consequences in the politics of France and Europe. I have written in Janata (29 April 2012), about the run-up to the Second

Round when Francois clinched the Presidency.

In the French Electoral System, there are two elections. In the first round, all the political parties put up their candidates and thereby one gets the idea how much support each party has among the electorate. In the first round, on 22 April, Hollande got 28 to 29 per cent. Then President Sarkozy got 25 to 26 per cent. The other three major candidates, the rightist, Marine Le Pen got 17 to 20 per cent, the leftist Jean-Luc Melencho got 10.5 to 13 per cent, and the centrist, Francois Bayrou got 8.7 to 10 per cent. The first two candidates Hollande, and Sarkozy went into the second round on 6 May, while all other candidates dropped out.

In the intervening period, the supporters of other political parties make up their minds on who they should vote for. Having no candidates of their own, the decision of the three parties was largely influenced by the consideration as to whom they would like to defeat. It was evident that there was a strong anti-Sarkozy mood in the country. Sarkozy's style and shifts in leadership was too abrasive for the French people to endorse for a second term. Many commentators contended that people voted against Sarkozy, not in favour of Hollande. Be that as it may, Hollande is the President now. Hollande won with 52 per cent. He got 90 per cent of Melencho's leftist votes, 50 per cent of centrist Bayrou's, 25 per cent of rightist Marine Le Pen's, and 4 per cent miscellaneous votes.

Another significant and worrying development is the poor showing of the charismatic leftist leader Melencho, who got 11 per cent of the votes, which was below expectation and the rightist Marine getting 18 per cent of votes. The leftists have gone down again. I have argued that Francois Mitterand, the First Socialist President gained electorally temporarily by aligning with the Communists but pushed French Socialist Party to the defensive until Francois Hollande became second Socialist President after 20 years. It will be interesting to look at the Socialist-Communist politics in France. Soon after the Second World War, the Communist Party was the single largest party in France and the Socialists played a junior role in left politics. Of course due to the brilliant tactics of Mitterand, some would argue, he took away nearly 3 million of the Communists by forming the "Union of the Left". He might have actually accomplished that goal, if he could have done that by building the Socialist Party on its own. Communists lost because of the decline in their appeal worldwide. Any track with Communists or even ex-Communists, like those in Sweden, puts mortal fear in the minds of the large middle class voters and entrepreneurs. However, as the 'leftists' are on the defensive now, the Socialists need to tackle the rightist National Front which is posing challenge to the evolution of French politics into a multicultural democracy. Francois Hollande has to occupy the centre-left ground by marginalizing both.

What will be the impact of Socialist Party's victory in France,

Europe and the world? One good news for Socialists is that Hollande won on a platform that promised a united genuinely multicultural France, and second, equally or more important, to pull France out of its economic downturn. Economy has not been seen as the strong point of Socialists, so it is a refreshing change. European countries are following austerity policies. But people do not accept them whether austerity is imposed by conservatives or progressives. In Romania, the conservative government fell over austerity measures. The conservative Czech government narrowly survived a no-confidence vote over austerity policy. Nobel Laureate economist, Joseph Stiglitz and others are arguing that no large economy has emerged from a crisis through austerity policies. It is encouraging to note that Francois Hollande and the anti-austerity coalition in Europe are emerging. The Socialist Presidents like Francois Hollande need to stimulate growth by balancing taxes and spending as he has promised in the election manifesto. He has to handle another important question of European integration. With 25 per cent of unemployment for the youth in Europe, there is a ground for support for populist and extremist parties. The question is whether Europeans should have more Europe, or less Europe. The progressive economists would say, "The whole is more than the sum of the parts". So the impact of Hollande's victory will be significant for France and Europe. If he manages the French economy and help stabilize Europe, he will have consolidated the Socialists in France for a long time.

For the Socialist fraternity in the rest of the world, Francois Hollande has to evolve into an international Socialist leader by taking greater

interest in Socialist International. The international body of Socialist Parties from all over the world, has a long and rich history, but is unable to play that international role. It has been euro-centric, with nominal presence in Africa and Asia. It has to extend its base to these two continents by changing its approach. It accepts membership of political parties only; that is perhaps why, in the absence of Socialist Parties in Asia and Africa, it cannot expand. A member of French Socialist Party is the Chair of Ethics Committee of Socialist International which is responsible for admitting new members: Socialist International could start in Asia and Africa by giving non-voting observer status to various think tanks, idea organizations that could inspire the birth of consolidation of Socialist Parties in their respective countries.

Francois Hollande is an experienced political organizer leading his party for 11 years. Generally viewed as moderate, the

former President Jacque Chirac described him in his memoirs as a 'true statesman' capable of crossing party lines. He had a grueling contest in the primaries with the party leader Martine Aubry; the contest could be likened to the fight between Obama and Hillary Clinton.

What is encouraging is that he said in a debate with his own party colleague and rival Martine Aubry, "I do not want a hard left, we are just coming out of five years of a brutal presidency, should we have a divisive candidacy, I do not want that. We need a solid left." This signifies his Socialist politics. Finally, Francois Hollande's political personality is nicely summed up in a recent biography called Francois Hollande: The Strength of Mister Nice, by a political journalist, "He is a man with strong ambition for the top job and yet at the same time one who shies away from conflicts and divisions". We wish you, good luck Comrade Hollande!

Historic Victory

ADS congratulates the French Socialist Party and Comrade Francois Hollande on their historic victory in the recent presidential elections. This is a great political development after the massive victory of socialist party in the populous state of Uttar Pradesh. The French Socialists occupy presidency after almost two decades disproving the assumption that socialists are down and out in Europe.

Comrade Hollande's victory vindicates the perennial values of socialism - equality, liberty and solidarity- which, if, reinforced with right policies will always appeal to voters across the globe and win elections. This is also indicative of increasing disenchantment with capitalism.

We wish Comrade Hollande good luck in these difficult times, as he leads France, a major European country and a significant actor in world politics. We also wish greater fraternal cooperation between India and France during Hollande's regime.

-T.K Oommen
President, Association for Democratic Socialism, New Delhi

Scope for Opposition's President

Mastram Kapoor

Forthcoming presidential election provides a golden opportunity for healthy change in sickly political atmosphere of the country. If this issue is taken lightly, it can give birth to problems which would be difficult to overcome. We are already passing through very bad days. Our 80 percent population is amidst the throes of poverty, although a small percent of our population is wallowing in vulgar wealth. The governments, central and state, are unable to ensure rule of law, having surrendered their responsibilities to anti-social and anti-national elements. The all pervasive corruption has eaten away the vitals of the state. In such a situation, to select our president by general consensus, rather than elect through contest, will tantamount to perpetuating the present regime and pushing the country to a disaster.

The word general consensus is good to hear. It gives an impression of divine will, like 'Panch Parmeshwar' system. But this denotes the feudal and king's court culture. In democracy election is sacred and tendency to avoid election in the name of general consensus should always be fought against. At present, the biggest of our political parties is being run on the principles of dynastic rule and other parties are trying to imitate it. This has encouraged the tendency of general consensus and discouraged that of contest which is not good, certainly, not in presidential election. All presidential elections except two of 1967 and 1969 were decided by general consensus. This not only

weakened our democracy but also reduced the dignity of the office and made the president, a rubber stamp. The first president of the republic, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, raised objection to this during the Prime Ministership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, but the controversy was settled through intervention of the Attorney General, which endorsed the role of a rubber stamp for the President. However it was ruled, that the President, being a symbol of moral authority can play an important role of advising and cautioning the Prime Minister. But the President elected by general consensus generally cannot play this role since he, as a rule, belongs to the ruling party and so remains obliged to it.

There is hardly an instance, where the President elected by consensus had criticized or shown displeasure to the government policies. The rift of Gyani Zail Singh with Rajiv Gandhi was purely on personal ground. Rajiv Gandhi had shown contemptuous indifference to the President and the President showed Punjabi impulse to remind him of his dismissal powers. K.R. Narayanan, however, criticized his government's policies in his penultimate Republic Day address and also sent a couple of letters to Narendra Modi, showing his displeasure, which APJ Abdul Kalam never did.

The two contests for Presidential election so far held had been interesting as well as of historical importance. In 1967, the contest was held between Dr. Zakir Hussain and Justice Subbharao

and was decided in favour of Zakir Hussain, by a narrow margin. Justice Subbharao's campaign was headed by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and other opposition leaders and they had worked hard to convert many Congressmen to opposition, but some of them were re-converted to Congress because Indira Gandhi had circulated personal letters to all and these congressmen considered this letter a great favour to them from the Prime Minister and felt obliged to vote for the Congress candidate. However, there was large scale cross-voting in this contest because no whip was issued. The unfettered expression of the opinion of the voters brought about a healthy change which broke the monopoly of the Congress and caused a power shift from upper castes to lower and middle classes. The second contest was between Neelam Sanjiva Reddy and V.V Giri which was caused due to sudden death of Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1969. This contest was between two factions of the Congress itself. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was the candidate of Old Congress known as Syndicate and V.V Giri was Indira Gandhi's personal candidate who later became Indira Congress's candidate. On this occasion also, no whip was issued and Indira Gandhi raised the slogan of call of conscience, which called upon all voters to vote according to their conscience ignoring their attachment to the party. Giri also won by a narrow margin and in the second round of counting after the second preference votes of the third candidate (C.D. Deshmukh, a Jan Sangh candidate) were transferred to first two. This

election also transformed the character of politics by starting the tradition of rubber-stamp Presidents, which is continuing to this day. It is worth remembering that no President except Rajendra Prasad was given a second term. Even in Rajendra Prasad's case Jawaharlal Nehru did his best to bring in Dr. Radhakrishnan in 1957, but a strong Congress Working Committee didn't endorse Nehru's wish and preferred a freedom fighter to a mere professor. Dr. Radhakrishnan could become President only in 1962. He also tried to earn a second term, but Indira Gandhi was not happy with his arrogant attitude, and it was decided not to give second term to the President.

The most important thing to note here is that no whip was ever issued in President's election and there was free voting. Indira Gandhi's 'call of conscience' was perfectly constitutional, although morally it was not correct.

In the present critical situation, we need to choose for an office of moral authority, a person who should be above party-loyalty though not necessarily apolitical. Such a person can only be elected by contest, since a candidate selected by a general consensus will remain obliged to the ruling party, which is not likely to agree to opposition's candidate, especially a party like Congress which had always been under the delusion that it has a divine mandate to rule.

All persons on which the Congress is trying to build consensus, are loyal to congress. Pranav Mukherji, Hamid Ansari, Meira Kumar, Karna Singh, AK Antony, all are or have been Congressmen. Even if Congress succeeds in roping in

Mamata Banerjee and Mulayam Singh, there still will remain enough space for opposition comprising of NDA and left parties, to maneuver for victory. But elections are not fought only for victory. Election is a moral duty in democracy and to run away from it for fear of defeat is immoral. However, in the present situation defeat for opposition candidate is not a given fact. With effort Opposition can win despite Mulayam's defection to Congress (which will be insulting to his mentors). Even if Samajwadi Party's total 68,812 votes are added to UPA's 4,60,191 total votes, it makes the total 5,29,003 and the remaining 5,69,097 votes can be acquired by the Opposition. In addition, if the whip is not issued (which should not be issued constitutionally), the Opposition candidate can also gain votes through cross-voting, since the cross-voting will most probably be from Congress to Opposition on account of DMK's complaint against the Congress and conscience- pricking among the socialists.

The question arises whether the leftist parties together with NDA members can present a common candidate. In my view there should not be any hitch in this because a non-party person well-versed in constitutional law who can exercise effective supervision over the government, can be agreeable to both sides. If the candidate is free from partisan loyalty, there should not be any difficulty in reaching an understanding. Ideological barriers can be overcome on national issues of wide importance. In fact, all revolutions, from churning of the sea of mythological time, to French Revolution, Russian Revolution, Indian Freedom Struggle and JP's revolution, were the outcome of the

cooperation between all factions and sections of the people. If all can join hand to fight the Emergency the present situation, which is as bad as Emergency due to the ruthless abuse of CBI against opponents, can also bring about that kind of cooperation. A candidate from South can give additional fillip to the opposition campaign.

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Ending the educational apartheid of centuries by democratising our classrooms could mark a watershed in our history, in the way that desegregating schools did in the US during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The debates which raged in America at that time mirror what we hear in India today: ranging from the encroachment of government into the private sector, to the idea that (economically or racially) disadvantaged students would simply not be able to cope in an integrated environment and should be kept apart.

At the heart of the resistance to admitting disadvantaged children to elite schools in India is the unwillingness of middle class Indians to accept the idea that their children, the children of their domestic help and a street child, will sit on the same school bench; study, eat and play together, and become friends. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke luminously of his dream 'that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. The RTE offers a dream for every Indian, that their children will grow up in a nation in which they will be judged not by their caste or faith or the money their parents have in their pockets, but by their moral and intellectual fibre.

Social Economy of Development in India

K. S. Chalam

Economic development is understood as a process through which both quantitative and qualitative factors influence institutions, organizations and culture. This is different from growth that relies purely on quantitative expansion in economic variables at the aggregate like GDP or per capita income. We see quite regularly in the media that the economy is growing at a particular rate to indicate the health of the economy and not necessarily the people. Economic development or simply development and its impact on the lives of the people is more important today as the measures used by economists are increasingly discredited due to the fact that they are too much concerned about quantitative issues rather than the human face. Realizing the limitations of the measures of development such as GDP, the UNDP initiated a concept to measure Human Development two decades ago with the intellectual support from scholars from the sub-continent, Amartya Sen and Mahboob-Ul-Haq. The concept is now being used, rather than the GDP, for understanding the development of people in a country as it takes care of health, education and income of the people as a composite index.

Disillusioned with some of the developments in Economics, a group of scholars started examining the ethical dimensions of growth about a century ago in France. They have developed the notion of social economy that studies the ethical and social causes and consequences of economic behavior of institutions, organizations, theory and policy. But this concept is now reduced to

that of a study of the third sector other than the private and public and is stated as the Non- government sector. However, it is not being used popularly in India though the civil society activities have increased several fold after 1990.

The above subject can be expanded a little further to understand how the so-called development brought changes in the forces of production or the capacity of the factors that are involved in the process of growth. In this context, we may also converse on ethical grounds as to whether these developments have really influenced the relations among different groups of people or the relations of production were made to change or have remained static. In a country like India with several dimensions and divergences, the social economy rather than measures like GDP, HDI or per capita income are more useful to learn about the impact of economic growth. It is also necessary to understand whether the basic structure of the economy and society as laid down in the Constitution is protected or eroded? It may be too ambitious to anticipate such a broad framework to be used by economists trained in neo-classical traditions either in India or abroad as the hegemony of English is significant as per scholars like Sen (see foot notes of 'Idea of Justice'). We may also find whether the development or growth in a country would really resolve the already existing contradictions or have widened them further. It is possible to examine the process without using the established terminology within the notion of social economy as it is concerned about the ethical

dimensions of development. In fact, the concept is being increasingly used to explain the expansion of the voluntary sector or the non-market segment of the economic activities in cooperatives, NGOs, foundations, agencies, etc., and has not been extended to examine the disparities and despairs that the growth has created.

The contributions of Fourier, St Simon, Proudhon and other socialist thinkers who had developed theories that were considered as pre-Marxian or utopian are being reexamined by some scholars in the context of the fall of Soviet model of socialism. Even Chinas' experiments with market socialism will soon find some serious problems in the area of social sector, particularly the growing unrest in society due to wide inequalities that are created now. Classical and neo-classical theories of development based on assumptions of free market have not been able to come out of the assumptions to come to grips with reality. In fact they are adding more assumptions than removing the two hundred-year old postulates to prove the real efficiency of market. However, it is increasingly found that the market as an institution has lost its neutrality between public and private sectors and is controlled by individual players in the market. Market is not considered today as an autonomous institution. Even neo-classical economists develop theories to facilitate state intervention to strengthen market and not otherwise. Further, the efficiency of markets is estimated on the basis of hypothesis without considering the wasteful expenditure

on advertisement, brand creation, bribery in contracts and finally loss of social security. Is it not meaningful to provide social security to people by controlling the tyranny of market and add the long term benefits of stability of society as a social benefit that might alter the so called loss of efficiency of market? The emerging notion of social economy under the above features in countries like India would enable the governments and the people to achieve human development much faster than the GDP. In fact capitalist development based on market has created more inequalities and tensions than any other system in human history. The human cost of tensions appears to be much higher than the benefits market-based growth has brought in.

For instance, sixty years after independence and centuries of isolation (from mainstream) the indigenous people of India or the native Indians who are called Adivasis still live in the same conditions, if not deteriorated ones. The implementation of recent laws passed by government after the reform agenda to protect the Adivasis like the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Dwellers Rights) Act 2006 clearly show the weaknesses of reforms or the official models of growth. It is reported as on January 2012, in tribal dominant states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, etc. the right of the Adivasis to land title has not been settled. In the state of Andhra Pradesh there are around 8 percent of tribals and 54 percent of their claims were rejected. There are reports of abuse of this Act by advanced communities who have used the loopholes in the legislation and rules to grab precious lands of the tribals, including the resource rich areas for mining. Interestingly the reforms have permitted the state

apparatus to cheat the gullible with the support of the mean bureaucrats. This is illustrated here to show that such things did not happen during the colonial period and is made possible due to the excess reliance on international market and theories of trade that promote exploitation of scarce resources disregarding the history and culture of the country. This would not have happened if one had followed the principles of social economy.

The hedonistic West has absorbed the so-called otherworldly India and transformed it as a materialistic nation by sponsoring spiritual activities and contributing to the popularization of our culture in English and other European languages. What else is needed to record the positive contribution of growth? Conversely, the aim of social economy is stated to serve the society without profit, autonomous management of economy with democratic decision making, primacy of persons rather than capital and redistribution of profits. It reminds us about the broad principles of state policy enunciated in our Constitution. In fact, our apex court has interpreted some of these to give protection to the poor that have been affected in the mad rush for sizeable gains in the economy disregarding the welfare of destitutes. In other words, courts are using occasionally the principles of social economy - our basic constitutional morality.

Interestingly, neither America nor the UK is interested in the notion of social economy though some Scottish scholars think about it. The proportion of the social economy in countries like Cuba, Argentina, Venezuela and a few others is slowly increasing giving way for an alternative theory of development. It seems India is not interested in it, though we boast of Gandhian

principles that broadly correspond to it. The overindulgence of some of our policy makers in the western market model (not even Chinese market socialism) of development has affected the structure and nature of our society and economy. It is found that the country is heading towards a "Dutch Disease" coined by some economists based on the experience of the Netherlands, a developed country. Netherlands or Holland or the Dutch has relied on an abundant natural resource rich natural gas deposit for economic development. The exploitation of natural resource has improved the balance of trade and contraction in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors due to the resource export boom is more than compensated for by increased income in the resource sector. It has been further characterized by high capital intensity that displaced labour and the increase in employment in mining has failed to compensate the workers who lost jobs in agriculture and industry. This phenomenon is called as Dutch disease. It was also experienced by Nigeria, Mexico and others but not by Indonesia. Scholars like Krugman, Matsuyama and others have argued that if some key manufacturers having strategic complementarities with others are obliterated by the natural boom like mining exports (may be even IT services), the economy may not only get back to its former development position but might even be trapped at a low level equilibrium. The recent legal tangles in the area of mining and other natural resources appear to give us an early warning to redesign our policies so as not to get trapped like the Dutch.

It is here one can look at the emergence of a new class of extortionists with strong political and bureaucratic connections during the reform period unlike the lumpen

proletariat who could be absorbed in any growing sector. It is reported that they have been able to distort state policies and can control governments to grab resources and even legal rights over public properties. They are emerging as partners in development and not the common man. The present model of growth and the measures to estimate their contribution to development is least bothered how the growth has taken place including the wealth created by the extortionists. The notion of social economy seems to be of some use in countries like India at least to record and protect the hapless victims of growth.

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those protesting these.

- Medha Patkar, Dr. Sunilam, Prafulla Samantara, Dr. Sandeep Pandey, Gautam Bandopadhyay, Anand Mazgaonkar, Bhupendera Singh Rawat, Rajendra Ravi, Vimal Bhai, Madhuresh Kumar

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committee as the work speeds up. It was further decided that the committee will start work with immediate effect to enroll members from all districts and hold programs of public interest.

Newly nominated convener Tarsem Pal announced that the next meeting of the party will be held in Srinagar in the month of May. He also assured the central leadership that he would work hard in the direction of forming the state unit of the party four months. The meeting was chaired by the Rashtra Seva Dal activist Kuldeep Singh. Vijay Kumar presented the vote of thanks at the end of the meeting.

- P.S.

Issues of Representation in a Democracy

Nishikanta Mohapatra

From experience of modern nation-states and organized governments so far, democracy has been accepted as the best form of government by the majority of the people on earth. The alternatives provided by totalitarian regimes under theocracy, monarchy, autocracy and communism have got discarded primarily for want of people's role in the decision-making process as well as the citizen's longing for freedom and equality. In that sense, democracy has been the champion of public participation, citizen equality and individual freedom. It has nicely evolved itself through the times and at different stages. For example, in the ancient times, in the Greek city states the population was small and the territory of the state was that of a present day village. So democracy during that period was direct and all decisions were taken in the public meeting through consensus or majority opinion. But in modern times, the nation-state with a large population and vast territory is impossible to be governed through direct democracy. Hence, indirect democracy or representative form of democracy has become the order of the day. Here people choose their representatives periodically to represent them in the legislative assembly and in the parliament and take part in the law making process on their behalf. So the aspiration of the public to be a part of the decision making process is maintained.

Similarly, democracy has manifested itself differently at different levels also. While at the state and central level it is indirect,

at the village level i.e. in the Palli sabha and in the Gam sabhas it is direct in form. Thus, we can say that democracy has suitably blended the citizen's aspirations of participation in the decision making process with that of the requirement of modern nation-state both directly and indirectly at respective levels. While direct participation in the Palli sabha has provided for accountable governance, it is the indirect participation in the legislatures or Parliament that has come under scrutiny in recent times. Both Anna Hazare and his lieutenant Arvind Kejrewal have exposed the façade of representation through the members of Parliament vis-a-vis that of Indian public and its aspirations. Doubts about effective representation further got fillip when Parliament ignored the overwhelming public demand for a strong anti-corruption law and failed to pass the Lokpal act. There are such numerous cases where the decision of the elected representatives has gone completely against the public sentiment and given rise to the impression that the present representation mechanism is not effective. The Singur case in West Bengal, Vedanta University case in Odisha, Jaitapur atomic power plant decision in Maharashtra, privatization of health and education sector, corporate farming and non-rationalization of prices of agricultural products, lack of sustainable and inclusive growth model; want of good governance and lack of endeavour towards egalitarian social order - are some of the areas where the juxta-opposition of the public mood and representatives' stand is evident.

In these circumstances, it is very pertinent to scrutinize the representative mechanism and to see whether any further reforms are due to ensure effective and accountable representation. Representative democracy to maintain its democratic essence must qualify the following tests:

The people's voice must be heard in the legislature (subjective representation)

The legislator must be a representative of the majority of the population of his constituency (vote share must not be less than 50 percent of the total votes polled)

The people must have a say on the continuance of the representative as he is accountable to his voters (continuance in office till he enjoys the pleasure of his voters - right to recall)

The representative must consult his constituency on all major issues before giving his opinion on them (proper feedback mechanism)

People must have a right to choose their representative in a free and fair manner (transparent election)

There must be scope to exercise proper choice of candidates (right to reject)

If we analyse the recent developments in Indian polity, we find dramatic shift in all these elements. No more people's voice is heard in the Parliament. The corporate houses and influential strata of the society have gained over the interests of the hungry millions. It is very much in evidence with increasing people's movements for their basic rights and the ultra-left

(Maoists) spread to wider areas. Whether it is movement for right to food and livelihood, right to forest land, right to water bodies, protection of agricultural lands from forcible acquisition, movement for right entitlement and due compensation or protest against corrupt system - everywhere there seems to be a disjoint between the public and their representatives. One can say the recent acts like Forest Rights Act, Right to Information and MGNREGA ect. are examples of effective and fruitful representation. There is no denying of it, but it happened only when the Government was pushed to the wall, and against its will. The rapid spread of Maoist network in more than 220 districts, basically in tribal areas and the administration's helplessness to tackle the issue for lack of local support speaks volumes about the absence of proper representation. Here, representation by elected candidates is only formal rather than effective. Submission of Jina Hikkaka, MLA from Koraput district of Odisha before the Maoists highlights this predicament.

Similarly, with multi-cornered contests the representative from a constituency is winning the election with 25 to 35 percent votes and he is not representing the majority of his constituency. A strategic mobilization of votes of a particular section can win him an election. Hence, instead of wider representation of interests and issues as well as public, the trend is towards narrow, sectarian, divisive mobilization. That is why caste, religion, region, traditional culture and interest groups are still dominant in our polity of modern times.

With a fixed tenure of five years, the representatives after winning the election are least bothered about the electorate and their wishes. The

elected representative neither turns up in his constituency nor consults the public with the understanding that his party will be fielding him again and the voters have no choice but to vote for him or his brother politician who is alike. Again the money and muscle power used in elections prevent the free and fair election. Political parties fielding candidates with criminal background further murk the representation system.

So present day representation mechanism has failed to maintain the essence of democracy. Rightly, the clamouring is for more accountability in the form of right to reject and recall. The civil society's demand for electoral reform and the present move to be consulted on important legislations can be seen on this account. Parliament must take these aspects into consideration and go for proper remedies. Otherwise, anarchy will be the order of the day. It should not take affront to Ramdev's utterances or Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejrewal's well researched arguments to protect its privilege. Never shoot the messenger. Rather it is high time for the Parliament to re-evaluate its performance vis-a-vis public expectation and national prerequisites. If necessary, it should take radical decisions even at the cost of losing its long standing traditions and conveniences of its members. Modern technology can be deployed to bring in cost effective, practicable solutions in our system. Some of the widely discussed and suggested reforms can be enlisted as follows:

Right to recall and reject

Proportional representation (50 percent requirement)

(Continued on Page 16)

An open letter to the Chief Minister Ms Mamta Bandopadhyaya, from the author of “Nandigram Diary”

I, Pushpraj, have authored “Nandigram Diary”, based on agrarian struggle at Nandigram. The book was published by Penguin India in 2009.0 an authorized witness of accounted incidents occurred at Nandigram, I am writing this letter to you with self acquired right.

When my book was published, allegedly a controversy was in circulation that this book had been sponsored by the anti-CPM forces. As these allegations were targeted to destroy the peace of any sensible human being, I, too, underwent through a phase of mental trauma for a significant span of time. Later, I was surprised to know that those allegations were leveled not by the CPM cadres; rather it was an attempt by a group of authors-journos - who had a view that I had been heavily funded by the Trinamool Congress, to settle scores with CPM.

After the publication of this book, a senior activist (a famous author) of Janbadi Lekhak Sangh - associated with CPM, raised some questions about my book and after rounds of dialogues, he was convinced that I had no mala fide intentions against any party. It might be possible that my book might have revealed the truth of Nandigram and tarnished the image of CPM, but comrades of CPM never took the writer as a matter of their personal antagonism. On the contrary, later one of the national leaders of CPM invited me at his Kolkata residence. The question arises as to why didn't any CPM leader or activist insult me with a sense

of taking revenge? To my mind, it happened so because the CPM is a political party of principles which can analyse its merits and demerits with politico-scientific vision. The CPM did not attack on my freedom of expression and possibly it discussed its mistakes that it committed at Nandigram in the light of my writings with an open mind.

On the contrary, in your regime - Professor Ambikesh Mahapatra was arrested after being roughed up by TMC workers. His fault was simply that he drew your cartoons! These acts of the government and workers of TMC were the violation of constitutionally bestowed fundamental rights of the freedom of expression. Subsequently, arrest of scientist Partho Sarathi Roy was virtually a shameful incident for a civilized democratic society. These arrests have virtually tarnished your image in the world. The statement of Mr Jyotipriya Mallik, the Minister of Food and Civil Supply, is very much objectionable in which he has asked TMC workers to socially boycott the Left cadres. The statement of the Minister has been circulated as the statement of TMC. No statement against this one has been issued from the TMC.

Mamtaji! What is happening, the so-called messiah of ‘Maa-mati-manush’ in your Paschim Banga? Perhaps, you have forgotten that in a democratic nation, you cannot declare your political rivals as your personal foes. Yes, it may be the artistic expression of Prof. Mahapatra

or crusade of Partho Sarathi Roy to save the slum-dwellers! In fact, these are the significant features of Bhadra-manush of Bangla samaj. I apprehend that if you will not handle these sensitive issues with your full senses, the chains of violence and counter violence will erupt and the government may not be in a position to control anarchy.

I shall love to remind you that it was none other than Mamta Bandopadhyaya - who had vowed to get justice for Nandigram victims. What have you done for Subedar Major Aditya Bera - who had gone traceless since November 10, 2007? Who is responsible to save his family from starvation or who is liable to provide pension to his wife? Who can save Tapasi Das of Gokulpur - who became handicapped by police bullet on March 14, 2007? Don't you or your government know the updated whereabouts of begging Das? Have you really forgotten the sacrifices of 96-year-old Rasomoi Das Adhikari, who with Matagani Hazara, whose house was burnt to ashes twice, fought the Nandigram battle - with the famous catchphrase of ‘Maa-mati-manush’? I think, your Trinamool was only interested in using this watchword as its party motto - to come in power in West Bengal. In order to respect legacy of martyrs, articulated honor to martyrs must be reflected through promises of the struggles.

Honorable Mamta Bandopadhyay ji! Please take my letter in good and unflustered spirit. Your political rivals are not your enemies. They

are also the citizens. And, if the rulers take them as enemies, it is virtually the murder of democracy and violation of human rights. You have promised the betterment of poor, labourers and peasants of West Bengal. Not only that, if you think that Marxism is the copyright of CPM or left parties, you are completely mistaken. Your mistakes are compounded by removal of Marx from the text and syllabus of schools, which has equipped poor to make them conscious of their rights. Hating Marxism will be treated as hating poors. Marxism, in fact, is one of the most important political theories that mankind has witnessed through the eras of civilization. If you and your party workers can bay for blood of Karl Marx – without seeing him, what will be the fate of the poor in your state? If not poor, then what about riches? Because you are seeing both of them! USA is ready to take over the democracy of India. Marxism provides best insights to fight against exploitation by American imperialism.

Hon'ble West Bengal CM! Hooghly has not dried up as yet. Make your vision comprehensive and try to visualize broader India in broader Bengal. Bengal will hardly develop without uplifting villagers and peasants and so is true for India without development of Bengal. Walk down your promising time of Nandigram and publicly apologize for your mistakes. A chief minister can never supersede a martyred armyman, a freedom-fighter mother or the scientist-teacher in Aurobindo's 'Always Ignited

Bengal'. Realizing mistake is never fatal. It will not only save your commitment and dedication that gifted you the power corridors of Writers', rather will save you from any oust. In order to honor the legacy of

martyrs, may I request you to reflect on my humble suggestions.

Jai Nandigram, Jai Sonar Bangla,
Jai Bharat,

With regards,

–Pushpraj

(Continued from Page 14)

Compulsory consultation on all important proposals of law with the people of the constituency

in each transaction

Transparency and accountability

Strong deterrent measures like Lokpal, citizen charter, etc.

I say to you, this morning, that if you have never found something so dear and precious to you that you will die for it, then you aren't fit to live.

You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be, and one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls upon you to stand for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid.

You refuse to do it because you want to live longer. You're afraid that you will lose your job, or you are afraid that you will be criticized or that you will lose your popularity, or you're afraid that somebody will stab or shoot or bomb your house. So you refuse to take a stand.

Well, you may go on and live until you are ninety, but you are just as dead at 38 as you would be at ninety.

And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit.

You died when you refused to stand up for right.

You died when you refused to stand up for truth.

You died when you refused to stand up for justice.

- Martin Luther King, Jr

November 5, 1967 at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

–Aman Biradari

janata

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Democracy zindabad!

S. Viswam

In celebration of the 60th anniversary of the first sitting of parliament on May 13, 1952, the two Houses, in a special day-long session last Sunday, passed a resolution unanimously resolving to uphold and maintain their dignity and parliament's sanctity, and make parliament an effective instrument of change and strengthen democratic values and principles. Cutting across party lines, members acknowledged the maturity of the people who have cherished democratic values over the post-independent years. It was a heart-warming gesture and the tone and content of the speeches on the occasion testified to the deep commitment which members nurse for democracy and democratic values and processes. A similar resolution was passed by both the Houses ten years ago when Parliament celebrated its golden jubilee, and on that occasion too, the honourable members, cutting across party lines, reaffirmed their faith in democratic values and processes and pledged themselves to make parliament an effective instrument of change and enhance the accountability of the government towards the people through the oversight of parliament. That pledge, as we all are well aware, was forgotten immediately after it was taken, and we dare say, though we wish to be proved wrong, the resolution adopted at Sunday's sitting would also be forgotten and parliament would revert to the by-now-well known ways of making parliament anything but an effective instrument of change, accountability and assertion of democratic processes. During the last decade parliamentary proceedings have remained chaotic, regardless of what members may say, and the honourable members, on both sides of the political divide, have certainly failed to maintain the requisite dignity and decorum articulated in the resolutions. It was in this context that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pointed out that the manner in which the MPs had conducted themselves had led to a sense of frustration and disillusionment among the people and lowered the prestige of the institution. Often enough, the very need for the existence of such an institution had been questioned and cynicism and skepticism had taken such deep roots that a debate rages within the country whether parliamentary system is suited to India and whether it has the potential of ensuring the welfare and progress of a billion-strong nation struggling for a place under the sun. Democracy has taken roots in India not so much

Between the lines

Presidential form of government

Kuldip Nayar

because parliament has helped to strengthen democratic values and processes but because of the people's deep commitment to the system, as manifested in successive elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. It is this commitment, and the exemplary manner in which the Indian voters, both rural and urban, have overcome cynicism induced by the conduct of the MPs and politicians at large, that has contributed to the survival of parliament for the last six decades. Indeed, juxtaposed against the fact that many countries which became free along with India succumbed to dictatorships or military rule, makes the survival of Indian parliament and democracy a notable achievement. Even so, while India can be proud of this achievement, it is debatable whether the parliamentary system is really suited to the Indian conditions and genius. This misgiving stems largely from the conduct of the MPs and the quality of their contribution to the betterment of the system. In their speeches on Sunday, senior BJP leader L.K.Advani and leader of Opposition in the Upper House Arun Jaitley noted that democracy had thrived in India because of the country's intrinsic culture of accommodation and tolerance and respect for dissent. However, parliamentary proceedings of the last several years show that political parties, including the ruling Congress and the main opposition, the BJP, have not set worthy examples of tolerance, accommodation and respect for each other's point of view. In fact, public perception has it that it is intolerance for dissent on the part of the major political parties that has rendered parliament an ineffective instrument of change

(Continued from Page 3)

Even the most optimist cannot escape the inference that India is destined to be a coalition-run country for many years to come. Its political landscape is so jagged that no party can make a simple majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the lower house. The Congress or the BJP, the two national parties which have been hovering around the 200-plus mark for a long time, may increase their tally by a few more members (or lose some) in the 2014 elections. Yet neither of the two looks like reaching the dream figure of 272 to rule the country by itself.

The scenario evokes despondency because the functioning of the Atal Behari Vajpayee governments of the BJP from May 16 to June 1 in 1996 and from March 19, 1998 to May 22, 2004 and those of the Congress from 2004 till today have shown that the party in power has to give in on too many critical points to ensure the support of the coalition partners to stay in power.

The Congress has constituted the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), while the BJP heads National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The very word, Alliance, suggests that it is a combination of parties which have chosen to stay with one another other in its own interest. The give and take is inherent in such an arrangement. Inevitably, what emerges is not the best but a

hotchpotch of different interests that may serve the purpose for the time being.

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee was bold enough to admit the other day that the economic reforms would have to wait till after the 2014 elections because what the government wanted to do was not acceptable to its allies. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has repeatedly said that his government has to follow the "coalition dharma," meaning thereby even giving up key projects for accommodating the wishes of its supporters. In other words, his is a lame duck government which has no option other than dotting the I's and crossing the T's for the next two years. The status quo in the face of rising prices and the declining growth rate is not a healthy proposition.

The nation has to think over the prospects coolly and responsibly. The country cannot make a rapid progress because the parliamentary system, with all its plus points, is too dependent on a majority which is illusionary under the circumstances. By shutting eyes to the realities, the facts cannot be denied or wished away. The parliamentary system in India has succeeded to sustain democracy but has failed to deliver the goods. The 60 years of the system, celebrated this week, has made members realize that the situation

as it has developed entails disruptions and walkouts. Is this good for a country which should be in a hurry to dent dismal poverty.

People should seriously consider the option to switch over to the presidential form of government. This too is democratic and transparent like in America and France. In this way, we will get the most acceptable face in the country because people from different parts of India would be voting directly for one person for a fixed tenure, say five years. He or she in turn would have all the attention and time to rule the country, not dependent on coalition or regional parties.

The President would not have to buy the support of MPs as the Prime Ministers of both the Congress and the BJP have done. In the process, the nation would feel more coherent and united. There will be parliament, the directly elected Lok Sabha and the indirectly elected Rajya Sabha, like the US Congress and the Senate. Powers of the houses can be redefined in the Indian context. No doubt, there is a danger that the President might turn into a dictator. But there would be checks and balances lest he or she should hijack the system.

India's thinking on the presidential form is flawed because it had the experience of Indira Gandhi who even as the Prime Minister became authoritarian. After having suffered the rigours of the emergency, parliament has changed the constitution and plugged the loopholes.

Likewise, the nation would leave no leeway for a dictator to

emerge once the presidential form is adopted.

In fact, the presidential form of government was debated at the constituent assembly. Many members favoured it while others wanted safeguards against a totalitarian government. But Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, stopped any further debate by arguing that India had become used to the British parliamentary system when they accepted the state assemblies and the central assembly before independence. True, he did not face any difficulty in his 17-year rule. This was because one, he himself was a tall person, loved by the people for having been chosen by Mahatma Gandhi and, two, the Congress was in power in practically all the states.

In any case, parliament has already undergone a change because of the legislation which has made the domicile qualification for the Rajya Sabha members redundant. It was laid down that a Rajya Sabha member should ordinarily be a resident of the state which returns him or her through its assembly. One decade ago, both the Congress and the BJP hatched a conspiracy and substituted the word state with India. How does India make sense when the Rajya Sabha is the house of states? By dropping the domicile qualification, the two main political parties have opened the doors of the house to money bags.

By doing so, the balance in the parliamentary system has been disturbed. The federal structure that the constitution framers had in mind has been demolished. Even the report by Justice R.S. Sarkaria on

the centre-state relations has not been implemented. The Prime Minister is ruling the country in the way the head of a presidential system does, without owning the responsibility when his ill-thought policies fail to work.

In democracy, it is important that people have faith in the system because otherwise the very basis of the state comes to be questioned.

The reason why parliamentary system is not working in India is the confusion of clear direction in the absence of a single majority party, or arriving at a consensus among different parties. The presidential system provides the alternative in a person who will lead and direct the country.

(Continued from Page 2)

and accountability. As against this perception, the fact remains that despite all its imperfections and shortcomings, parliamentary democracy has come to stay and the people retain sufficient faith in its efficacy despite the failings. The cure for the ills of democracy is more, not less, democracy. Honourable MPs vie with one another to ensure that their rights and privileges remain unassaulted. But, sadly, similar concern for the rights and privileges of other sections of the society escapes them. It is this absence of sensitivity that is responsible for parliament's failure to pass the women's reservation bill, and many other legislative measures. If the MPs mean what they say in their resolution passed on Sunday, they must demonstrate their sincerity by passing that progressive measure which will make parliament more representative and thus enhance its efficacy.

Is the Constitution a log book?

K.S. Chalam

It is reported that some chief Ministers in the recent meeting in Delhi on NCTC wanted the Constitution be reviewed to accommodate perhaps their grievances in a federal set up. Similarly, the Supreme Court in its fresh order on reservations in promotion has made the political class to appeal to the Prime Minister to amend the Constitution Art 16(4) may be third time in a decade. The occurrence of these episodes made us sad due to the exiguous respect paid to the Constitution by those who are supposed to revere and uphold its values. The Constitutional history of India indicates how we have evolved and adopted it in November 1949 in the Constituent Assembly. The federal structure of the country was already there in the 1935 Act. The Chairman of the drafting committee B.R Ambedkar was the only person who was eminently qualified at that time to take a view on the federal structure as he had already done Ph.D on Federal Finance under an eminent economist. Even Benegal N.Rao or B.N.Rao, Adviser was not an economist in the sense of B.R Ambedkar in dealing with not only economic issues in a federal set up and even the structural and ideological concerns. Ambedkar used to refer to India in all his writings as United States of India indicating the federal nature of the country. In this connection, one may find few disconnects here and there in the federal composition that may not call for a review. The Chief Ministers' conference, NDC meeting etc., are forums where such

issues can be sorted out if a hard headed Home Minister is considered as an issue, but not a review of the Constitution.

The Constitution is generally defined as a "frame work of political society organized through and by law, in which law has established permanent institutions with recognized functions and definite rights". The apex court and its learned Judges in the past have delineated the basic structure of the constitution. Though, legal luminaries and administrators like Shivasankar had expressed very serious reservations on such judgments due to the tilt given to Mathadipathis and elite, the fact remains that we are now following the arrangement. In fact, the partial view given to the structure without considering the social vision of the constitution and the preamble has been a subject of academic discussion in the country for quite some time. It is in this context, we may bring in the history of the social clauses put in the constitution. The country would not have emerged as the so-called Nation on 1st January 1950 without certain agreements and reservations in framing the Constitution. It is relevant to refer to the agreement reached between B. R. Ambedkarji and Gandhiji in 1932 and the first amendment made to the constitution under Art 15(4) in 1951 due to the agitations in the South on caste based reservations. The guarantees given to minorities under Art 29 and 30 can also be considered as the serious concerns of the nation. They are very fundamental for a nascent nation

that was emerging with several dichotomies in its social and political life. I feel that we should consider these as the "Social Contract" between the minorities (the vulnerable) and the majority or the ruling classes. If these agreements are not respected, the ideal of a unified nation might collapse at any time.

The visionary Judges of the apex court in the formative years of the country have shown great insight in to the Constitution with their wide experience, learning and maturity in delivering judgments dispassionately keeping the country's future. It is difficult to find such class of people now due to the quality of legal education, training and recruitment. The Judges to the High courts are appointed from anyone who has 'for at least ten years been an advocate of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession', or a judicial officer for ten years". According to one estimate 67 percent of the judges are coming from the category of advocates. It appears that some of them occupy chairs in the apex court with limited exposure. Otherwise, how do we understand the disarray in social jurisprudence in the country particularly in relation to caste based reservations?

Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy is respected and remembered even today for his exemplary clarity of thought and social purpose in his judgments. We may draw here the Judgment delivered by him in *K. C. Vasanth Kumar vs. State of*

Karnataka in 1985 which is relevant here in the context of the recent Supreme Court order on reservations in promotions. He said that, "Efficiency is very much on the lips of the privileged whenever reservation is mentioned. Efficiency, it seems, will be impaired if the total reservation exceeds 50 per cent; efficiency, it seems will suffer if the 'carry forward' rule is adopted...But, the truth is otherwise. The truth is that the civil service is no paradise and the upper echelons belonging to the chosen classes are not necessarily models of efficiency....There is neither statistical basis nor expert evidence to support these assumptions...all that we mean to say is that one need not make a fastidious fetish of it." It may be pertinent here to bring out the fact that out of 1.90 crore jobs in the government today at all levels and categories in the states and centre, scheduled castes get 15 percent only (population is about 17 per cent now). This comes to 28.5 lakh jobs and it constitutes 0.0139 percent of 20.40 crore of scheduled castes (it turns out to be abysmal if compared to total population). How does it affect the system though it would definitely contribute to the creation of a class within like in every other caste to demonstrate that through education one can reach the chosen goals? Therefore, Art 335 made in the context of scheduled castes in 1950 appears to be redundant and deserved to be repealed to avoid litigations.

It has become a popular method now to ask for statistical evidence to prove that these categories are not adequately represented in services. It has happened both in Nagraj (2006) and in the recent U.P reservation in promotion cases. In fact the National commission for

Scheduled Castes seems to have submitted a report to Government providing statistical data indicating that the representation is not adequate except in group D services. It is a common knowledge that the Departments in consultation with constitutional bodies like the service commission(s) prepare cadre strength and identify the earmarking of posts. The exercise is based on data and other inputs from different layers of the system. It is strange that without understanding nor enquiring in to this process,

superseding other constitutional bodies do not augur well for the judiciary. This would entice the political class to resort to amendments to the Constitution to show their authority. This competing tussle between Judiciary and the Executive with puerile behavior even after 60 years of republic would reduce the Constitution a mere Log Book to make and or expunge entries. This would bring down the esteem and the vision of the founding fathers to build a liberal democratic republic.

Book on Madhu Limaye released

A booklet on ace parliamentarian and Socialist leader Madhu Limaye was released in Agra by a senior activist from Bihar Anil Prakash, who has been waging relentless battles against state government agencies for fouling up development plans and polluting rivers in the state.

The booklet by a former socialist Ram Kishore from Lucknow, and published by the Socialist Foundation, outlines the seminal political ideas of Madhu Limaye, who not only exposed numerous scams in the Lok Sabha like Dharm Teja, Kanti Desai, Sanjay Gandhi's Maruti and many other corrupt deals, but also fought the Portuguese in Goa, and was jailed for 12 years. "He was the true successor of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia who groomed many parliamentarians including Raj Narain," Kishore said.

Madhu Limaye defined and structured his "Four Pillar state" concept that aimed at decentralisation of power and

devolution of power down to the grass-roots, Kishore added.

A large number of ex-socialists, Lohiates, who do not consider the present ruling dispensation in UP as "truly socialistic," attended the book release function.

Speakers lamented the loss of commitment to values and the general deterioration in the quality of parliamentarians presently in the houses. "Democratic institutions down the line are paralysed and hardly anyone takes interest in running the foras in a democratic manner," Vinay Paliwal, a senior socialist leader of the past said.

"I think the time has come for some major policy initiatives like compulsory sittings of the houses for X number of days. The Akhilesh Yadav government for instance is taking all kinds of policy decisions without convening the house and debating the finer points on the floor," Anil Prakash said.

—Brij Khandelwal

Is François Hollande a dangerous man for India?

Jean-Joseph Boillot and Philippe Humbert

The recent presidential change in France has at times raised concerns in India. Firstly, they concern the man himself. Admittedly, he is not well known, but the Indian media has presented rather negative images of him - of an “evasive” man whose humour would serve primarily to circumvent difficulties, while former President Sarkozy was able to win them over with his ability to forge direct contacts and make quick decisions during his first visit to New Delhi in 2008.

In fact, Indian traditions have seen this kind of contrast between two personalities. On the one hand, the Arthashastra of Chanakya defines the qualities of a statesman; and on the other, the Mahabharata and his hero Arjun portray a great and epic battle between good and evil. In the beginning, the French were won over by the Mahabharata-like Sarkozy but soon they were disappointed by his behaviour as revealed by the plummeting popularity in polls just a year after his election. He never recovered. India knows that democracy suffers from governance flaws, but it has also consistently rejected those who divide the national community or attempt to govern by force.

Coming back to the man, it is said that François Hollande has no international experience. Actually, he led a party with a long international tradition for over ten years and was a very close associate of François Mitterrand, undoubtedly a man of great international stature. Although he has never visited India himself, it is not the case of some influential

people in his entourage like Martine Aubry who organized in Lille in 2006 the first ever and largest festival of India in France. A few days ago, Hubert Vedrine, our former Foreign Minister who is called worldwide as the French Kissinger, gave the best definition of the upcoming diplomacy - if François Hollande is elected, he will “behave more rationally, less impulsively” (than his predecessor), in a word more “predictably”. This becomes obvious when we meet the teams of experienced diplomats and experts who worked for months to prepare the new presidency.

Moving on to policy

On this subject, a lot is written and it is in total opposition of reality. A few days ago, a *New York Times* tribune published in India talked about a totally “evasive” man, when the same day a huge cover of the influential *The Economist* claimed that François Hollande is so entangled in the old social democratic doctrines that ‘he is a dangerous man for his country and for Europe’. We are naturally not obliged to take a newspaper that voted for Bush against Obama in 2008 seriously, nor the one which presented the French model as the most resistant to the crisis in Europe in 2008 (“France Is Doing Better Than the Anglo-Saxons,” *The Economist* May 2009). Sarkozy never stopped trying to dismantle this model. But we must of course answer the main question: what policy will the new French president undertake, and what will the economic and diplomatic consequences be, especially for India?

1 – On the economic and European front, President Hollande is indeed different from his predecessor. Instead of the old, classic and conservative policies, he wants to trigger dynamic and progressive management of the global crisis which is severely affecting India as shown by the recent downgrading of the sovereign ratings of the country and of some of its banks and businesses by S & P and Moody’s.

Mr. Hollande is not a dangerous man who believes that the welfare state and increase in taxes are the only solutions, but he considers that only inclusive growth and a state conscious of the general interest of its people can provide a sustainable solution in today’s open world. These are exactly the same challenges that India has chosen to take up even if some disgruntled people continue to believe in the theory of the “trickle-down effect.” No, by letting the rich get richer, their savings will not automatically restore growth as evidenced by history and the current slowdown in India; it is businesses and real entrepreneurs, and not rentiers, who need jobs creation, solvent demand and an effective state.

Contrary to what is being said, Mr. Hollande is not a dangerous man for Europe either. Everyone knows that since the failed referendum on the European constitution in 2005, it is his top priority. He simply underscored for months the need to combine a return to balanced public finances WITH a growth policy to prevent the European Union from

plunging into recession and a return to nationalism. This view is increasingly shared by EU officials, including the ECB. If the bet is won, it is an opportunity for India who is suffering from the Eurozone crisis as its banks are reluctant to lend abroad, and the country has suffered reduced foreign investments as illustrated by the recent cancellation of the Peugeot car plant project in Gujarat.

2 - On the global economic level, Mr. Hollande does not have double standards of denouncing competition from emerging countries as being responsible for the crisis in order to fuel chauvinism and even racism; and then go begging for contracts in the same countries. The new President is a responsible man who knows that globalisation can bring benefits to all if it is regulated in a balanced manner and he knows that the ultra-liberal discourse has been the source of global excesses for many years, creating strong divisive inequalities within each country, be it in France or in India. More ultra-liberal globalisation is not the solution and India knows this, not just in the field of finance but also for food security etc. Each country or regional area must be able to maintain control on its economic and social development. However, Mr. Hollande is not a protectionist either. He knows that we all have a stake in the open world of trade. The key is then to adopt a balanced approach. Is this different from New Delhi's vision? France, in a more progressive Europe, and India can highlight this discourse in major international forums like the G20 and even the WTO headed by Pascal Lamy, François Hollande's friend.

3 - On the bilateral front, François Hollande is just as open to India as

other French presidents. For several years, socialist leaders like Martine Aubry, Jean-Louis Bianco or more recently Segolene Royal have visited India. François Hollande most probably will quickly confirm the bilateral cooperation priorities in the key areas of civil nuclear technology, space, defence and security. He might even offer India a wider cooperation agenda especially in renewable energy that he committed to develop as a part of the socialist alliance with the environmentalists.

4 – The Indo-French strategic partnership started in 1998. Lionel Jospin, a socialist was the then Prime Minister and Mr. Hollande was the undisputed leader of the Socialist Party. Undoubtedly, the French Socialists have a strong commitment to India. This partnership is still part of the same common vision of a multipolar world, more preferable to a bipolar “Chinamerica”. In geopolitical terms, France will seek more than ever to enter into dialogue with India on all global issues: there are various areas of agreement such as multipolarity, symbolized by the G20; the permanent seat in UN Security Council for India; the fight against terrorism; the need for economic and financial regulations; and the mutual interest in strengthening relations with the ASEAN.

There are areas where there exists, or where there will be disagreements: financial transactions tax, climate change, respect for social and environmental standards, or the practice of secularism in France. But let's discuss them.

Finally, there are some difficult short-term issues like the best way to stabilize Afghanistan. France has

always been sensitive to the concerns of India, but President Hollande has committed to advance the withdrawal of French troops fighting in the country to the end of 2012. This does not in any way mean that he is not concerned about the serious crisis in that country since he has also taken up the commitment to continue working for its political reconstruction. The situation in Syria and Iran are other sensitive issues where Mr. Hollande's team knows that we need more consultation with India.

There thus need not be any qualms about the new French President. Broadly speaking, he expresses a new style and a new policy. That is the alternation rule in any democracy. Nevertheless, India has its rightful place in the new presidency and the new President's entourage is already actively trying to understand how to interact successfully with New Delhi: create a denser structure of inter-governmental and parliamentary policy dialogue, systematically explore areas for building coalitions of interests area by area in order to be more effective together on the world stage, and in addition why not create a “Franco-Indian Erasmus” to promote exchanges between our young students.

It is time to avoid procrastination and an attitude of wait-and-see, and to work immediately for a strong Paris-Delhi axis, part obviously of the EU-India strategic partnership. The next G20 summit will be held in Mexico on the 18th and the 19th of June. Mr. Hollande will have to act resolutely and take important decisions in the global economic context which continues to be overstressed. He will be present, India will be there too. A good opportunity to meet!

Socialist wind blows in Germany!

D. K. Giri

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) won a spectacular victory on 13 May in Landtag (State Assembly) elections in the most populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) in Germany. After the victory of Francois Hollande for presidency in France just a week before on 6 May, this is good news for socialists across the world. Political analysts term this victory quite significant as NRW state seems to set the tone for German politics. NRW has 18 million people almost a quarter of Germany's 80 plus million people, consisting of 16 states. It accounts for a quarter of the GDP of Germany. NRW has been the centre of industrial revolution of Germany in 19th century and the epicenter for post war Germany's economic miracle. More important, NRW has often been seen as a forerunner of federal politics. For instance, the SDP-Green coalition won in 1995 in NRW and then formed the national government, likewise, CDU-FDP formed the government at the centre having won in NRW. Let us look at the tally of the votes, the personalities, the policies and significance of the victory for Germany, Europe and the world, at least for the socialists.

Significance of Votes

There are six parties vying for votes in Germany now and coalition governments have become the norm. So the voters have to choose between different coalitions for formation of governments. In NRW also, there were six political parties in the electoral fray. The Social

Democrats (SPD) got 39 percent, an increase of 4.6 percent over 34.5 in 2010, the Christian Democrats (CDU) 26.3 percent, a drop of more than 8 percent from 34.6 percent, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) got 8.6 percent, an increase of almost 2 percent, the Greens got 11.3 percent, a marginal drop of 0.8 percent, the hard-to-define Pirates got 7.8 percent, a rise of more than 6 percent. SPD and Greens, the Centre-Left coalition forms the government. The notable consequence of the results is that, this was the worst ever showing by Angela Merkel's CDU since 1949. The hardcore Left party got wiped out of the state, they had 11 seats in the Assembly in 2010; the Pirates got 20 seats, they had none in 2010. This is second consecutive loss for Merkel's party in northern state of Schleswig-Holstein, which again was the worst defeat of CDU since 1950. So does it mean Angela Merkel's support is slipping! It is hard to say until SDP puts up a formidable challenge.

SDP policies

The Social Democratic Party of Germany is the oldest party in Germany and is one of the major parties in Social Democratic fraternity. Established in 1875, it began under Marxist influence led by the leading theoretical exponents like Karl Kautsky and Engels. The SPD was set up as a socialist (communist) party but underwent major ideological shifts since its Erfurt programme in 1891, and Heidelberg programme in 1925 - both were similar - to more significant

Bad Godesberg programme, adopted in an extra-ordinary conference, on 13-15 November 1959. The Heidelberg programme called "for the transformation of the capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production to social ownership". It had stated quite emphatically, "the aim of the working class can only be achieved by transforming private capital property of the means of production into public property". The Godesberg programme sought to move the ideological position to the Centre. It evolved from a socialist working-class party to a modern Social Democratic party seeking to transform capitalism. The current party platform, like that of any other Social Democratic party, is to adhere to the principles of freedom, justice and social solidarity, and adopt policies that balance economic growth and social justice.

Against this brief background, one could look at the policies at play in NRW state elections. The major issue of contention is Merkel's fiscal policy that calls for austerity measures and public spending cuts. This has put tens of millions out of work in Europe causing widespread public anger. Although Germany, the fourth largest economy in the world has not been affected by the anti-austerity wind blowing heavily in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy, it has not remained untouched. Francois Hollande in France called for a growth pact, and Europe can learn from the victory of Social Democrats offering Germans not austerity, but sensible fiscal policies.

There were specific issues like SPD's proposal of rebate of 40 Euros. The patients pay to the doctors, earmarking more spending on education, ensuring minimum wage and so on, and criticism of Merkel's offer of stipend to parents who care for pre-schoolers. On this, the shoe was on the other leg, as, interestingly, Merkel was riled for wasting taxpayers' money. But the deeper and larger issue is the austerity drive in absence of a plan for growth and jobs.

Austerity in Europe

To be sure, the victories of François Hollande, Greek elections, and the SPD win in NRW are evidences of anti-austerity reaction in Europe. There are other examples as well. As a matter of fact, and experience, the European austerity does not work economically and has serious political and social consequences. It is being increasingly clear that the austerity push, without plans for growth and jobs, has led the euro zone, to economic contraction, almost to the brink of collapse. Although it has not affected Germany so far, given that Germany's economy is reliant on European export, it will face the political fallout of euro zone disintegration.

A couple of weeks ago, the noble laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz stated in a conference in Rome organized by the Social Democratic Foundation, called FEPS – Foundation of European Progressive Studies, “There are so many natural disasters in the world, like the earthquakes and tsunamis, so it is a shame to add to these a man-made disaster. But that is what Europe is doing”. The secretary general of FEPS, Ernest Stretter, an economist

by training argues, “No large economy- and Europe is one – has ever emerged from a crisis through austerity policies. Europe has resources economic policy instruments and political structures to rescue the Euro, and to overcome the crisis”.

If austerity does not work in Europe economically or politically as is evident, the kind of growth strategy formulated by the resurgent and self-confident Social Democrats in Germany and France is crucial for Europe. Some commentators consider this to be euro zones' last chance if it were to survive.

Personality Factor

Another point of view on the elections is that, in the absence of sharp distinction between party policies, in this case CDU and SPD, personality of the leaders became the cutting-edge in the elections. This is a new trend emerging across Europe following somewhat the American style. The personality of the leader was a factor in Swedish general elections, in the recent French presidential election where mild and moderate candidate won over an abrupt and abrasive Sarkozy, and now in NRW, where, by many accounts, the smiling persona of Hallenore Kraft, the SPD leader, was a clear winner over Norbet Rotgen. Norbet, the CDU leader, a 'blue-eyed boy' of Merkel never seemed to adapt to the NRW state politics. As a powerful Environment Minister in Merkel's cabinet, he aspired to be a national leader, not stuck in state politics. He has since been sacked from the federal ministry by the Chancellor. The popular refrain that the voters in NRW have rejected the singer, not the song reinforces the personality issue in the election.

Hallenore Kraft, NRW SPD's Minister-President is the first woman to fill this post since it was created in 1946. She was also the first woman to hold the presidency of German Bundesrat between 2010 and 2011. She is currently one of the four vice chairmen of federal SPD. Ms Kraft comes from a working class background and is very much a part of commoners. That is perhaps why her party in NRW is called “*currywurst ist SPD*”, roughly translated, curry and sausage that is SPD; which also means, she is close to the ordinary people. Ms Kraft exudes rationality and reliability compared to CDU's Norbet Rotgen's outsider image, Ms Kraft's “*landesmutter*” - mother of the state - went down well with the voters. Ms. Kraft is one of the SPD's most popular national deputy leaders, who is being seen as the prospective candidate for the Chancellor vis-à-vis the SPD troika - chairman Sigmar Gabriel, the parliamentary leader France-Walter Steinmeir and the former finance minister Peer Steinbrück. Christian Lindner, the leader of FDP is growing too in popularity which does not look well for his coalition partner Angela Merkel.

Impact of NRW win

SPD is trailing in opinion polls by 10 percent behind CDU, but in the run-up to the general elections in 2013, a few things can change. First, the fiscal compact and austerity debate has become the debate all over Europe. France and Germany, the main architects of European Union who have greater stakes have to win this debate. So, social democrats in France and Germany

(Continued on Page 15)

Text of the resignation letter by the Chief Advisors of NCERT

Dear Professor Sinclair,

We have followed the discussion in both Houses of the Parliament today regarding the cartoons published in the NCERT's Political Science Textbooks. We also heard the Hon'ble Minister's response to the debate in the Rajya Sabha wherein he has announced the deletion of the said cartoon, withdrawal of the textbook and institution of an independent review of all such cartoons and other 'objectionable' material in all the Political Science textbooks.

Since both of us were, and presumably continue to be, the Chief Advisors for all the Political Science textbooks of the NCERT from class IX to XII, it is only appropriate that we step aside to allow you to go ahead with the independent review process. We agree that the government must bow to the wishes of the Parliament, especially if the feelings are so strong and cut across the political spectrum. At the same time, we believe that it is our duty to point out that the parliamentary consensus unsettles some fundamental canons of democratic society.

Allow us to place on record some of the facts that we had drawn your attention to in our communication of April 3rd (attached here):

1. The said textbook was published in 2006, has been taught since then and so far has received appreciation from various quarters; scholars, educationists and students.
2. These books represented a new approach to textbook writing and

departed from the formal and dry text of the earlier textbooks. A large number of cartoons and photographs have been used to make the books lively and interactive. Mostly these are classic cartoons of the time concerned and naturally depict famous personalities of the time, including Gandhiji, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Pandit Nehru.

2. The cartoon on page 18 is by the famous cartoonist Shankar. This is a cartoon not done for the textbook but published at the time when the Constituent Assembly was working. To our mind, it does not denigrate Dr Ambedkar. Cartoon, like any art form, makes use of symbols and it would be a travesty of art if its symbolism were to be taken literally.
3. It is ironic that this example has been picked up to paint these textbooks as anti-Dalit and against Babasaheb. However, the text on pages 17 and 18 amply elaborates why the making of the constitution took considerable time and what procedures were followed by the Assembly. It is also explained that deliberation and consensus were the key elements of Constitution making.
4. In no way does the text or the cartoon denigrate or downplay the contribution of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Since this textbook is in continuation of the Standard IX and X textbooks, it assumes the knowledge about the role and contribution of Dr Ambedkar. In Standard IX textbook, on page 48,

Dr Ambedkar's role is explained and also a quotation from his speech is given for students to better understand his approach.

5. It may also be mentioned that the Textbook had gone through a very detailed scrutiny and finally was also vetted by a Monitoring Committee co-chaired by Professors Mrinal Miri and G.P. Deshpande. The national Monitoring Committee included among others, Professors Gopal Guru and Zoya Hasan of JNU.
6. Before publication the textbook was also reviewed by many eminent scholars and was highly appreciated for its balanced treatment and student-friendly structure.

Given all the facts stated above, we think that the short, heated and not very well informed debate in the Parliament did not do justice to the responsibility that a democratic society has towards its future generations. While deferring to the supremacy of the Parliament we think it is our duty to dissent. Please treat this letter as a letter of resignation and relieve us of our responsibilities with immediate effect. In view of the larger public issues involved here, we are releasing this letter to the media. We also attach our earlier communication to you dated April 3rd which clarifies all facts of the case.

Yours

Yogendra Yadav
and
Suhas Palshikar

Dangers of deletion

Yogendra Yadav

Ever since the Ambedkar cartoon controversy erupted, I have not stopped wondering about the irony of the situation. The attempt, perhaps the first one in the national textbooks, to accord Babasaheb Ambedkar his due place as one of the founders of our republic, was being attacked for insulting him. Professor Suhas Palshikar, who has taught me to read Ambedkar more carefully, has been attacked in Ambedkar's name. To be honest, we did expect an attack on these books, at some point from some quarters. But little did we imagine that it would come from proponents of social justice.

Over the last two days, we have tried explaining this to anyone who cares to listen. Palshikar tried explaining this to his attackers too. The cartoon in the spotlight is actually one of the more innocuous of the hundreds used in the political science textbooks of the NCERT. It has been made to look offensive by a series of misreadings. One, the content of the cartoon has been mischievously presented by overlooking the positive symbolism (that Ambedkar holds the reins to the Constitution and holds a whip) and overplaying a possible negative symbolism (Nehru holding a whip behind Ambedkar has been presented as Nehru whipping Ambedkar). Two, the art form of a cartoon is negated by a crass literal reading of the symbol of whip. Three, the cartoon is detached from the text accompanying it on the same page that celebrates the deliberations that led to the delay in the making of the Constitution. Four, the cartoon is isolated from other cartoons involving

Nehru, Indira Gandhi and other leaders that appear in this and other textbooks. Finally, Ambedkar's depiction in this cartoon is torn out of the context of how Ambedkar and his ideas are treated in this and other textbooks.

Having gone over this a few dozen times, it became clear to me that this debate was no longer about Ambedkar or the cartoon. The real danger is not what you can see and identify clearly. The danger lies lurking just beyond your vision.

For starters, the danger is not that one or a few controversial cartoons may be removed from the textbooks without good reasons. That would be sad, but not a cause for alarm. The danger is that this is just the beginning. The minister's reply in Parliament mentioned a review of other "objectionable" cartoons and content in the textbooks. A group of parliamentarians has been demanding the deletion of several cartoons that showed politicians in poor light. Many MPs are uncomfortable with the truthful account of post-Independence history in these books. Ambedkar's name may have been used to shield much else. This may be the beginning of a slow and imperceptible rollback of a historical transition in the writing of textbooks in this country that took place between 2005 and 2008, following the adoption of the National Curriculum Framework.

This is linked to the issue of autonomy of institutions like the NCERT. Again, the danger is not

that of a sudden loss of autonomy vis-à-vis the government. It is hardly a secret that the autonomy of such institutions vis-à-vis the babus in the ministry is at best highly circumscribed and often non-existent. The rights of the authors and advisors vis-à-vis the NCERT and that of the NCERT vis-à-vis the ministry are admittedly in a grey zone. The parliamentarians obviously did not see anything grey here. They wanted to settle on the floor of the House an issue concerning the content of the textbook that had gone through a due internal process. The minister obliged. The real danger is that this would begin to appear normal to us, that we would forget that institutional autonomy is an issue.

Again, the danger is not that this issue would compromise our freedom of expression in a general sense. The media's intense scrutiny of the political class on this question has demonstrated, if it needed any demonstration, that the Indian media enjoys ample freedom to take on the government. Besides, the textbook is not the site for an unbridled exercise of freedom of expression. Textbook writing is an exercise in caution and balance. The danger here is that we would miss an opportunity to define what should freedom of expression mean in the context of a textbook. In the course of a TV debate, a fairly well-read MP complained that this cartoon sowed a doubt in the mind of a young student. The danger is that we might begin to think that textbooks must not create doubts, must not leave any questions.

The attack on Palshikar's office has momentarily shifted attention to the physical danger to which scholars involved in such an exercise may be exposed. He handled the attack with the equanimity, dignity and courage that I have come to associate with him. If and when my turn comes, I could try and emulate him. But that is not the real long-term issue. The danger is psychological. Just think of the message such an incident sends to any future textbook writer. You cannot blame them for looking at every passage, every image, every drawing to ensure they have eliminated the possibility of giving rise to any offence to any group that may exist then or in future. The worst form of censorship is the one that lies in the mind of the author. In any case, a text pruned of the possibility of misreading is a text devoid of any interest and substance.

Finally, the danger is not that loud voices of identity politics will triumph through brute parliamentary majority. The real danger is that any such "triumph" may be counter-productive. This incident might end up damaging Dalit politics in more ways than one. It is not just that the Dalit-Bahujan leaders have lived up to their worst stereotypes in the mainstream media and reinforced the prejudices of the chattering classes. Unfortunately, the shrill pitch of the parliamentary debate and its echoes in the media may have already created an insult for Babasaheb that was never inflicted, let alone intended. The censorship that the Dalit leadership and its loyal intellectuals demand today could end up deifying Ambedkar into an empty symbol, worse than any caricature.

–*Courtesy : The Indian Express*

...In conclusion, some background about these textbooks, placed on record for what it is worth. The NDA government had reduced NCERT to a pathetic forum peddling the ruling Hindutva ideology in textbooks, and after its exit, the question of rewriting textbooks came up afresh on the agenda. That was when the National Curriculum Framework 2005 was produced, evolving out of an uncommonly democratic process, involving about three hundred people all over the country – teachers, academics and educational activists – over a period of seven months. After the NCF 2005 was released, it was followed by a prolonged public debate. One opinion then expressed was that in order to 'detox', we needed to simply bring back the old, pre-NDA textbooks which upheld secular values etc. As opposed to this, there was another opinion, espoused by a large number of academics and educationists, that we needed to upgrade the textbooks in more ways than one. For one thing, many strides have been made in the field of knowledge and we cannot simply revert to older text books. Our new books should reflect the latest developments in thought. Secondly, the pedagogical question should now be placed on top of the agenda. The old textbooks that gave ready-made 'gyan' to students that they had to then memorize, should be replaced by more creatively produced textbooks that pushed students to think for themselves. The idea was to raise questions that would encourage critical thinking among them. This also meant a move away from the boring, pedantic style of old textbooks. It meant further that even supposedly settled questions like those of 'secularism' would not be taught as if there is nothing to debate there. In this attempt to refashion textbooks, a huge public debate took place, first around the NCF 2005 in which hundreds of the best social scientists of the country participated, followed by an even more intensive collective process of textbook writing.

The process of actual writing of textbooks that followed, involved literally hundreds of teachers and researchers throughout the country. This process would not have been what it became but for the stewardship of the new NCERT Director, Krishna Kumar who made it into a veritable movement for writing textbooks across all disciplines. So it is misleading to see these textbooks as the outcome of the fertile imaginations of one or two individuals who became the public face of part of the process. Indeed, some others like historian Neeladri Bhattacharya who co-ordinated the writing of the history textbooks, and educationist Sarada Balagopalan who co-ordinated the text-books on Social and Political Life, deliberately emphasized the collective nature of the process and placed themselves outside of any high profile publicity. It was over months of intensive collaborative discussions of drafts and repeated writings and re-writings, that these textbooks finally saw the light of day....

–Extracts form **Aditya Nigam's** articles in *Kafila*

Save the classroom from the political class

Suhas Palshikar

When an emotional issue erupts in the public domain, argument becomes difficult and secondary to decision-making. That is what happened over the controversy regarding the inclusion of a cartoon depicting Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in a class XI textbook. One self-proclaimed inheritor and interpreter of Dr. Ambedkar's legacy ensured the debate could not even enter the realm of reason by comparing him to the Prophet. Such persons have done immense harm to the Ambedkar legacy of critique — remember that he not only sought to critique and demolish Hinduism or Gandhi's ideas; he even sought to critique and recreate Buddhism when he chose to embrace the Buddha. But now the controversy has become wider in its scope. When the Parliament of the country, almost in one voice, reprimands the inclusion of cartoons in political science textbooks, is there any scope for reason? Thus, in either case, argument is the casualty.

One could, of course, say that a “duly constituted” committee has been now appointed to look into the matter and that, of course, there is no reason to think that eminent colleagues sitting on that committee will not hear the case out rationally. However, the core issue remains: MPs across party lines have expressed their displeasure over the inclusion of cartoons and indicated their pedagogic inclination by expressing concerns over “vitiating young minds”.

Issues to be argued

Initially, when the controversy broke, concerns were expressed that this has something to do with freedom of expression. But many political leaders have pointed out that they are not opposed to cartoons being published in the media. This has made the debate more focused now. Besides the purported denigration of Dr. Ambedkar, five other issues have now emerged and need to be argued, debated and resolved both in the academic realm and the public realm more generally.

The first issue is about “impressionable” minds. Magnanimously, some of the participants in this debate have assured us that cartoons are fine for researchers and postgraduates, just not for young minds, please. This reminds one of the recent move to legislate that sex is not to be allowed till a certain age. No sex and textbook cartoons please, we are under 18. And that takes us to one of the larger issues: an authoritarian parental mindset that typically characterises our relations with younger generations and to collective life generally. With the explosion of information and media, issues transcend boundaries of age and this needs to be taken into account when arguing for a protective approach towards dissemination of ideas and knowledge.

But then, why should we be doing this through these textbooks? And

there we come across the second issue: as one Honourable MP put it in a TV debate, ‘*yeh sarkari kitab hai*’ (this is a government textbook). There is a danger of conflating government with autonomous state institutions. That is exactly what one wants to guard against. In India, we have adopted a complex structure whereby school textbooks are formally under government jurisdiction, but with a caveat: the government, as such, does not write textbooks or decide what should or should not go into the textbooks. The government only ensures a certain procedure — creation of a body responsible for the task (NCERT in this case); selection of the right persons at the top (the director's appointment is made by the government); and then leaves the rest to those persons and institutions. Saying that the books are *sarkari* goes against the democratic principle of delegating work and assigning autonomous responsibilities with internal monitoring mechanisms. The perception that these are *sarkari* books is exactly what the post-National Curriculum Framework textbooks sought to dispel. That achievement of the NCF is now endangered. Are we saying that institutions have autonomy only so far as that autonomy does not become real?

The third issue that has come up is about the role of cartoons generally. Yes, cartoons — whether in textbooks or in print media — make us laugh, chuckle, and feel a little cheerful. But that is surely not

the core function of a cartoon. It would be a gross misunderstanding, therefore, if we said — as some are now saying — that cartoons poke ‘fun’ and hence they are for purposes of cheap criticism — ‘*mazaak*’. Much more than, and along with, poking fun, cartoons are a powerful art form for locating ironies and bringing forth the inconsistencies of our collective selves. This core value of the art form is not at all appreciated in the ongoing debate.

Pedagogy

Moving on towards the textbook issue again, a fourth point that deserves attention is the pedagogy of textbook writing. The authors and advisors of the now-controversial textbooks do not claim any expertise on this. But they surely had the inputs of experts from the field of education and teaching. Besides, the NCF and its pedagogic approach was the guiding principle for the teams that prepared those textbooks. Not information but inquisitiveness is what the textbooks want to inculcate. They do not satisfy curiosity but fan more curiosity. They do not dish out opinions as “official wisdom” but help students become their own leading lights on the path of knowledge and understanding.

Whether cartoons fit in with the pedagogy based on this approach can very well be debated and it could also be argued that they are not the only means whereby these objectives could be achieved. However, the argument about impressionable age and the idea of giving a *sarkari* version of everything would not stop only at throwing out cartoons: depictions of drought could be objected to;

pictorial presentations of domestic violence or communal carnage could be objected to; pictures of destruction caused by war can be objected to — all these unquestionably make a powerful impression on the viewer, young or whatever. The issue is: do we want students to have the benefit of all these strategies of dissemination and inquiry? The current series of post-NCF textbooks believes that these are necessary tools if the objective is to encourage creative thinking, imagination and, above all, the spirit of inquiry and critique.

Finally, another argument in the current debate seems to be this: the books are anti-democratic and show politicians in a poor light. As an aside, is it not somewhat odd and anti-democratic that a democratic society should have a separate “political class” rather than an engaged and active citizenry? But we shall leave it at that. Political science can be and was being taught mainly as formal institutions and rules and procedures such as “what are the powers of the President of India” and “how many members are there in the Rajya Sabha” and so on. Besides being information oriented, this approach is also the least encouraging in terms of producing an active citizen. The current (now nearly abandoned) textbooks did not only wish to make political science “interesting” but also wanted to make political science engage seriously with the political (and hence they have to pay the price for doing that).

Politics is about creating and running institutions; politics is about power and about power being used for various collective purposes; politics is not a sanitised anthem of democracy but a shrill and not so sweet mix of different sounds. This

politics produces governance — and sometimes may even fail to produce governance. Politics is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ — unlike the romantic movie, there are men and women in politics rather than sanitised heroes and heroines and villains and side villains. Is this not a robust and democratic depiction of politics?

Committee welcome

It can be nobody’s claim that this approach towards teaching politics is the only correct approach or that the textbooks have correctly followed this approach. It is for the larger academic community now to go beyond issues of an emotive nature and engage with the questions that the controversy has thrown up. While the context in which the inquiry committee has come into being may be somewhat sad, it is a welcome situation that the working of the committee will allow academics and the teaching/studying community to come forward on these issues.

—*Courtesy : The Hindu*

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Ghastly Act

It was very disappointing to hear about Prof Suhas Palshikar's office at the University of Pune being vandalised on Saturday. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar himself was a hardcore supporter of liberty of thought. It was because of his reverence for the freedom of speech and thought that he specially incorporated Article 19 in the Constitution of India, which assured citizens the right to think and express their thoughts.

Liberty of thought is the most important tool to defend the rights of the downtrodden, weak and those unable to express themselves. The Ambedkari movement (progressive movement) has so far faced much criticism and has rebutted them at the intellectual level. For example, when Bal Gangal, editor of Sobat, criticised Mahatma Jyotiba Phule in the late 1980s, a plethora of Dalit writers successfully proved him wrong.

Again, when Arun Shourie made defaming statements in his 'Worshipping False Gods', similar rebuttals were given. These types of criticisms were shown their worth through well-supported and well-worded retorts.

The Ambedkari movement has the capability to face off with and counter anybody in the world without an iota of fear. More so, because it shows that we have lost the capability to engage in an intellectual debate. This violent attack is very much out of line with Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision and is an insult to his teachings.

Both Prof Palshikar and political commentator Yogendra Yadav are close to the Ambedkari movement. They have contributed immensely towards progressive thought

throughout their careers. To doubt their integrity or to target their offices is not only unfortunate, but also a condemnable act.

The controversial textbook, at the heart of all the acrimony, was written five years ago and is being taught in schools all over the country under the NCERT syllabus. All of a sudden, pandemonium erupted in Rajya Sabha on Friday, with Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal finally announcing that he has ordered the 'offensive' content to be removed from the books.

These governmental steps aside, it would have been welcome had the objection to Shankar's cartoon come via the same or similar medium instead of a violent attack. Having said that, it must be remembered that Dr Ambedkar himself had seen the cartoon in question, and had not objected to it.

Dr Ambedkar was sporting by nature, and he knew how to respect opponents' ideology. Now, political stunts are being used to gain instant publicity. It is damaging for the progressive movement to indulge in such violent means when we have the constitutional recourse of expressing differences of opinion with Prof Palshikar and Yadav.

The point is open to debate whether this cartoon, which was drawn and published in 1949, is obsolete and putting it in a textbook is out of context. But such attacks close the routes to debate, which is the more untoward development.

Discussion is the wealth of democracy. That is why, as a worker of the Phule-Ambedkar movement and as a teacher as well, I condemn this ghastly act. I also appeal to all not to close the doors

to debate and discussion and to not shrink the vast expanse of Phule's and Ambedkar's thoughts.

—Hari Narke

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have to come up with alternative growth, investment and job strategies that satisfy creditors as well as job seekers. Second, SPD needs to enhance its business appeal so that it can attract voters and coalition partners like FDP. In Germany, the option for unorthodox coalitions has grown; this means FDP can scout for new partner. This trend has been initiated by Merkel herself, "some see it as a rule of nature that Merkel always remains the Chancellor but just swaps her coalition partner". So, even a new coalition can emerge to put SPD in power at the federal level, Third, SPD has led the Social Democracy discourse internationally, having transformed from a classical Marxist party into a modern social democratic party. Even evolution of social democratic philosophy and adaptation of its policies into contemporary contexts owe quite a bit to German Social Democrats. Therefore, how they steer Europe out of this economic crisis, how they reconcile capital formation with social justice will be an inspiration to Social Democrats elsewhere. It is true that German social democrats had antagonized the working class, without winning the middle class, and without business appeal during Schroeder's regime. They seem to have overcome that lapse, and are and trying to build a winning coalition. This is the breath of fresh air blowing across NRW in Germany".



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Patient is on oxygen

S. Viswam

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**The Prodigal
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 Harsh Mander

Cartoon Controversy

The worth of any government is generally assessed on the basis of a handful of factors, among them legitimacy, authority, credibility, performance and public perception. The first four shape the fifth. The United Progressive Alliance government, which last week entered its fourth year in office in its second term, commands only the first of the attributes. The other four are hugely suspect. The Manmohan Singh-led coalition is not in want of numbers for survival. Apart from the numbers that make up the multi-party coalition, it has enough “outside support” to sustain it in power. However, its weaknesses are reflected in the steady erosion over the last three years in the strength of its other attributes. Consequently, the public perception of the UPA government as of now is unflattering in the extreme. In the popular mind, the government lacks leadership, cohesion, confidence and has virtually lost the will to govern. Since it has abandoned decision-making and decision-taking as a vital function of governance, it is seen as suffering from a paralysis, a malady that stands in its way of exercising control. Indeed, the government is at the receiving end of criticism for being in office under false pretences, being unable to deliver on its promises, and being incapable of giving an onward thrust to governance. Sonia Gandhi complained the other day that “it has almost become a fashion these days to criticize the government.” This may be true, but then who has made pillorying the government for its sins of omission and commission fashionable? The short answer is: the government itself.

The public perception of UPA One’s performance was so encouraging that the Congress-led coalition partners managed to retain power in 2009 with added numbers. However, the jinx that has the government in its grip started asserting itself from the first few months, nay weeks, of its assuming office. Scam after scam hit the headlines. It was not only leaders from the coalition parties but senior Congressmen themselves, who contributed to the proliferation of the scams. The government was forewarned but failed to control the resulting damage. It was as if it was physically, morally, emotionally incapable of withstanding the sustained assault on its credibility. Since it failed to exercise authority, it failed to retain credibility. Without credibility, its performance waned and faltered, till a stage has arrived where the government, and more important, the Congress

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party that is the UPA coalition's senior partner, are fighting with their back to the wall.

The public perception of the government need not have been this negative had the government retained its goodwill and faith with the public. Indeed, there is no rapport whatsoever between the government and the people, and hence even those sections of the people who are used to the BJP's anti-Congress propaganda, tend to believe the worst of the government. The Congress party, which, by virtue of its dominance in the coalition, is regarded as the UPA's principal spokesman, is suddenly suffering from a dearth of good communicators and effective exponents of the coalition's political and social philosophy. Indeed, where are all the senior veterans and stalwarts of the Congress party? In hiding?? Neither Prime Minister nor party president Sonia Gandhi, nor even the prime ministerial hopeful Rahul Gandhi, is in touch with the people. Sonia makes it a point of prestige and status to remain inaccessible to leaders and ranks of all kinds. Manmohan Singh sees no merit in interaction with the media at any level. Rahul Gandhi, humbled and crushed by the UP Assembly verdict, has become even more a reluctant politician than in the past and refuses to shoulder any responsibility. Thus, a handful of second rank politicians carry the onerous burden of defending the coalition against attacks on it by all and sundry.

Addressing the valedictory session of the Congress Parliamentary Party last week, Sonia Gandhi sounded the alarm bells when she said that time was running out for the Congress

Dimensions of Durban Defeat

Ishwari Prasad

The International Energy Agency has recently announced that if the current track of warming continues unabated in future, the level of earth's temperature will reach six degree Celsius by the end of this century. Scientists are of the opinion that the maximum limit of tolerance of the earth is two degree Celsius above pre-industrial revolution level. So far the world community has been unable to find a solution to deteriorating climate change. Therefore, we are moving towards the brink of catastrophic situation: if climate change continues unabated, many areas of the world will become uninhabitable and barren because glaciers will dry up and sea level will rise.

Very recently, a climate conference was held at Durban in South Africa from November 29 to December 9 of 2011 to decide the future course of action for combating the deteriorating climate condition of this planet. In this conference 195 countries of the world participated and discussed the climate concerns in detail. This was very important because the period of Kyoto Protocol was closing in 2012 and therefore a new arrangement had to be worked out to replace it. It was particularly important for India, because she desired to extend the decision of Kyoto at Durban. The Kyoto Protocol was very encouraging for India because it had adopted a differential responsibility between developed countries and developing countries of the world. The burden of sharing carbon reduction was placed more on

developed countries and they were asked to commit heavy emissions cuts. From the very beginning India has been of the opinion that most of the industrial infrastructure of the world already in existence were responsible for current high level of emission and would continue to do so for decades to come. These industrial infrastructures predominantly belong to developed countries. India's climate policy was based on the principle of equity and justice. Therefore, China and other developing nations were expected to support the Indian stand, and a favourable outcome was expected at Durban.

Nature does not know who creates condition for climate change, but everyone gets adversely affected if the earth becomes intolerably warm. India will be heavily affected by the climate change. India has a long coastal line. The ground water in the coastal areas will become saline. People settled on sea-coast will have to be displaced. The coastal population in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other states will get adversely affected. India's is an agricultural economy, around 70 percent of people depend on it. Agriculture has been mostly rainfed. Rainfall pattern will change. Glaciers will melt. Many of the major rivers are glacier-fed. Initially there will be floods but later on there will be drought because rivers will dry up. Underground water will also be difficult to fetch. Since the temperature will rise and there will be shortage of water, the whole of agriculture will be ruined. Industry

(Continued from Page 7)

and services will also collapse. People will lose work, employment and income.

The stake associated with global warming is very high because the whole world is in one boat and we are all in it. The survival of this globe requires effective and comprehensive carbon rules to stop systemic risks becoming systemic collapse. Great expectations were, therefore, attached to Durban meet. At Durban India wanted to achieve three objectives. First, it wanted the continuation of Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012. Second, India wanted that its main principle of equity, which was neglected in the previous negotiating rounds, should be taken up seriously and integrated in the future climate agenda. And third, it wanted to preserve the notion of differentiation between developed and developing countries and get it recognised in the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The net outcomes at Durban were not commensurate to Indian objectives; though some newspapers in India claimed that the performance of the Indian delegation was satisfactory and the overall result was a victory for India. But the fact is that India was defeated on all three fronts. It is pointed out that the agreement on second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol is a victory for India. But the continuation of Kyoto is hardly an important decision. The US, Canada, Japan, Australia and Russia are not very inclined to honour Kyoto Protocol. It is the European Union whose commitment had some value to cheer. In the past also, this Protocol was not seriously taken by the developed countries. Under these

circumstances, the survival of Kyoto Protocol is doubtful. Moreover, if we consider what had to be foregone to achieve this objective, it would be clear that, in fact, it was not a success of Indian proposal. Europe offered to support Kyoto commitment in exchange for a road map that would lead the way towards a legally binding agreement on mitigating global warming that would involve all parties. India has signed on a key agreement which does not have even a reference to "equity" or to the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". Instead of equity and differentiation, the Durban Platform resolution calls for a "range of action to close the ambition gap with a view to ensuring the highest possible mitigation efforts by all parties."

This was a technical defeat for India. At Durban, India fielded a delegation of 34 members. Some point out "serious question about the wisdom of its negotiating strategy" along with its management and capacity. India was unprepared. India throughout the meeting was more or less isolated." Durban was a triumph for European climate diplomacy. European Union succeeded in forming coalition with small island states, the least developed countries, developed nations and emerging economies of Brazil and South Africa, behind a climate agenda which did not contain any serious item of Indian "road map."

Even on moral grounds, India is defeated. The cornerstone of Indian stand on climate issue is equity which means that those countries which have polluted, in the past, more and are polluting, in the current situation, more must agree to bear great emission cuts

in any climate negotiation. This is considered justified in historical terms, reasonable for sustaining the ongoing economic growth of the countries of world and on the environmental security from the possibility of future climate catastrophe. Since the average American emits 19 times as much carbon dioxide as the average Indian, it is argued that developed countries should first reduce their green house gas emission before the developing countries are asked to reduce their emission level.

The whole argument of current debate on climate is based on the assumption that high level of production technology is essential for raising the standard of living, that the nations are the units of consideration for identifying responsibility of carbon emission and that all individuals within a nation either have acquired equal advantage or will have to suffer equally in terms of hazards associated with health, employment, income and life chances, when climate deteriorates. But the reality is that within a nation the advantage of economic growth favours a small section of people while the cost of industrial development is borne by the majority of poor population.

It is true that industrialised nations of the world have polluted the environment. But the division of the world into developed and developing is not a sufficient condition to pinpoint the burden of emission. The economic development perspective may be stretched further to arrive at a better criterion of assigning responsibility of emission reduction. In other words, a war against climate change must take into consideration the human rights perspective also. An effective and

equitable framework must take into account the factors associated with individual wellbeing. Moreover, if only developed countries are asked to cut carbon emission, it is possible that a situation might crop up providing bigger incentive to big developing countries like India and China to “to increase their pollution level as far as they can” so that they can catch up the industrial level of the developed countries. In such a situation the least developed, small in size and island nations will be left behind and would remain exposed to disaster. Their danger from the warming of earth would not be relieved.

The human rights aspect of climate solution must start from human well being rather than from economic development as such. However, the human rights based warming regime is not against economic development. The only difference is that the whole gamut of economic development under human rights based scheme, becomes an instrument contributing to the realisation of human rights for the poor and marginalised. Under this scheme of equitable global warming policy, it must be realised that every one has a right to a certain amount of emission. This may be called survival emissions, including the right to benefit from economic development. The majority of people, for example is India, have not benefited from the fruits of economic growth. A small section of population have benefited from the economic growth. In other words, the majority of wealthy citizens within a nation have a debt to the poor segments of the community in the same fashion in which the whole developed industrialised nations have a debt to developing nations.

(Continued from Page 7)

Excerpts from a letter about Western Ghat Ecology

Dear Friends,

I write this to bring to your notice some recent, for me notable, developments.

I had the privilege to serve on a Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, GoI. Our principal mandate was to:

- (i) To assess the current status of ecology of the Western Ghats region.
- (ii) To demarcate areas within the Western Ghats Region which need to be notified as ecologically sensitive and to recommend for notification of such areas as ecologically sensitive zones under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- (iii) To make recommendations for the conservation, protection and rejuvenation of the Western Ghats Region following a comprehensive consultation process involving people and Governments of all the concerned States.

We undertook this task with great interest and sincerity. Basically this was a scientific task of deciding on a set of criteria for declaration of Ecologically Sensitive Zones on the Western Ghats, putting together a spatial database on ecological parameters for the region, delineating potential ecologically sensitive zones, and suggesting a strategy for conservation, protection and rejuvenation of the Western Ghats tract, taking into account our

assignment of ecological sensitivity levels.

In order to properly appreciate the issues, we conducted field visits and wide ranging consultations with civil society, experts, concerned state governments, MoEF officials, elected representatives ranging from Gram Panchayat members to MPs and Ministers and CMs.

We also published a scientific paper based on the initial formulation of our criteria for ecological sensitivity for public discussion in India’s premier scientific fortnightly, *Current Science* in January 2011...

We submitted our report as required on August 30, 2011. We were told that it will be released at a public function on 21 September 2011. On 19 September 2011 we were informed that the report is not going to be made public for the present, and that we should not release it or discuss it publicly.

Beyond that, our report has set in motion a series of developments that culminated in Central Information Commissioner passing a significant order on April 9, 2012. ..I quote from it :

“Disclosing a report or information does not mean that the government has to follow it. It may perhaps have to explain the reasons to public for disagreeing with a report based on logic and coherent reasons. This cannot be considered as prejudicially affecting the scientific and economic interests of the State.

If such reports are put in public domain, citizens’ views and

concerns can be articulated in a scientific and reasonable manner. If the Government has reasons to ignore the reports, these should logically be put before people. Otherwise, citizens would believe that the Government's decisions are arbitrary or corrupt. Such a trust deficit would never be in the interest of the Nation.

The disclosure of the WGEEP report would enable citizens to voice their opinions with the information made available in the said report. Such opinions will be based on the credible information provided by an expert panel constituted by the government. This would facilitate an informed discussion between citizens based on a report prepared with their/public money.

MOEF's unwillingness to be transparent is likely to give citizens an impression that most decisions are taken in furtherance of corruption resulting in a serious trust deficit. This hampers the health of our democracy and the correct method to alter this perception is to become transparent. Such a move would only bring greater trust in the government and its functionaries, and hurt only the corrupt".

CIC had ordered the report to be made public by 10th May 2012. Additionally he ordered that MoEF must put all such reports in public domain within 30 days of receipt, in accordance with requirement of suo moto disclosure in RTI act.

Now I understand that MoEF has gone to Delhi High Court challenging this order...

– **Madhav Gadgil,**

An Open Letter to SIT Chief

Dear Shri R.K. Raghavan,

We have been reading these days every day about your 'clean chit' to Shri Narendra Modi, the Gujarat Chief Minister about his responsibility about the Gujarat riots of 2002 in general and about the Ahsan Jafri brutal murder in Gulbarg Society, in particular. The Supreme Court had appointed you as chief of Special Investigation Team (SIT) putting full trust in your impartiality and integrity.

We also put full trust in you and were sure that your investigation will throw full light on the happenings of Gujarat riots and we will be able to judge, through your investigation, what is right and what is wrong. However, your investigations have raised storm of controversy and it is also surprising that you have given differing reports one in 2010 and another final closure report in 2012 finally giving 'clean chit' to Shri Narendra Modi.

What is more surprising is that in defending your investigation and its 'truth' you have defended Narendra Modi the way even BJP could not have defended or perhaps even Modi himself could not have defended himself. It appears as if you were appointed by the Gujarat Government and not by the Supreme Court of India. I read your point by point refutation of Shri Raju Ramchandran (Amicus Curie) 'views on your report.

The fact that the Supreme Court had to appoint Amicus Curie itself is a reflection of controversial nature of the Report. Shri Raghavanji, you were head of CBI, the prestigious

investigation agency of our country and is the ultimate report of victims denied justice by other investigation agencies. One can hope for justice from CBI and not even from politicians. Politicians have their own logic. Whereas investigation agencies like the CBI are supposed to go strictly by the law of the land.

As a student of politics and as a political analyst I can tell you that what happened in Gujarat in 2002 had its own politics behind it. The BJP was losing all elections even at local levels and lost even Assembly bye-election and had panicked as the Assembly elections were due in December 2002. The reason was several corruption scandals in which BJP members were involved had surfaced and people of Gujarat were very unhappy with its performance and BJP leaders feared its government will be thrown out in 2002 elections.

One easiest way in our country, to win elections, unfortunately, is to polarize the voters on caste and community basis and BJP was resorting it steadily to hide its

corrupt practices and to win 2002 elections it had to do it on much larger scale and with much more intensification. It needed some event to do that and Godhra incident on 27th February 2002 in which 59 *Karsevaks* were burnt came handy to the BJP leaders.

The Godhra incident, as you must have known, itself is shrouded in mystery as to who did it? Was it done by those 120 people arrested by the Modi Government? The court verdict is not very supportive

of conspiracy theory. The police had made Hussain Umarji as 'chief conspirator' but court found no evidence against him to declare him guilty. He was thus discharged by the session court. Some were held guilty but they were all poor vendors and could hardly plot a conspiracy to burn one coach of the train. This is not the place to go into those details. Anyway whosoever was responsible the Modi Government got an opportunity to provoke riots against Muslims.

The fact that Government of Gujarat joined the *bandh* and allowed dead bodies to take out in procession itself is an indictment of Narendra Modi Government. No Government, worth its salt and interested in keeping peace would ever allow dead bodies to be taken into procession irrespective of who claimed the bodies. That is merely a technical problem. Real question is who gave permission to take the dead bodies out in the procession through the streets of Ahmedabad causing grave procession when all sorts of rumours were being spread and people were already agitated. As a police officer of such high rank you must be well aware of consequences of such a procession.

For your information Shri Raghavanji I have investigated all the major riots in this country from Jabalpur in 1961 to the Gujarat riots in 2002 and I am well aware of what government should or should not do when there is palpable tension in a town or a city. Government immediately imposes 144 and takes other steps to stop rioting and also tries its best to counter rumours.

The Modi Government did nothing. The Gujarati newspapers were carrying highly provocative

articles and were publishing, most prominently, rumours as news and were also writing provocative editorials. You know there is something like Article 153 (A) in the Cr.P.C. under which action should have been taken against those newspapers but nothing of the sort was done and newspapers enjoyed full 'freedom' under the Modi Government to provoke riots.

You say there is no proof that in the high level officials' meeting Modi asked them to let Hindus to take out their anger and not to stop them. Okay though such a firm stands is controversial but even if it was so Modi is not culpable. But you go a step further and say even if he said this so what? He said this in a closed door meeting and so he is not culpable. Raghavanji how can you forget that he was not saying this to ordinary people in a closed door meeting but to high police and other officials who were responsible for controlling the riots? In fact it is worse than saying such a thing in a public meeting.

But it seems you are so keen to defend Narendra Modi that you are not taking such elementary things into account. And you know what happened in Gujarat in coming days. You also did not take into account the sting operation by Tehelka which had completely exposed Modi government how it had given them assurance of protection after committing heinous crimes of killing hundreds of innocent people. They also told the person carrying out sting operation that we were provided all hiding facilities by the Modi Government.

Sting operation is considered credible evidence in any court and it was on this basis that former BJP President Shri Bangaru Laxman was

convicted by the Delhi Court. You should have taken sting operation into account at least for further investigation. Raju Ramchandran, the amicus curie, is of the opinion that whether Modi gave instruction to high police officials or not and whether Sanjiv Bhatt was present or not, should have been investigated further instead of dismissing Mr. Bhatt's claim. He could have been cross questioned but you did not consider this worthwhile.

You even found Narendra Modi not anyway responsible for what happened with Jafri and instead blamed Ehsan Jafri responsible for his death saying he fired on the mob. It is disputed whether he fired or not and even if we accept for a moment the theory that he fired on the mob, tell me Raghavanji who will not try to save himself from such a violent mob when all your pleas fail? And when no one is ready to come to your rescue. I have investigated Gujarat riots and found how desperate was Jafri's position and about 60 other innocent persons who had taken refuge in his Bungalow. I am not a super cop like you but still possess certain faculties and can vouch for the position Jafri was in,

Even the People's Panel which was presided by a Supreme Court retired Judge, Justice Samant and Justice Suresh have falsified your claims. Both judges are men of known integrity they are, after all, judges and judge the investigations done by the men of your tribe i.e. the police. I personally talked to Justice Suresh and he was of the firm opinion that Narendra Modi was responsible for all that happened in Gujarat in 2002.

Also, in your 2010 closure report prepared by Mr. Malhotra, one of your colleagues, you had found

some problems with Mr. Modi and had blamed him on some counts. *Tahelka* the well known fortnightly which is known for its exposures had published it and that report was closer to truth than your final one in 2012. *Tahelka* had also alleged that your to and fro trip to London for your personal work was paid for by the Gujarat Government. I do not know whether it is true or not but such an allegation against you is a serious matter.

I have spoken to many eyewitnesses of Gujarat riots of 2002 from police officers to victims to members of political parties to survivors of these riots and all of them have blamed Narendra Modi. I have also heard Modi's speeches which were video-recorded including the one in which he justified riots as per Newtonian law of equal and opposite reaction to action (though reaction in Gujarat by no means was equal but several hundred times more in number and in brutalities) and the one in which he calls relief camps as 'Baby-producing Factories'.

These speeches may not constitute hard evidence of his complicity in the riots but certainly indicate his mentality and his collusion. Apart from his collusion or not his failure to control riots itself places great moral responsibility on him. You also must have read in papers what Mr. A.B.Vajpayee said when he visited Ahmedabad after riots in 2012 that what face will I show when I go abroad and, addressing Modi, he said you must know your *rajdharm* i.e. your responsibility for governance. A chief minister who cannot stop riots for weeks and lets innocent people be killed in hundreds is not worth continuing. He not only continues but now takes out *sadbhavna yatras*.

Raghavanji, such people are not fit for multi-religious democratic governance who, for the sake of power, do not mind thousands

being killed. We thought you will, as an honest officer, expose such politicians. But alas we were disappointed.

Yours sincerely,

Asghar Ali Engineer, Chairman,
Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai

(Continued from Page 2)

(and of course the government). How true! Only two years are left before the 2014 polls, but in effect only some 20 months. The government has the onerous task of erasing the negative public perception and replacing it with a favourable, if not an entirely positive one. How to achieve this seemingly stupendous task is for Sonia Gandhi's advisers to determine. The first challenge is to demonstrate that the government still retains the will to govern, and this it can do by being courageous enough to attempt the enactment of some, if not all, of the pending reformist legislation. The second is to start narrowing the gap between the government and the people. The third is to ginger up officialdom and awaken it from its current spell of slumber.

The UPA enjoys two advantages right now. First, its main political adversary, the BJP, is even less coherent. It has a surfeit of prime ministerial aspirants but no real, quality leadership. The public perception of the BJP-led NDA is even less flattering than that of the UPA. The second advantage is that the voters who opted for the UPA rather than for the NDA in 2009 are still in the mood to give the Congress and its allies another chance in 2014. But they may change their minds and mood if the UPA does not cure itself of its paralysis without any more delay.

(Continued from Page 4)

In India the rich segment is totally responsible for emitting carbon. Poor people; who constitute majority, neither emit carbon nor get benefit from the carbon based industrial development. But they cannot escape suffering from the consequences of environmental deterioration. The climate policy of the government of India is defeated at home front on such a moral ground. The Indian government however, is still adamant on its original stand of equity. This is exhibited in their recent Economic Survey. It states that equity and the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" will be at the heart of its negotiations for post-2020 global climate regime. It would have been advisable that India should have announced a different growth path on carbon free strategy of development to qualify as a genuine agent committed to equity. This would provide diplomatic and moral strength to stand for carbon free economic development. And such a strategy of development demands, under Indian condition, primacy of agriculture, small-scale industrial structure and discouragement of consumerist culture in society. But on the contrary, India still aspires to achieve the status of industrial West, naturally therefore, India will always be defeated in climate war both at home and abroad.

The Prodigal who did not return

Bapu Heddurshetti

Minocher Rustom Masani, better known as Minoos Masani was one of the founders of the democratic socialist movement in India. Born on 20th November 1905 in a middle class Parsi family of Mumbai, he studied in the Anglican Cathedral School. It is here that he met Yusuf Meherally, another founder member of the socialist movement. Masani's father wanted his son to become a doctor, but it was Yusuf who convinced Masani to become a lawyer. Masani became much more than that.

Having completed his degree from Elphinston College, Mumbai in 1921, Masani went to London School of Economics on a scholarship. There he also did his bar-at-law and was called to the Lincoln's Inn in 1929. Masani became active in student politics and was elected the President of his University's unit of the Labour Party and of the India Society. He also became the Chairman of the University unit of the League of Nations Society. He even witnessed the session of the League on 6th September 1926.

In London, Masani came under the influence of Fabian socialism. Masani not only read extensively on socialism but also made his grandmother read George Bernard Shaw's 'An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism, Socialism, Fascism and Sovietism'. Masani supported the General Strike in England in 1926 and walked in the Labour Procession to the Hyde Park on 1st May with a placard in his

hand. He married Phyllis Atkinson, an English woman, and returned to India.

Though Masani did not accept Mahatma Gandhi's ideas he had great respect for Gandhi. While he accompanied Gandhi on many of his morning constitutionals, he defended Gandhi on many an occasion from the virulent attacks of the Communists. He tried to convert Gandhi to socialism. He had given Gandhi a book on socialism which Gandhi read. He had also given Gandhi the socialist programme adopted by the Bombay socialists. It is in response to this programme that Gandhi had given a detailed and point by point reply. When Masani mentioned that the Socialists were not for violence and that they would accept Khadi, prohibition and non-violence, Gandhi would not believe him. Gandhi wrote: "I was pained to read your reply to my article. You seem to say that socialists believe in Khadi, in prohibition and in non-violence and that the committee has no evidence of speeches inciting to violence having been made. I have talked not with one socialist but with many of them. I have read their writings and their speeches. They have not (accepted) ... non-violence, have ridiculed khadi and said that prohibition is only a waste of money. As for the evidence of the use of force, I get it almost daily"... "Only the day before yesterday a report of Meherally's Madras speech came into my hands and I went through it. It explains fully what the socialists are doing. The object is to start a revolt in every

sphere. But a revolt has never been possible without violence..."

In spite of ideological differences with Mahatma Gandhi, Masani accepted Gandhi's leadership of the freedom movement. Masani perhaps was the first of the Socialists in India to have been arrested during the freedom struggle. He was editing 'Congress Bulletin' and was arrested and detained without trial for two months. Later when Gandhi gave a call for civil disobedience, like Acharya Narendradeva, Masani also gave up his practice at Mumbai High Court and offered Satyagraha in January 1933 and courted arrest. He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and lodged in Nasik Road Jail where he met Jayaprakash Narayan, Nanasaheb Goray, Achyut Patwardhan, etc., and planned the launching of the Congress Socialist Party within the Indian National Congress.

But then he had to pay a price for his patriotism. Tired of his incarceration, his wife deserted him and fell in love with some one else. After his release from the prison, Masani was divorced from his wife. Though a little later he married Piroja Fraser, a woman of German-Parsi descent, that marriage did not last for more than a year.

Perhaps three incidents made Masani a staunch anti-communist. In 1927 he contested the election to the presidentship of the Students' Union of his University in London. But as V.K. Krishna Menon, also contested against him, the labour

votes were split and as a result a Tory candidate was elected. Secondly, Masani visited Russia when he was still a student and Lenin was the ruler of Russia. Masani had come back with a very good impression about the socialist revolution in Russia. However, when he visited Russia again as a joint-secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, when Stalin was the ruler in Russia, Masani came back, carrying concern about the authoritarian rule that was being established in Russia in the name of Marx.

There were both Marxist and democratic socialist strains in the Congress Socialist Party from the beginning. However, the party had officially adopted Marxism as its creed in its second and third conventions held in 1936 under the Chairmanship of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Jayaprakash Narayan respectively. But when the British banned the Communist Party, the communists started infiltrating in the Congress Socialist Party and conspired to gobble it up. Masani exposed the communist conspiracy. Masani, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan and Lohia resigned from the membership of the Party's Executive Committee. When Masani was chosen to preside over the Lahore Convention of the Party in 1939, he, in his presidential address was very critical of the authoritarian rule being established in Russia by the communists. However, he appears to have come to the conclusion that authoritarian rule was inherent in socialism and hence distanced himself not only from the Congress Socialist Party but also from socialism. In 1944 he wrote 'Socialism Reconsidered' and justified his stand.

To counter Communist propaganda all over the world, an association of intellectuals, writers and artists, etc., was founded with the title 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' with headquarters at Paris. Masani founded 'Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom' with the help of Jayaprakash Narayan and Asoka Mehta and got it affiliated to the 'Congress for Cultural Freedom'. However, by the time the Congress Socialist Party abandoned Marxism and accepted democratic socialism as its creed in its convention at Kanpur in 1947, Masani was no longer in the party.

After leaving the party, Masani wrote his most popular book 'Our India' which was even prescribed as a text book in schools in pre-independence days. In 1941 he joined the Tatas. But then, when Mahatma Gandhi launched his 'Quit India' movement, Masani once again resigned his job and plunged in the movement, courting arrest. On his release from the prison, he was so popular in Mumbai, that at the age of 38, he was elected the Mayor of Mumbai, youngest of them till then. Later he contested to the Central Legislative Assembly and won. When the Assembly was converted as the Constituent Assembly for framing India's constitution, he contributed to its deliberations as member of the sub-committees on Fundamental Rights and the Union Powers.

After India became free, he founded and edited a journal 'Freedom First'. Masani, who had distanced himself from socialism, became an advocate of 'mixed economy'. Prime Minister Nehru made him India's representative on the Sub-Committee on Minorities

established by the United Nations. However, Masani was recalled from the position when he became critical of the oppression of minorities in the Soviet Union and its satellite East-European countries. He was then sent as an Ambassador to Brazil from where once again he returned within a year. He was now of the view that in an independent and democratic India, extra-constitutional methods like Satyagraha, Bundh etc., had no place.

In 1957, Masani contested from Ranchi in Bihar as an independent with the support of the Jharkhand Party and won and became a member of the second Lok Sabha. In August 1960, he, along with stalwarts like C.Rajagopalachari and N.G.Ranga, founded the 'Swatantra Party' which became the mouthpiece of Indian Liberalism. He contested the elections to the third Lok Sabha from Chamba in Himachal Pradesh as a Swatantra Party candidate and lost. However, later he entered the third and fourth Lok Sabhas from Rajkot in Gujarat. Since the Swatantra party emerged as the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, Masani became the official 'Leader of the Opposition'. However, in the elections held in 1971, his party formed 'Grand Alliance' with the Congress(O), SSP and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, and Masani and the Grand Alliance were trounced in the elections. This was his last election.

Masani, who had held the view that in an independent and democratic India, Satyagraha had no place, joined the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan when Indira Gandhi tried to throttle democracy and impose her authoritarian rule

on India. His party merged with the 'Janata Party' in 1977 at the behest of Jayaprakash Narayan and romped home to victory in the elections. Though Masani did not contest in the elections, he was promptly appointed the Chairman of the Minorities Commission by the Janata Government. However, once again Masani resigned his position due to his differences with the Government. Perhaps eternal rebellion was his strain.

After his divorce from Piroja, Masani married Shakuntala, a daughter of the Education Minister of the then United Provinces, Shrivastav, who later became a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy. However, Masani could not find his happiness in this marriage also and after a protracted battle spanning more than two decades, at the age of 84 he got a divorce and married again for the fourth time. Having perhaps spent his last days with peace, harmony and perhaps with love, Masani on 27th May 1998 departed as to make the return of the prodigal impossible.

Masani's Works : *Our India (1940), Socialism Reconsidered (1944), Picture of a Plan (1945), A Plea for a Mixed Economy (1947), Our Growing Human Family (1950), Neutralism in India (1951), The Communist Party of India: A Short History (1954), Congress Misrule and Swatantra Alternative (1967), Too Much Politics, Too Little Citizenship (1969), Liberalism (1970), The Constitution, Twenty Years Later (1975), Bliss was it in that Dawn ... (1977), Against the tide (1981), We Indians (1989).*

Land Use Policy

Pannalal Surana

Parliamentary Standing Committee for Rural Development Department, headed by BJP MP Sumitra Mahajan, in its report on proposed Land Acquisition Bill, has suggested that government should acquire private land for genuine public purposes like linear infrastructure or social infrastructure like schools, hospitals etc. to be constructed at state expense.

Two central ministers have reacted violently. Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said that "it is a regressive step if accepted, there will be no investment in manufacturing investors would be scared all manufacturing in the country will stop"

Such hype coming from the mouth of Central Minister is surprising. But not quite. Anand Sharma is known to be more loyal than the king.

Why should existing manufacturing units stop just because there would be no acquisition of private farm lands for private business? And, in future, would not an enterpriser be able to purchase land by negotiating directly with the party concerned? Why should the government be obliged to acquire land for him? If he can purchase machinery and other equipments in open market, why not do so for land?

Reaction by Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Rural Development, is more shocking. He is reported to have said that "... the country needs to embark on high speed industrialization and urbanization and the government cannot shirk from the responsibility of obtaining farmers' lands for private enterprisers." Has he forgotten that he has taken the oath to safeguard constitution which by 73rd amendment has conferred the right to decide about land and other natural resources on the Gram Sabha?

Nobody would dispute that our country needs speedy industrialization. But what kind of industries to be put up? During the last two decades, the state has showered so many facilities and concessions on automobile producing units, which besides aggravating menace of global warming, are also causing increase in the deficit in foreign trade as petroleum constitutes more than 25 percent of our import bill.

What a country like ours needs is a decentralized industrialization with greater component of processing agri-products. And lands for such units can be obtained in waste-land tracts of states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, etc.

Agriculture is a vital sector of our economy. More than 60 percent of our people work on the land. Food grains needed for our increasing population can be produced on land only. Raw materials like cotton, sugarcane, oilseeds, etc. are also being produced by our farmers. Uprooting them from their lands under cultivation is not a wise policy.

Good urbanization can be planned alongside the less congested tracts of railways and/or major roads, instead of putting up SEZs near over-congested centres like Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata or Chennai. Let there be a balanced urbanization.

As the country needs industry, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining, it is high time the central government, or better still, the Planning Commission formulates rational and equitable Land Use Policy. And the rural people should be allowed to participate effectively in the decision making process.

In the age of neglect

Harsh Mander

The process of ageing involves the continuous biological decline of the body and mind with the passing of years. People become forgetful, their vision fades, they hear less, and find it hard to walk. Senility and neurosis are common. It has always been this way. Thirteenth century Sufi poet Rumi sings wistfully of this universal mystery of life: "Why is it that the lion's strength weakens to nothing? The wrestler who could hold anyone down is led out with two people supporting him, their shoulders under his arms?"

This summer, elderly people from villages and slums across the land gathered for five scorching days in Jantar Mantar, the capital's site for public protest. There were among them farm workers and small farmers, casual daily workers, head-loaders and construction labourers, artisans and sex workers. After lifetimes of hard labour, when their wearied bodies sought rest and health-care, they are instead condemned to toil until their last day, if they are to eat.

Their demand in what they called the Pension Parishad was that every aged person in the country who does not pay income tax, or draw a pension from other sources, should be entitled to a monthly pension from the State. A public official is paid a pension equivalent to half the last salary that he or she drew. By the same logic, all aged people from the informal sector should receive a pension that is at least half the statutory minimum wage for unskilled work, which amounts to around 2,000 rupees a month.

This massive public demonstration concerning the destinies of more than 90 million people, tellingly attracted little more than a few inches of newsprint, and hardly any discussion in the loquacious television talk-shows. In an impatiently youthful nation, the aged no longer seem to matter.

The inexorable decline in physical strength with age does not necessarily imply a decline in social worth. On the contrary, in many traditional societies, the aged taught the young the values of the community, and were anchors of the community in difficult times. But in modern society, old people find themselves increasingly pushed to the margins, poorly valued, often barely tolerated, or actively abandoned and expelled.

These problems are compounded greatly for old men and women from impoverished households. They carry many burdens: economic deprivation and insecurity, restricted mobility because of ill-health, physical insecurity, lowered dignity and self-esteem, loneliness, rejection, and lack of dignified occupation and leisure. The UNPF estimates that 70 per cent of the elderly are illiterate: The figure is as high as 93 per cent for aged women. This severely limited their capacity to earn and save when they were strong of body and mind; it limits them even more as they age.

It is estimated that round 75 per cent of old persons live in rural India, of which over 48 per cent are women and more than half are widows. My colleagues and I undertook a year-long study of hunger among destitute

groups in villages in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Odisha. Significantly, large numbers of the most destitute people we encountered in any village were aged persons, several of them living alone.

We found that life, especially for old persons without care givers, is one of unrelieved toil until their last day, of humiliation and daily denial. They suffer daily indignities in securing food through foraging and begging, debt bondage and low end highly underpaid work; self denial; and sacrifice of other survival needs like medicine.

Chronic food shortages often demand the most unreasonable of choices, between food and medicines, such as the choice between eating to stay alive and buying medicines to relieve unbearable pain. Many old people simply try to wait out an attack of illness rather than seek treatment, because if they go to an (often dubious) health practitioner, it means even less food in their stomachs or in those of spouses and others who are dependent on them.

Old people in poor families usually need to work regardless of whether they live separately or with their sons (or occasionally daughters); they still need to contribute to the household in productive ways. Employers know they are desperate and powerless; they pay them very low wages, often nothing more than food, country liquor and a new set of clothes every year.

The work they are offered is physically difficult like cattle grazing on steep scrub hillsides with little foliage, weeding, sewing,

Cartoon Controversy

cutting grass for fodder, cleaning cowsheds, husking and drying grain and gathering firewood and dung and similar activities that require work that is exacting and toilsome, and payment exploitative. Even this is always offered like charity to the unproductive and undeserving, rather than as a rightful claim to work.

Old people are mostly rudely turned away when they seek food on credit from shopkeepers. Trying to buy groceries on credit is always a humiliating experience. Shopkeepers sardonically remark that there is no guarantee how long old people will live; they may slyly slip away to the other world without repaying their loans.

However infirm they are, however sick, however challenged to feed dependents or themselves, there is no prospect for food for them unless and until they work. If begging is also considered work, then this is virtually an unbroken rule that applied almost universally among the old, who also happen to be poor.

It was such men and women who briefly gathered in the city's capital. They asked many questions of us. If people who work for government or private companies get pensions, why not us? If the country cannot afford a pension for the poor, how come it can afford it for those who need it far less desperately than us? The government finds money for what it feels is necessary — for armaments, for building glittering cities, and yes, for multi-crore scams. Then why not for a well-earned retirement for those who laboured all their lives?

They asked many questions of us. But we had few answers.

—Co-written by Oommen C. Kurian

- Aman Biradari

...What begins as a controversy over one cartoon of one icon in a Class XI textbook gallops swiftly — in the space of a weekend — into an oceanic sense of affront by a whole political class. Leader after leader rises in Parliament, aghast at how cartoons in school textbooks are “poisoning” children’s minds, “denigrating” politicians, “endangering” democracy and inculcating “totalitarianism”. This spectacular show of unparalleled political agreement — wondrous gift to mark 60 years of India’s parliamentary democracy? — ends with a blanket call for a ban on cartoons from all NCERT textbooks. The Congress, the BJP, the Communists, the socialists, the TMC and smaller political groups of every hue who can never come together for anything significant — not land acquisition Bills; women’s reservation; farmer relief; anti-corruption laws or even economic regeneration — endorse this unanimously.

Only one brave man, Sharifuddin Shariq, National Conference MP from Baramulla, dares to breast the tide and ask: Aren’t we going overboard? Should we not introspect?...

... Akali Dal MP Harsimrat Kaur screamed about violated 16-year-old minds. Congress chief Sonia Gandhi thumped the table. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee promised a roll back. Congress MP Sanjay Nirupam alleged a conspiracy. BJP veteran Yashwant Sinha asked for resignations. CPI leader D Raja said “historical circumstances had changed”. And HRD Minister Kapil Sibal, who declared the cartoons

to be “offensive and inappropriate for textbooks”, not only ordered an instant “inquiry” into the role of NCERT officials “behind” the books, but summarily withdrew all the textbooks and set up a committee to review them and come up with “appropriate alternatives” in a month...

...A day after the sad spectacle in Parliament, BJP veteran Jaswant Singh began to speak up against his ilk in television interviews. “The demonstration in Parliament was frightening,” he reiterated to TEHELKA. “All the parties displayed unacceptable levels of intolerance. Parliament is a deliberative and legislative body. It should not ever become an inquisitorial one, delivering instant judgments. The way in which it instantaneously rejected cartoons by committed and talented Indians was a disgrace.”

Janata Dal (U) spokesman Shivanand Tiwari is as indignant. “I feel all the MPs behaved like a crowd, without applying their mind on such an important and big issue,” he tells TEHELKA. “The curriculum had changed for the first time after Independence and, ironically, Ambedkar had been properly introduced in the textbooks and given his due for the first time. But nobody bothered to read the text beneath the cartoon. So many politicians said these cartoons denigrate political parties and democracy, but have any of them read even a single sentence in these books that says we are all thieves and corrupt? Instead, these books inform children about the importance and meaning of democracy. I’m a strong

critic of Nehru but I admire the tact with which he stood his ground, rejecting the pressure to declare India a Hindu nation, defending the vision of India as a secular nation when communal passions were running high. Things were much more difficult then. The Constituent Assembly was performing the dual function of drafting the Constitution and acting as Parliament. But even in those trying circumstances,

Parliament behaved well. Now, 60 years later, confronted by such a small uproar, the government immediately yielded. What does this say about all of us?"

This sentiment is mirrored by several young MPs, willing to break ranks with their party veterans. "I find it both amusing and disturbing," says BJP MP Varun Gandhi, "that the two or three

issues for which MPs have come together has been for raising their own salaries, putting red beacons on their cars and slamming cartoons." Manvendra Singh, a former BJP MP, says, "The whole episode demonstrates that we have a severe lack of reading in our country — not reading *Competition Success Review*, but provocative, dissenting history and literature."...

Shoma Chaudhury in Tehelka.

We the undersigned are concerned that Kapil Sibal, minister for human resource development, made an ex cathedra announcement, that the cartoon in the Class XI text book, found offensive by several members of parliament, would be removed, and that he was looking into other potentially offensive cartoons with a view to their possible removal.

Whatever be the merits of the case against the cartoon, the matter should not be treated as one of mere executive discretion. This establishes the kind of precedent that should be avoided. Such issues are bound to come up from time to time, therefore appropriate procedures have to be followed, such as the setting up of a committee of academics to look into each case, so that summary judgments of the ministers concerned, under political pressures of various kinds, do not determine the contents of our academic syllabi.

We strongly condemn the vandalism perpetrated by a group of people in the office of Professor Suhas Palshikar, one of the advisors for the textbook. Such vandalism is fundamentally antithetical to the democratic values cherished by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar for which he is justly revered by all Indians.

- Romila Thapar, Prabhat Patnaik, Zoya Hasan, Amitabh Kundu, Mushirul Hasan, C P Chandrasekar, Pralay Kanungo, Gopal Guru, Jayati Ghosh, Ram Rahman, N K Sharma, Sudhanva Deshpande, Rajendra Prasad, P K Shukla and M K Raina.

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Following is the text matter from pages 17-18-19. (The cartoon on constitution making appears on page 18) of the NCERT Class XI Political Science textbook “Indian Constitution at Work”

The Principles of Deliberations

The authority of the Constituent assembly does not come only from the fact that it was broadly, though not perfectly, representative. It comes from the procedures it adopted to frame the Constitution and the values its members brought to their deliberations. While in any assembly that claims to be representative, it is desirable that diverse sections of society participate, it is equally important that they participate not only as representatives of their own identity or community. Each member deliberated upon the Constitution with the interests of the whole nation in mind. There were often disagreements amongst members, but few of these disagreements could be traced to members protecting their own interests.

There were legitimate differences of principle. And the differences were many: should India adopt a centralized or decentralized system of government? What should be the relations between the States and the Centre? What should be the powers of the judiciary? Should the Constitution protect property rights? Almost every issue that lies at the foundation of a modern state was discussed with great sophistication. Only one provision of the Constitution was passed without virtually any debate: the introduction of universal suffrage (meaning that all citizens reaching a certain age, would be entitled to be voters irrespective of religion, caste, education, gender or income).

So, while the members felt no need at all to discuss the issue of who should have the right to vote, every other matter was seriously discussed and debated. Nothing can be a better testament to the democratic commitment of this Assembly.

The constitution drew its authority from the fact that members of the Constituent Assembly engaged in what one might call *public reason*. The members of the Assembly placed a great emphasis on discussion and reasoned argument. They did not simply advance their own interests, but gave principled reasons to other members for their positions. The very act of giving reasons to others makes you move away from simply a narrow consideration of your own interest because you have to give reasons to others to make them go along with your view point. The voluminous debates in the Constituent Assembly where each clause of the constitution was subjected to scrutiny and debate, is a tribute to public reason at its best. These debates deserved to be memorialized as one of the most significant chapters in the history of constitution making, equal in importance to the French and American Revolutions.

Procedures

The importance of public reason was emphasized in the mundane procedures of the Assembly as well. The Constituent Assembly had eight major Committees on different subjects. Usually, Jawaharlal Nehru,

Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad or Ambedkar chaired these Committees. These were not men who agreed with each other on many things. Ambedkar had been a bitter critic of the Congress and Gandhi, accusing them of not doing enough for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes. Patel and Nehru disagreed on many issues. Nevertheless, they all worked together. Each Committee usually drafted particular provisions of the Constitution which were then subjected to debate by the entire Assembly. Usually an attempt was made to reach a consensus with the belief that provisions agreed to by all, would not be detrimental



Cartoonist's impression of the snail's pace with which the constitution was made. Making of the constitution took almost three years. Is the cartoonist commenting on this fact? Why do you think, did the Constituent Assembly take so long to make the Constitution?

to any particular interests. Some provisions were subject to the vote. But in each instance every single argument, query or concern was responded to with great care and in writing. The Assembly met for one hundred and sixty six days, spread over two years and eleven months. Its sessions were open to the press and the public alike.

Inheritance of the nationalist movement

But no constitution is simply a product of the Assembly that produces it. An Assembly as diverse as the Constituent Assembly of India could not have functioned if there was no background consensus on the main principles the Constitution should enshrine. These principles were forged during the long struggle for freedom. In a way, the Constituent Assembly was giving concrete shape and form to the principles it had inherited from the nationalist movement. For decades preceding the promulgation of the Constitution, the nationalist movement had debated many questions that were relevant to the making of the constitution - the shape and form of government of India should have, the values it

should uphold, the inequalities it should overcome. Answers forged in those debates were given their final form in the Constitution.

Perhaps the best summary of the principles that the nationalist movement brought to the Constituent Assembly is the Objectives Resolution (the resolution that defined the aims of the Assembly) moved by Nehru in

1946. This resolution encapsulated the aspirations and values behind the Constitution. What the previous section terms as substantive provisions of the constitution is inspired by and summed up by the values incorporated in the Objectives Resolution. Based on this resolution, our constitution gave institutional

expression to these fundamental commitments: equality, liberty, democracy, sovereignty and a cosmopolitan identity. Thus, our Constitution is not merely a maze of rules and procedures, but a moral commitment to establish a government that will fulfill the many promises that the nationalist movement held before the people.



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Unsurprisingly, the report of the three interlocuters on Jammu and Kashmir has not been favourably received by all sections of Indians. The Indian political class has more or less cold-shouldered it. The main opposition party, the BJP, has been critical. Within Kashmir itself, the separatist groups have predictably rejected it as of no consequence to the determination of Kashmir's future. Outside the political class, the intelligentsia has yet to offer a studied reaction, and in all probability may not choose to do so.

The Kashmir question was complex and complicated to begin with. Over the years, it has hardened to the extent that a seemingly intractable logjam appears to have entrenched itself and now stands in the way of a breakthrough. Yet, a way out is not beyond reach if, and this is a big "if", all the concerned interests apply their minds to finding a solution that will ensure a durable peace in the valley blessed by both India and Pakistan. The three interlocuters have realistically acknowledged the complexities and have wisely desisted from offering impractical solutions. The complexities are such that no team of interlocuters or mediators or well-wishers of India and Pakistan

can suggest a way out that would be acceptable to the three major stake-holders, India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The quest has always been for a common denominator that embraces, largely if not wholly, the interests, short term and long term, of all stakeholders. This also has been the basis for all the backstage diplomacy that has been undertaken by well-wishers of both countries in the last few years. In our view, the interlocuters have also attempted to offer the basis for such a long term solution.

Although feelings tend to run high in the two countries on the Kashmir issue, we are now in a stage where sober heads have realized, and have succeeded to a large extent in transferring that realization to the respective populations that there cannot be a military solution to the Kashmir problem. Also, that neither India nor Pakistan can ever agree to a change in the status quo in terms of control or influence or territorial allegiance. With a war or a change in status quo ruled out, the only way out of the logjam is to legitimize the reality that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India governed by the Indian Constitution with the state being on par with

the other states of the federation. The interlocuters have taken this postulate as the fundamental plank of their recommendations and have attempted to fulfill their mandate through specific suggestions for action. All the actions suggested aim to enlarge Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy with a view to satisfying to the maximum extent the aspirations of the people.

A return to the 1953 situation has been found impractical. Much waters have flown down the Jhelum since 1953 and have changed not only the politics but also the mindsets of Kashmiris. The interlocuters suggest that the Line of Control be made irrelevant so that interaction between the two Kashmirs can narrow down emotional distance that divides them. A soft LoC will facilitate not only human flows in either direction but also movement of goods. In the context of the recent decision to open up bilateral trading and trade routes, a soft LoC will be a facilitator.

The suggestion for the retention of the special status for J & K is a wise one since the status issue has assumed all the overtones and undertones of "prestige and face" and any proposal to amend it or modify it consistent with the position in other states is apt to rouse passions. A follow-up of this suggestion is the recommendation that a panel be set up to review all central laws made applicable to the state after 1953. This together with the proposal to examine the avenues for enlarging the state's powers and privileges should go a long way in convincing the people that short of independence New Delhi does not wish to abridge the state's autonomy in any way.

(Continued on Page 5)

Between the lines

Is India's story over?

Kuldip Nayar

When a chief minister leads a demonstration in her own state to protest against the hiked petrol price, it shows the intense feelings over the raise. But it is all too comical to see the chief minister doing so when the government is the authority where the buck stops.

Something similar is happening to India's economy: the ruling Congress is angry over the increasing burdens on the people and its government is behaving as if it is not accountable. Who is to blame? Was the bloom a mere bubble that has burst? Is the success story over? In a way, it is, if one were to look at the tumbling growth rate from the 8-9 per cent to 5-7 per cent and the beating the rupee is receiving at the hands of the US dollar, touching Rs 56 when it was Rs 45 this January. The decreasing exports and slowing of industry suggests that the moonlight was just a one-evening phenomenon.

The inflation crossing the figure of 10.5 per cent makes one still more pessimist about the future. On the other hand, the reports of bumper wheat crop beyond the storage capacity of silos and mandis are elating. In the same way, the progress in information technology industry and the spectrum (mobiles) is inspiring. The service sector on the whole is doing well. The progress doesn't seem to be fake.

What one can see is that the ventures dependent on individual initiative have fared well. The entrepreneurs have, on their own, propelled the economy upwards despite the meddling by the

government. In fact, in most cases of failure there is only one explanation: the government's bungling. The Manmohan Singh rule did not take remedial measures when the faltering economy required correction. However loud the denial, the policy paralysis and slow decision-making are palpable.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is an economic wizard, but looks like King Canute who had placed his throne near the shore and vainly attempted to command the waves to recede until he almost drowned. The Prime Minister sees the demolition of India's success story, but does not know how to pick up the pieces or from where to start. The main drawback is his inability to have his way. The recent budget is an example.

The Prime Minister reportedly proposed two or three measures to Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to make the budget perk. But Mukherjee did not consider the proposals worth including in the budget. It is an open secret that the union cabinet lacks cohesion. Some ministers are not even on speaking terms. The estrangement between Mukherjee and Home Minister P. Chidambaram has come in the way of taking bold steps. The latter is Mukherjee's predecessor and has different ideas about improving the economy.

The problem arises when Manmohan Singh does not assert himself even when he realizes that his cabinet colleagues are wrong and that the country needs such

drastic steps which he had initiated in 1991 when he was the finance minister. He doesn't seem to have his way even in small matters like the distribution of food grains because Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has his own ideas. Therefore, the government does not step in when a large quantity of (60,000 tonnes) of food grains, some of it as old as 15 years, is rotting while one third of India's population is going to bed without food. The governments, both in the states and at the centre, have ignored even the Supreme Court's order that food grains should be distributed among the poor and not allowed to rot.

However, the most important reason for the economy's regression is the lack of political stability. Economics cannot be separated from politics. True, the government's own allies are in the way. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who led the protest march in Kolkata, is not in favour of reducing subsidies which run into thousands of crores. Is it the coalition dharma that has made the government effete?

The government could have tried to reach a consensus with the BJP. The party, which has more numbers than the Congress in the Rajya Sabha, has been willing to give support to bills relating to insurance, pension and food security. But its complaint is that the Congress is divided on these measures and does not bring the bills to the house. For the sake of the nation, they would have to bury the hatchet on basic economic issues and jointly push the wheel of development out of the quagmire in which it has struck. The country cannot afford to go back to the Hindu growth of 3.4 per cent.

However, it has become a fashion for the Western agencies to downgrade India because it is

a free society and to extol China which is a dictatorship without any voice of the people. Even the United Nations Development Programme, supposed to be independent, has lectured the Indian government not to emphasise on "inclusive" growth because this would come a cropper. But this is one way to see the benefits of development reaching the poor. India still provides the West with a huge market to dump whatever it wants to.

The cry for foreign investment does not behove a nation which has freed itself from the exploitative London, still at the top of economic cooperation with us. One fears that the pressure to introduce more

reforms may make the government relent in the fields where the indigenous producers are strong. And what about the Indian corporate sector which has made all the money in the country and now feverishly investing abroad?

India has to look within and find a solution to the problems itself. A nation's assets are its people, not the government which can be thrown out in elections. This reminds the words of President John F. Kennedy: *And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.* People in India need a similar approach.

PM and Safety

Strongly favouring nuclear power, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on said there would be no compromise on safety of atomic plants and it would be harmful to close the additional source of energy. "It would be harmful for the country to pass an ordinance on denial of nuclear power," Dr. Singh said replying to supplementaries during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha. He was replying to question by PManant Geete (Shiv Sena) on whether India would do a re-think on nuclear power in the post-Fukushima scenario in which Germany and Japan have announced that they would give up atomic energy. "We must keep the option of having nuclear power as an additional source of energy open," Dr. Singh said. He said there would be no compromise on the safety of nuclear power plants. Dr. Singh said after the Fukushima accident of March 2011, he had ordered a complete review of all the 20 operating nuclear power reactors across the country and none of them has reported any incident. "Our view is that when it comes to safety, there will be no

compromise," the Prime Minister said.

Do you mean Japan did compromise on safety before Fukushima Disaster? Do you mean Russia did compromise on safety before Chernobyl? Do you mean USA did compromise on safety before Three Mile Island accident? Do you mean India did compromise on safety before Bhopal Gas Tragedy? We are not fools to believe you all these safety when you cannot have safety in ISRO under Madhavan Nair? This is under you PM? Whom are we going to believe any more? As PM you cannot give safety in 2G spectrum? AS PM you cannot give safety even in Commonwealth Game? These are all under you and easily controllable. But you have no direct control over Nuclear Plants, how can you give us safety? Since 1962 after the enactment of Atomic Energy Act by the Parliament you are able to produce only 3000 MW electricity. Do you mean all your predecessors were a failure? Enough is enough. Do not make us all fools.

– **Thomas Kocherry**

Burden or Debt?

Harsh Mander

The Government of India today guarantees a pension of Rs. 400 a month to all persons above 60 years who are identified to be Below Poverty Line (BPL). State governments have variously added to this amount. The meagre official pension today, equivalent to just around 4 to 8 days' statutory minimum wages in most states, is way too little for dignified survival. There are huge problems of delay and corruption in this small amount of money reaching old people on time in most states, unchecked because of the powerlessness of the aged. Even so, our studies show that pensions are the life-line of survival for impoverished old people, when it reaches them.

In the formal sector, old age is a time of well-earned rest on a reasonable pension, of around half the salary drawn when a person retires. But this is only a dream for most old people, because the informal sector assures few social security protections. Most indigent old persons, therefore, are forced to look for work, even when their limbs, breathing and eyesight fail. The National Sample Survey Organisation in 2004-05 estimated that around 37 million elderly in India are engaged in productive work. The actual numbers are likely to be much higher, because poor old people in the countryside are condemned to the most casualised work, within or outside homes, underpaid and devalued, in order to feed themselves each day. In most MGNREGA sites, I have found significant numbers of aged persons,

struggling with the demands of hard manual labour.

Fractures in the joint family system and commonly owned property, urban migration, shortage of accommodation in cities and different individualistic cultural norms have all contributed to sharply eroding family care of the aged. The crumbling of joint families, loneliness and the lack of physical and emotional support systems, compound their struggles to survive with dignity. Earlier, impoverished men in villages tended to migrate alone, leaving behind the elders with their spouses and children. Today, increasingly, they migrate with their nuclear families, leaving behind their elders literally to beg for food, or die.

Increasing numbers of aged persons are forced to live alone, or only with their spouses. The United Nations Population Fund estimates that around one-fifth of the elderly live alone or with a spouse only both in the rural and urban areas. The percentage is as high as 45% in Tamil Nadu, and significant in Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Kerala. This trend is likely to accelerate country-wide, deepening the need of the elderly for economic, social and psychological support.

Current official pension arrangements cover too few people, with too little. Existing poverty lines are really starvation lines. As development economist Jean Dreze observes, "They were not

meant as an eligibility condition for social support". Further, "the 'BPL Census' invariably turns out to be a hit-or-miss affair". He adds that "elderly people may be severely neglected even in relatively well-off households. The impossibility of identifying BPL households is compounded with the impossibility of ascertaining the distribution of resources within the family". For all these reasons, "there is a strong case for universal pensions, along with a universal PDS - both are needed by the elderly as well as by other vulnerable groups".

The immediate reaction to the demand for a universal pension for all aged persons who are not covered by formal pension schemes, or pay income tax, is that this is an impractical, unacceptable demand, because the country could not afford the 'burden' of a universal pension. It is interesting that most references to ageing in public policy are today prefixed with the word 'burden'. For a culture which valued the aged as repositories of wisdom and experience, and looked up to them for wise counsel and socialising the young, we have indeed come a long way. In today's obsession with economic growth, people are valued mainly as producers and consumers. The aged no longer qualify for respect and worth.

Any public intervention for the 'non-productive' elderly is seen as a drain on the exchequer. Every State effort at expanding social security is criticised as 'pulling growth down'. Global literature on ageing abounds

with alarmist speculation, pitting 'workers versus the elderly', and drawing worrying scenarios, where the latter are seen as 'an increasingly costly burden on the rest of society'. The aged, like disease, are viewed routinely as a burden: to the economy and by implication, to our society at large, and increasingly even to the families which they raised and to which they belong.

But Noam Chomsky reminds us, "Social security is based on the assumption that we care about each other, that we have a communal responsibility to take care of people who can't take care of themselves, whether they're children or the

elderly." He observes that in today's times, this principle "is considered subversive and has to be driven out of people's heads: the principle that you care about other people".

There is no doubt that a universal pension will cost a significant amount. At Rs. 2,000 a month, and covering 90 per cent of all aged persons, it will amount to an annual public expenditure of Rs. 192,000 crore.

The people of India must decide if this is an unbearable burden. Or is it a long-neglected debt to the aged which must no longer remain unpaid?

Cartoon Controversy

The letter by Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar to Professor Sinclair and their articles 'Dangers of Deletion' and 'Save the classroom from Political class', on the cartoon controversy in NCERT's textbooks (*Janata* May 20, 2012) is a sad commentary on our education, especially the school-stage education dealing with children of adolescent stage — a delicate stage between childhood and adulthood. It is true that our political class, like the political class of all ages and societies, has messed up with education and tried to indoctrinate children according to their (politicians') needs rather than those of the children. This had been happening from implementation of Macaulay's Minutes to present day, in spite of the noble efforts of Prof. Yashpal, Prof. Krishna Kumar and other scholars associated with National Curriculum Framework, 2005.

There is no doubt that this was the best effort at national level to

prepare books for school stages. This dealt with most of the concerns of the educationists although some of the questions remained untackled, perhaps due to lack of time. One of such questions was to identify and delineate the aesthetic needs, tastes and capability to appreciate the contents in respect of children of various age-groups. I remember this kind of discussion was started in the sixties of the last century by 'Muktadhara', the Hindi version of Nikhil Chakravartty's weekly 'Mainstream'. This discussion especially stressed the point that the textbooks must include contents which should be suitable to the needs and capabilities of the various age-groups and must not include material which should be difficult for children to appreciate or which may produce a negative effect on children. It is generally agreed among the educationists (which I found during my research on children books, in the sixties of the previous century) that the cartoon,

an art of the ridicule, is not suitable to adolescent children who are generally used to comics — the art of fantasy. This premise may not be perfectly correct but it has some ingredients of truth which should have been kept in mind. However, the violent reaction of the political classes on this is deplorable and must be condemned. It will be tragic if this will result in 'deifying Ambedkar into an empty symbol worse than any caricature', as Yogendra Yadav said.

- **Mastram Kapoor**

(Continued from Page 2)

Many grievances and complaints remain and will persist as long as the current trust deficit is unerasable. Unfortunately, despite the lowering of tensions stemming from insurgency and militancy, even trivial developments are contributing to the deepening of this deficit. The interlocutors' report should be regarded by both New Delhi and Srinagar as the basis and signal for reviving the dialogue between the two capitals. The report is certainly not the last word on the subject of breaking the Kashmir impasse but it surely can be the instrument to goad the Centre and the State to talk to and not at each other in pursuit of the larger goal of a durable peace.

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A Nostalgic visit to Rashtra Seva Dal Youth Camp

S. R. Nene

India has more than 50 percent population below the age of 25 and 65 percent below the age of 35 percent. It is expected that in 2020 the average age of an Indian will be 29 years compared to 37 for China and 48 years for Japan. India's young population employed in manufacturing, services and agricultural sectors is expected to contribute over 85 percent to the Indian GDP. Hence there is a need to guide the youth of India to develop their cognitive and performing abilities in the right direction to achieve the GDP goals. But this is not all. There is a greater need to shape up national character by creating awareness of probity in public life and the spirit of national service through individual character, the end result of value education. This also means waging a stiff fight against the corrupting influence of free market economy sponsored by American imperialism.

Ulka Mahajan, a dedicated social activist knows well the importance of India's youth power in shaping up India's future. For the last eleven years she has organized several youth camps of one week duration at the Sane Guruji National Memorial Campus, near Goregaon, Raigad district, Maharashtra. She and other scholarly faculty members guide the camp inmates in the age group of 18-25 on the hows, whats and whys of contemporary socioeconomic, political and environmental issues. Each year she offers an integrated course that enables the inmates to acquire knowledge that is not available in

high schools and colleges. There are no servants here. All chores at the camp including housekeeping i.e. cleaning of dormitories, kitchen, dining area, assembly place, cutting of vegetables and all other assistance in kitchen management is rendered by the inmates, turn by turn. All inmates have to align themselves with a disciplined community living, as in a Gandhi Ashram, in which there is no place for petty pride or a lowly feeling arising out of one's caste or social background.

The theme for the daylong on 7 May was : awareness of individual and collective obligation. The faculty consisted of Suresh Sawant and Bharati Sharma, both noted social activists. They used catechetical method to elicit fuller participation. They asked the course mates to prioritize important concerns and interests of common man. The speakers laid threadbare the nature, relevance, function and political relationships of various aspects of the theme. Early during the morning session a mere 8 percent of the students were in favour of participating in politics, 60 percent shunned politics and the remaining 32 percent were neutral. At the end of the session more than 80 percent had changed their minds. They were in favour of participating in political process. They affirmed that most political processes relate to the vested interest of people at large and that politics themselves constitute an established right that cannot be eliminated in any society since it is a fact of life.

The camp was attended by 54 participants, 36 boys and 18 girls. They came from varying backgrounds, rural, urban and semi-urban. Most of them belonged to middle or lower middle class. Almost all of them were high school graduates and 8 participants had university degree.

On 6 May Ulka Mahajan had designed a role playing game using Orwellian insight. She made full use of political allegory to expose how the rich, able, mighty and the cunning exploit common people through villainy, calumny and demoniac behavior. Ulka is an intelligently outspoken lady. She is a taskmaster but a student friendly person.

Other noted speakers included : Neeraja, a poetess who spoke on a woman's role as a mother ; Ojas spoke on Irom Sharmila's fast against special powers given to the army in Manipur ; Nitin Tawde spoke on bird-life. Thought provoking films on Sane Guruji's life and work, understanding of democracy, gender differentiation and the need to recognize gender equality were screened followed by open discussion.

The campus is spread on 36 acres of vast forested area. A hill side, a canal and four simple but elegant building structures under construction provide a serene and sylvan background for holding character building camps. The memorial is being developed largely on public charity and there is no

government interference in either planning or development of the site. The memorial started with a fund of Rs. 80 lakh collected by children. Antarbharati, Sane Guruji's pet theme for transmission of Indian cultural values infused in regional literature is among the main projects of the memorial.

I spent one full day at the camp. Suresh Karale, general secretary of the memorial committee and Sonali Shinde a senior camp leader briefed me. Ulka Mahajan, chief organizer of the camp is supported by two dedicated workers, Sandip Deore and Umesh Khade. Both of them work full time for Search, a social organization founded by Dr. Abhay and Dr. Rani Bang. The Search works for the upliftment of deprived tribals and destitute people.

Five Rashtra Seva Dal workers in the age group of 65-70 had come to meet the camp inmates. It was indeed a nostalgic experience to talk to them.

I had attended two Rashtra Seva Dal Camps in 1944 and 1946. The speakers included great names like Acharya Bhagwat, Acharya Javdekar, Bhausahab Ranade, S. M. Joshi, Vasant Bapat et al. I did not understand much of what they said at that time. But they made a lasting impact on me. I did become a self-aware individual, I did shed some biases and prejudices, I did move closer to human values viz. honesty, respect to elders, dutifulness, simple living of dispassion etc. These values have guided me all along. I was happy to see that there are, in 2012, aspiring young people who would like to become good human beings, the sine qua non or the purpose of human life.

B.T. Brinjal Biopiracy Case

In its first official confirmation, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA, India's independent regulator on all matters pertaining to biodiversity protection, conservation and use) has stated that "it is proceeding with lodging of complaint against the alleged violators" of Biological Diversity Act on grounds of biopiracy in promoting B.t. Brinjal, India's first transgenic GMO food. This information was provided to Environment Support Group (ESG) in response to a Right to Information query. As per Indian law, the filing of the complaint against this serious environmental crime assumes launching of criminal prosecution against the violators. India has already enforced a moratorium on the commercial release of B.t. Brinjal on various scientific, legal, health and community concerns.

The undersigned on behalf of Environment Support Group had filed a complaint in February 2010 accusing the world's largest agritech company Monsanto along with its Indian partner Mahyco, Sathguru Consultants (representing USAID and Cornell University) and various public funded agriculture institutions such as University of Agriculture Sciences (Dharwar, Karnataka), Tamilnadu Agricultural University (Coimbatore) and Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (Uttar Pradesh), of accessing over 16 varieties of brinjal endemic to India in comprehensive violation of the Biological Diversity Act while promoting the commercial release of transgenic B.t. Brinjal through 2005-2010. None of the regulatory agencies, including the

NBA and Ministry of Environment and Forests, had bothered to verify compliance with the B D Act throughout this period, and began to take action with much reluctance after ESG filed the complaint.

The RTI query was filed seeking all documentation pertaining to the case filed by ESG. Shockingly, and quite questionably, NBA has refused to part with the documentation even to the complainants. Justifying this stand, it has controversially and peculiarly claimed that the documentation cannot be shared with the complainants as "the matter is under advanced stage of lodging of complaint and taking into account the intricacies which involve nuances of biotechnology it is felt that it may not be appropriate to provide the documents/instructions at this juncture". Evidently, NBA is not even sure if this is the right decision to take, and ESG will file an appeal against this decision soon.

As reported in the media, the decision to initiate criminal prosecution against this case of biopiracy was taken by NBA in its meeting held on 28 February 2012, after it was put to a vote. The vote became essential as some members of the NBA were keen on stopping the prosecution. This when when NBA had already resolved in June 2011 to prosecute the violators, a fact repeatedly confirmed in Parliament by the Indian Environment Minister Smt. Jayanti Natarajan. ESG has consistently raised concerns over such dithering by NBA to initiate action against violators of the Biological Diversity Act.

(Continued on Page 15)

Challenges for Danish Socialists-in-Power

D. K. Giri

The historic general election in Denmark last year, on 15 September 2011, went interestingly unnoticed in the Indian press and even Social Democratic fraternity. For the first time in Denmark's democratic history, a woman became the Prime Minister in that year. It was a kind of a Pyrrhic victory for the Social Democrats as they got only 24.9 per cent of votes, the worst result for them in 108 years, yet Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the leader of the party became the Prime Minister by cobbling up a majority coalition. The Rightist Danish People's Party became the third largest party with 12.3 percent of votes. The voter turnout in the election was record high with 87.7 percent. Such a spectacular election merits a closer attention of Socialists across the world.

Denmark with 5.5 million people sends 179 members to its unicameral Parliament (folketinget). Denmark votes for 175 members, two come from Faroe Islands, and two from Greenland. The 'Red bloc' or centre-left consisting of Social Democratic Party, Socialist People's Party, Social Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance ended the 10-year rule of centre-right "Blue Alliance" led by Lars Loekke Ramussen of Liberal Party. The Liberal Party remains the largest party with 26.7 percent votes and 47 seats, adding one to its tally in 2007 elections; the Social Democratic Party got 24.8 percent votes and 44 seats, losing one from 2007 tally; the Right wing Danish People's Party came third with 12.3 percent votes and 22 seats, losing 3 from 2007; Social Liberal party

secured 9.5 percent votes and 17 seats, gaining 8 seats from 2007; Socialist People's party got 9.2 percent votes and 16 seats, losing 7 from the last election; Red-Green Alliance got 6.7 percent votes and 12 seats: the Liberal Alliance got 5 percent votes and 9 seats, adding 4; Conservative People's Party got 4.9 percent votes, and 8 seats losing 10 seats from 2007. So, the Red Alliance totaled 50.2 percent votes and 89 seats, gaining 8 seats and the incumbent Blue Alliance got 49.8 percent votes with 86 seats losing 8 seats. The government was formed by a coalition of four parties with a simple majority. In the victory rally, the SDP leader said "make no mistake, today we have written history!"

The Election Issues

There was no major difference between the two major parties in election campaign. As such, Denmark is a strongly Social Democratic State; there is a national consensus on Social Democratic architect of the Danish welfare state. In fact, both welfare state and open market institutions are not a bone of contention in Danish politics. The Danes are strongly in favor of their welfare society; it has to be "defended at any price". Even the Liberal party which headed the government from 2001 to 2011 promised to keep the welfare state intact, or run it more efficiently.

There were however, three important issues in the general elections -economy, immigration, and deeper integration into European Union. Danish economy like other

European economies faced low growth, large government deficits, and historic levels of national debt. Although Denmark was not like Greece or Spain, in economic downturn, the unemployment rate rose from 0 to 5 percent on the eve of elections. The budget deficit rose to 3.8 percent of GDP, with bank bailout programme, the deficit was estimated to rise to 4.6 percent in 2012. Danish government got involved in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to observers, to divert people's attention from the economic problems.

The incumbent Prime Minister Loekke Ramussen thought he had steered the country through the economic downturn that had engulfed the whole of Europe, and was seeking re-election. But his ally Danish People's Party had pushed Denmark in a corner on immigration and European integration which caused heavy losses of support. On the other hand, the Social Democratic party fought on a stronger and more positive economic platform. It promised to tax Denmark's banks, wealthier people, finance 4 billion dollar expansion of Denmark's welfare system, by far the most generous one in the whole of Europe. It sought a judicious mix of government spending and tax policies to restore the economic health, not letting Denmark slip into bankruptcy like Greece. The party refused to jump into austerity band wagon; instead the SDP leader proposed 12 minutes a day extra work in order to increase growth and productivity. This seems to have worked as extra hour a week

has raised 15 billion Kroner to the State coffers. It was observed that the high turnout of voters (87.7 percent) was meant to protest against the social cuts.

The second issue was immigration. In Denmark, there are now 200,000 Muslims, mostly asylum seekers. Danish People's Party, an ally of the incumbent government suggested tighter controls on immigration. Danes are a highly homogeneous population; in fact they are formed as a tribe. The immigration issue has caused problem of integration in Danish society and unemployment, as was argued by the Danish People's Party. Although immigration is an issue, some saw it as a scapegoat for bad economic management, so while the Danish People's Party retained its support base, the Liberals and the Conservatives lost.

The third major issue was of deeper integration into the European Union. Danish People's Party got Denmark to restore border controls against Schengen agreement. It sought to re-impose controls on its frontiers with Germany and Sweden. The leader of Danish People's Party, Pia Kjaersgaard argued that controls would counter illegal immigration and organized crime. The DPP also reached a "gentleman's agreement" with the government that Denmark would support a Franco-Italian proposal for the changes to Schengen Agreement itself. However, this move hurt the Danish business interests as European Union is the market for Danish export industries. Thus, the ruling coalition lost the business support.

Renewal of SDP

Ironically, the Social Democratic Party had its worst showing since 108 years, and yet, leads the present

government. This is the time for the party to undergo serious change in its approach, initiate a process of self-renewal to consolidate its position.

The Social Democratic Party came into existence in 1884 entering Danish Parliament the same year. By 1924, it became the largest party, and remained so for 77 years. The party dominated the Danish politics in the 1960s, 1970s and again in 1990s. The Social Democratic government led by Poul Nyrup Ramussen in 1990s, created a package of macro-economic, industrial and labour market policies that led to Danish employment miracle and established the famous "flexicurity" (flexible + security) system that attracted the world wide attention and admiration. But in 2001, they lost to the Liberals. Some believe that a 1998 initiative, dubbed as a Whitsun Packet, named after the season it was issued, which meant increased taxes and limiting private consumption, was a factor in the 2001 defeat of Social Democrats. The loss of power to the Liberals meant that Social Democrats lost their position as the largest party in the Folketinget, a position they had held without interruption since 1924.

The Danish politics is largely Social Democratic. It is therefore difficult for a Social Democratic party to remain indispensable for social inclusion, solidarity and emancipation. These shared political values can be secured with any political party. I have argued that a similar situation exists in India. Since socialism is written into India's Constitution, everyone claims to be a socialist, hence difficult for a Socialist Party to be distinctly recognized. In such a fluid context, other factors like leadership qualities, campaigning styles, ideological posturing, comparative

charisma and so on, become decisive for electoral success. No wonder, in the last election, the SDP leader was commented upon for her dress sense, her liking for designer clothes - she was called by a section of media as 'Gucci Helle'. One political paper remarked that "she was too well dressed for Social Democrats, too fresh to become the head of the country, and too cool to win peoples' hearts." The Social Democrats need to be perceived as people's leaders, by identifying with masses, persuasive communication with particular target groups. In order to regain their support base and the profile, the Social Democrats need to refocus on the image and the ideology. Already, there are accusations that the government is renegeing on several of its election promises. This has to be rectified with adequately explaining to the people. If this government fails, which many are predicting, the Socialists will go into a long limbo, and find it harder to recover. The Social Democrats must manage the economy, rescue it from seductive "less tax and more choice" approach, they must communicate to the people that there is a fine trade-off between taxes and public utilities.

Social Democrats are usually accused of mismanaging the economy, encouraging less growth and more government spending, that stigma must be shed off. On immigration, they have to be rational to immigrants, as well as sensitive to the feelings of locals. Social Democrats should remain firm on their principles and flexible in their policies. Unless they provide formidable leadership, their support will continue to slip into their allies, as well as their adversaries. The major challenge they have is to govern and they must face it.

Ailing Public Health Care

K. S. Chalam

Public health care is generally understood as the science and art of prolonging the health of individuals and groups supported by the state. The definition given by academics may be different from what we normally conceive as public health (government) care system in India. It is not limited to communicable diseases as common people expect that the state should provide health care to prevent any kind of disability due to physical or mental suffering. One of the important gifts of human civilization is that the prevention of disease is transferred from the individual to the group or society. However the public/government health care is now being replaced by private service providers or insurance companies that charge a premium to come to the rescue of the client when he becomes a patient. This has grown as a big service sector that runs in to trillions of dollars across the world. It is estimated that the medical market in India is worth 3-5 lakh crores of rupees per year. Thus, India has emerged as the worlds' most debilitating country as far as health services are concerned. There are several reasons for this and liberalization is alleged to be one of the causes for reducing health care to a commercial service.

Modern medical professionals were trained by the British in their allopathic system by offering courses through colleges affiliated to universities. The notion of quack has been made popular to render indigenous systems inferior - till the state recognized them and introduced the AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga

and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) in 1995. Even those who have undergone training through these traditional courses prefer to settle in cities. Majority of the students who get in to the colleges by paying huge sums of capitation fees and go through years of prolonged education of obtaining P.G, diploma, certificate, etc to be able to attract enough clientele do burn out or reach the middle age by the time they start practicing. Some of them may think that the rural areas are not resourceful enough to recover the costs of their training. Some of them seem to be deficient in knowledge about the disease regimes of the rural areas and the poor. This may be one of the reasons for the lack of response to the government proposal to incentivize rural service with 10 bonus marks per year to get admission in PG. There is a shortage of 14000 doctors at PHC level. Some senior professors complain that the students care less for the para-clinical subjects in their anxiety to prepare for PG entrance. The knowledge base of several students mostly from the private colleges is so poor that the degrees from Russia and Eastern Europe are now considered as better choice at least to employ them in the management of corporate hospitals.

The state of health of people can be discerned in terms of some indicators. The life expectancy in India is 65 years as against world average of 68, adult mortality rate is 212 against 176, Under 5 mortality is 66 against 60, prevalence of TB per lakh of population is 249 against 201

and so on - in 2011. It is reported that 5 lakh people are killed annually due to TB and another 1.25 lakhs to 3 lakhs die due to malaria. The incidence of ill health is related to the availability of safe drinking water, sanitation and other conditions that are critically inadequate in India. It is found that the medical manpower is being supplied through private colleges. There are 334 medical colleges in the country out of which 180 colleges are in the private sector and the standards are far from satisfactory as per MCI. The complementary segment of public health care can be considered as the drug or pharmaceutical industry that has been completely privatized and the few public sector units were ravaged by the greed of few corporate players. It is alleged that the IPR regime of WTO has helped some of the companies to dupe the customers and in connivance with corrupt bureaucrats and doctors have damaged the health of the gullible public. It seems there is some change in the attitude of the government in recent times as far as drug policy is concerned.

It seems the central Ministry of Health and Family welfare along with the MCI are seized of the problem. The proposal to conduct NEET, two months' foundation course, three year rural oriented Medical degree etc, appear to be some of the strategies conceived to overcome the challenge. But, the crisis in public health care is so grave that these measures appear to be inadequate. The ministry has

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Constitutional Vision of Democratic India

B. Sudershan Reddy

We often find policy and opinion makers gloating over the fact that many Indians have done superlatively well in all walks of life, both here and abroad, and that some of them have become world beaters. However, while those facts are undeniable, let us pause and reflect upon their numbers. They would but constitute a very tiny proportion of the entire population. That is also an equally undeniable fact. In a country of 1.2 billion people, that such a small proportion would rise to the top, through extraordinary self-motivation, or on account of them being fortunate to have grown up in socio-economic circumstances that allows them to explore their creative talents, is only to be expected. But that cannot become an excuse to turn a blind eye to the fact that most of our youngsters are being under-served. Unfortunately, the entire debate about “quality education” seems to again turn on whether there are enough institutions that develop “immediately employable skills”, and viewing the educational sector as another profit, nay inordinate profiteering, avenue. There is a difference between running an educational institution in a commercially feasible sense, wherein the costs of providing the education, and the efforts at creating new knowledge, are met, versus greed to generate inordinate profits in disseminating knowledge. That would be the wrong way to go. History, that great theatre of human experience over time, teaches us that there has never been a single centre of great learning that has ever been

built on the profit motive. Whether it is an Oxford and a Cambridge in the United Kingdom, or a Harvard and a Stanford in United States, every society built its great centres of learning on one cardinal principle: teaching youngsters is a sacred task, and it ought to be informed by a degree of social conscience that cannot be sullied by the profit motive.

While the economic impact of the failures of our educational system, which can be reasonably be seen to be socio-cultural failures, has often been noted, broader public debate does not sufficiently reflect upon the potential impact on the polity of this nation, and the project of constitutional democracy.

An equally important effect of an underperforming educational system, amongst other things, would be with respect to the quality of public discourse about the problems confronting our nation and societies. On account of the failure to inculcate critical and auto-didactic modes of learning we end up leaving our youngsters woefully ill equipped to engage in a reasoned and reasonable arguments about choices to be made as collective entities. The learning by rote methodology leaves us with little ability to deconstruct proposed solutions, especially where there are vast distributional issues involved as between the benefits that are expected, who gets them, and the costs to be incurred, and who bears them. What this does is that it induces a blind acceptance of

policies as being universally good, especially where the policy design and implementation is likely to effect us beneficially. This in turn leads to a refusal to acknowledge the fact that the costs may be disproportionately being borne by others in the society, and development of the perception that those who protest the policies being designed and implemented are anti-social, or even anti-national. The core problem is the inability to transcend the narrow sectarian interests and understand the others view point, thereby reducing the level of tolerance exhibited in public debate. It probably ought not to surprise anyone that the nature of public debate in India has assumed, often, the shape of a shouting match – there is less of debate, because people are unwilling or incapable of questioning their own assumptions of what is right or wrong, and more of name calling.

Humanity has grappled with the role of “knowledge” in politics from times immemorial. Plato believed that pure reason will definitely lead us to a categorical body of knowledge that is complete, and that everyone who has access to that categorical body would both agree with each other as to what that body of knowledge is and also follow it, because that would be the just and the good life. However, starting with Hume, and then majestically culminating in the works of Immanuel Kant, we have also come to realise that all knowledge is fallible, and that it is only a provisionally accepted truth,

which in light of new experiences and circumstances ought to lead us to revise our notions of the truth. While often cast as polar opposites of each other, it would be more fruitful to recognise the two as balancing propositions. Not seeking knowledge, even if it leads us only to provisional truths, would disable action, both individual and collective. It would demolish the very prospect of collective and cooperative action. However, the belief that all truth is provisional also seems to lead to the conclusion that there exist no common grounds for any agreement whatsoever. The post-modernist turn that degenerates into pure critique, and indeed the infeasibility of any form of consensual agreement, also makes collective action impossible, because it posits that there are no moral grounds to proceed.

Today, as we scan the daily headlines, we see public discourse proceeding on both those two extreme fronts. On the one hand we see a group claiming that it has all the answers, and that the niceties and necessity of democratic discourse, channelled through institutions of a constitutional democracy ought to be set aside in creating new institutions and new laws, irrespective of whether they comport with the constitutional values and ideals. On the other hand, we also see a discourse being enacted in our political institutions, wherein competitive politics, and claim to power in order to plunder the nation, ride supreme. If the first one exhibits the monotonic mind, that believes that the knowledge one possesses is infallible, the second one seems to be founded on the belief that there can be no moral foundations of political action and discourse, and hence every venal action is permissible so long as ultimately people keep electing them. In this struggle between the

dogmatic, and hence the dictatorial, and the relativists, and hence the amoral, on the other, it would appear that we have forgotten that we have constituted ourselves as a Constitutional democracy, and the history of how we did so.

At the time of our independence, many of those who led us there, had such stature and affection of the people, and indeed possessing of such great intellect, they could have sat down, by themselves and drafted out the Constitution. However, they were also committed democrats, who knew that a constitutional democracy would survive if and only if it is founded on strong institutions to work the constitution, and manned by people who have faith in the constitutional values and ideologies. Consequently, they formed the Constituent Assembly, and debated for nearly three long years every para and word, in an atmosphere of great respect for divergent view points. I will submit that there has never been, and probably never will be, a greater demonstration of reasoned and reasonable debate. Within the context of public discourse that informs our political sphere, I think I would be remiss if I were to not point out that our Constitution, contrary to what its critics propound, is a masterly document to promote reasoned and reasonable debate.

The primary mechanism that the framers of our constitution chose was to explicitly state that all collective action, envisaged under the watchful eye and guidance of the State, was to be subject to the rigour of testing on the anvil of fundamental rights, along with directive principles of State policy that were to be foundational in governance. Contrary to what some political theorists propound, the fundamental rights as enunciated in

our Constitution are not just negative rights against actions of the State, but are also informed by positive obligations of the State, to undertake measures that would promote a more productive deliberative democracy: greater equality of status and opportunity, and complete justice, social, economic and political in all walks of life, coupled with the promise of tolerance for different belief systems. The framers of the Constitution were acutely conscious that in a country with the kind of diversity that we have, and with the endemic inequalities, of status and opportunity, and vast swaths of humanity in our nation being subjected to gross and unconscionable social and economic deprivations, the prospects of a deliberative democracy – in which every individual has his/her innate dignity protected and groups of them can live in fraternity – would be very bleak.

It is not a surprise then, that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, also warned us that without bringing about social, and economic equality, the mere grant of political equality would not suffice to ensure the continuance of a constitutional democracy, that is ever strengthened through reasoned and reasonable debate about choices being effectuated in the social, economic and political spheres. One of the principal reasons why political freedoms are not sufficient, to realise the promise of equality of status and opportunity, is that there is an ever present danger of elite capture of the judicial, executive and legislative spheres of state action and to that extent it was foreseen that the discourse between the elite and the historically dispossessed who form the majority of the population would turn away from the ideals of reasoned and reasonable debate about social choices.

For too long we have belaboured under the false impression that economic growth is primordial and that for its sake we can forsake all other constitutional goals. However, even a cursory glance at the Constitutional structure and text ought to make it clear to any discerning person that economic growth is but one of the means to achieve the broader set of constitutional goals. Where the pursuit of economic growth derogates from other constitutional values and goals, especially to a large extent, then the Constitutional framework necessarily has to intercede to prevent constitutional failure. Consequently, our Constitution has always been interpreted to mean that it does not prioritize either a dictatorial socialist system of organisation of the polity and the economy nor a fascist neo-liberal paradigm in which whatever consequences result as a consequence of the functioning of a laissez faire free market are to be deemed to be acceptable. This has been the principle means through which a balance has been struck between the market and the State, so that the primordial task of eliminating rampant inequalities and social discrimination can be pursued.

In fact the history of our constitutional jurisprudence can be viewed as a debate between the Supreme Court and the Executive and Legislative branches with regard to how and where the balance ought to be struck. In the early years of the republic, while a strictly legal positivist approach would appear to have been followed by the Supreme Court, the fact remains that even though the Court had struck down many socio-economic legislations on the grounds that fundamental rights were affected, once the constitutional amendments were put in place, the Courts accepted

the very same socio-economic legislation as acceptable within the constitutional order. However, when the provisions of the Constitution were sought to be used to completely eviscerate fundamental rights of their meaning, of both political and socio-economic rights, the Courts again stepped in to declare that the identity of the very Constitution by which legislatures were being formed could not be changed.

It is this theme of our constitutional history that Granville Austin wrote about in his seminal book, "The Indian Constitution: The Cornerstone of a Nation". In recent times there have been a lot of remarks, in popular media, that the Supreme Court of India is an activist court, prone to judicial over-reach, and is stepping into the executive domain. I believe that the criticism is unwarranted and also ill informed, both intellectually and ethically. Further, such a claim is only possible if one were to assume that the Indian Constitution is a neutral document or that it ought to be treated as one.

When the framers of our Constitution debated, wrote and ratified it, they were obviously informed about larger movements in philosophical thought about how a country ought to be governed. They sent experts to visit many countries, and studied their experiences. Based on such a thorough study, they framed the Constitution, with elements that are both rigid as well as flexible. A recent empirical study about stability and life spans of all the written constitutions reveals that Indian Constitution exhibits practically each and every element that contributes to stability. The average age of a written constitution has been around 17 years, and nearly 90% of them have not gone past 50 years.

What does one mean by the statement that a "constitution has survived"? It could have multiple meanings. In order to delineate those meanings one would need to understand what a "constitution" is. It is certainly a political document, because it reflects the compromises effectuated by people as a nation, at the constitutive moment when they are organising themselves as a nation-state, about the mode and manner in which the country is to be governed, as well as the goals to which the country is to aspire for. It also distributes authority, legislative, executive and judiciary, mandating the duty to uphold the Constitution upon all the organs and agents of the State. Hence, it is also a legal document, and it is a well established principle of constitutional interpretation that any state action that transgresses constitutional limits is to be struck down as unconstitutional. The measure of success of a Constitution then is to be seen in whether the people who have constituted themselves as a nation state continue to repose faith in the constituting document and the institutions it has created as the means to resolve their differences in, and continue to effectuate collective action through.

That the Indian Constitution has survived is primarily evidenced by the fact that by and large the people of this country have sought to resolve their differences through the institutional framework erected by the Constitution, and have continued to retain faith in democratic politics. The survival of India, as a democracy and as a country is no mean achievement. Few scholars, as this old civilisation and its inheritors constituted themselves into a nation-state, gave it chances of remaining as one for too long. As the Chief Justice of the High Court of Guwahati, I

had the opportunity to visit even the remotest parts of the North East. One thing which struck me, and indeed gladdened my heart as it would anyone else, was that in even the remotest of outposts we were invariably greeted by a “Jai Hind.” Not namaste, not good morning, or any equivalent in any local dialect. But a full fledged “Jai Hind” delivered passionately. India has been transformed from being a land of hundreds of political formations and deepest of social divisions; and the idea of India as a nation has survived and even thrived in the minds and hearts of our people. In that sense, we can certainly say that the constitutional order has succeeded.

A closer look at who votes reveals the fault lines. It is the poor of this country, the socially dispossessed and the deprived who have voted, in election after election, in massive numbers and proportion of the total voting public. In a large measure the credit for survival of India as a nation and as a democracy must surely go to the people of this nation, and the institutional complex erected by the Constitution that has been able to provide checks and balances on the exercise of power, and so long as the State functioned in accordance with its values the people of this nation were given a perceptible degree of hope, especially the dispossessed and the disempowered, of the possibility of a dignified life, if not for them in their lifespan, at least to their descendants.

However, when we look at the matter of other constitutional goals, in the socio-economic sphere, things do not appear to be as rosy as we would have liked them to be, and there are many reasons to be extremely disturbed. Amartya Sen, in his book the *Argumentative Indian*,

notes that with respect to matters concerning equality and justice, while what we have not achieved is not an immeasurable failure, we have “measurably underachieved”. It is this facet of non-performance of the Constitutional order that ought to worry us. This is so because the longer such “measurable underachievement” continues, the greater the risk that the hope that people repose in the constitutional order would be withdrawn. In a certain sense, some of the signals of that hope receding may already have emerged.

As I remarked earlier in this speech, India’s population has increasingly become younger in composition. It is also better informed, and politically more assertive. If a vast majority of them begin to believe that the “hope of a better tomorrow” is nothing more than a chimera, a false promise that will not translate into real development, for all the people in some foreseeable future, then it could lead to an explosive situation.

Over the past few decades, a new paradigm of policy and popular discourse has emerged which eschews the need to continue to maintain this project of hope for the poor and the dispossessed. It claims that the only hope lies in rapid economic growth, whatever be the costs, so that eventually everyone else can be lifted. The argument that there ought to be a greater pie so that everyone can have a greater share, and that it would lead to greater political stability is only trivially true and believable if and only if one were to also believe that the existing pie itself is way too small to be more equitably distributed, and that economic growth, by itself, would eventually lead to a more equitable distribution. That this paradigm

is being increasingly questioned is reflected in the vast pockets of disaffection. According to some official counts nearly one third of India’s land mass is affected by serious violent agitational politics. It is equally reflected in the fact that in response to voices of dissent, policy makers, power wielders and the elite have begun to advocate a muscular state craft in which all voices of dissent are to be suppressed ruthlessly devoid of any respect for constitutional limitations.

In a certain sense we seem to be again arriving at an inflection point that demands articulation of constitutional values, of political and socio-economic rights of the citizens, in order to protect, maintain and uphold the project of hope that the Constitution essentially is. When a dictatorial socialist world view attempted to eviscerate fundamental rights of all meaning and content, the Supreme Court of India was able to find within the constitutional text the majestic values espoused in its decision in *Keshavananda Bharati*. When a fascist neo-liberal world view informs the governance model, and as revealed by the shape that the governance systems take, and threatens those fundamental rights, of any content, both negative and positive, the constitutional text can be relied upon to articulate constitutional limitations against acts of omission and commission of the State and its agents. This is the very essence of Indian constitutionalism.

Obviously the judiciary ought not to articulate a political ideology or a world view of its own that is alien to the Constitution. Its primary task is to articulate the constitutional vision, based on the text and constitutional history. The argument that the judiciary can never question and set aside a policy decision is misplaced

and a false one. Policy is not framed in the air, and its consequences are not limited to mere theoretical abstractions. Its consequences are real, and those real consequences can and do, many times, have extremely deleterious impact on fundamental rights of citizens. The freedom of the executive and legislatures to frame policy is not unlimited; the domain of that freedom is limited by the walls of constitutional permissibility. It is the duty of the judiciary to enforce those limits; and while doing so it is also the duty of the judiciary to emphatically articulate the constitutional vision and values. The sterile language of legal positivism cannot adequately conceive the vastness of the task, the extent of misery suffered by vast swaths of our people, and the attendant dangers to fraternity amongst groups and national integrity that arise from a disregard of the foundational goals of the nation-state enshrined in the Constitution.

The second criticism levied against the judiciary whenever it holds acts of omission or commission of the State to be unconstitutional is that an unelected judiciary setting aside the decisions of an elected legislature and executive is fundamentally anti-majoritarian, and consequently anti-democratic. This criticism is also misinformed because the very notion of a constitutional democracy is underpinned by the assumption that electoral politics become possible, or if they emerge *sui generis* sustainable, if and only if the power of the people vested in them are used within limits acceptable to most, if not all the people. The danger to the feasibility of democracy lies in the very possibility that majoritarian mandates are viewed as *carte blanche* to suppress minority views and aspirations. Moreover elite capture of the decision making

institutions can lead the exercise of the power of the people towards ends that are contrary to the interests of the people. Constitutions are written in order to specify those limits so that democratic politics become possible and sustainable. In that sense, constitutionalism is to be viewed not as anti-democratic, but as essential foundation for the thriving of a democracy. There cannot be any doubt that to the extent that political institutions, and the cultural sphere, articulated the constitutional vision of dignity and fraternity, more and more people joined the democratic process, asserting their rights to participate in the decision making processes, and trusted that the processes within the institutions erected by the Constitution reflect adequately the aspirations of the people.

(to be concluded)

(Continued from Page 7)

ESG has also submitted a representation to Karnataka Chief Minister Shri. Sadananda Gowda urging him to immediately revive the decision to criminally prosecute those engaged in biopiracy through the Karnataka Biodiversity Board. It may be recalled that the Board had decided to initiate appropriate legal action against University of Agricultural Sciences (Dharwar), Monsanto and Mahyco for accessing 6 local varieties of brinjal illegally from Karnataka, and converting them into transgenic B.t. Brinjal products, all in violation of the Biological Diversity Act. However, due to pressure, apparently brought by none other than the Principal Secretary of Karnataka's Environment Department (the chief custodian of Karnataka's biodiversity), the investigation built

over two years was suspended in a controversial decision of the Board in January 2012. ESG initiated a mass petition in February this year against this illegal and retrograde decision to the Chief Minister. Over 500 groups and individuals across India and the world have endorsed this representation.

More details about ESG's efforts to tackle biopiracy in India, including documents listed above, are accessible at: www.esgindia.org

**- Leo F. Saldanha and
Bhargavi S. Rao**

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recognized in some of its reports that the out of pocket expenses on health care is very high and "the hospitalized Indians spend on an average 58 per cent of their total annual expenditure. Over 48 percent of hospitalized Indians fall below poverty line because of hospital expenses." The average expenditure for a BPL family in a private set up is estimated to be Rs 5638 and even in public hospital it amounts to Rs 2700 (2004). The solution offered by the policy makers in terms of privatization of health care through insurance coverage is evaluated by scholars: It is found that it has raised the out of pocket expenses of the insured and the experiments through Arogyasri have ultimately helped the corporate hospitals. The central budget expenditure on health in India is the lowest with less than one per cent of GDP compared to USA-6.2, China-2 and even Bangladesh at 1.6 percent. How could the tinkering of medical education (of course in the right direction) without increasing the budget and regulating the private sector would cure the ailing public health care?



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In India the main internal issues are : [a] The need to eradicate corruption [b] The prevention of religion-based and caste-based sectarianism and [c] Provision of the basic needs of the people, ie, food security, health, education, and cultivable land for those progressively or arbitrarily deprived of it. Issues [b] and [c] were {in addition to issue [a] also important considerations for Mahatma Gandhi.

Twice in the last few decades (in 1974 and 1989) we have seen movements develop around Issue [a]; but when those who ran or controlled these movements came into power, they did little about Issues [b] and [c]. Indeed, quite the contrary!!

Those taking part in such movements should therefore be asked also to make some commitments about [b] and [c]. If Issue [a] is to be used only as a basis to come to power in India, such a movement ought to evoke little sympathy.

It is important, therefore, that some lessons be learnt from the JP and VP movements and the political cycles which the country underwent as a result.

Anti-corruption movements in India have suffered from an incomplete understanding of the meaning and implications of corruption. These movements, whether led by JP or by VP Singh, or as organized in recent months, have been marked by a narrow understanding of corruption (even though JP personally may well have had a wider understanding).

Corruption is simply a species of the wider issue of abuse of power and authority and of a lack of respect for the Rule of Law.

Recent anti-corruption movements have understood corruption primarily in financial and monetary terms. But corruption is not limited to bribery-related conduct. A studied and deliberate withdrawal on the part of state-authorities and of dominant political parties from a performance of their

duty to protect the lives and property of citizens is also corruption. It is in fact a grave form of malfeasance that seems to cut across political parties and regimes. In recent memory such malfeasance has been reflected, for example, in the state role and political party conduct in the face of violence against Sikhs in Delhi, Muslims in Ahmedabad, Christians in Orissa, non-Maharashtrians in Maharashtra and Dalits in Haryana. Anti-corruption movements that not only do not raise such issues but appear

instead to offer good conduct certificates to certain delinquent forces and regimes cannot inspire as much confidence as they might otherwise have done. The ideological stance here cannot be concealed: Such movements would go after a police constable for, say, taking a traffic-challan-related bribe (indeed in the last round of the Lok Pal movement its major focus was on subordinate Government employees), but wink at a senior police official or a minister for organizing a pogrom or looking away while human

beings are killed or beaten up as part of a concerted and in-built bias against a community or a section of the people.

Corruption will be fought as part of a national renewal and of a re-affirmation of the highest values of our struggle for freedom and of our Constitution. It cannot be fought by a method of pick and choose that leaves the worst traits in our politics and society untouched and in fact strengthened by non-condemnation, direct certification or affirmation by association.

The World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy Consultation is Farce

We came to know about the recent World Bank consultation on its Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) in Bengaluru held on 31 May 2012. Invitation for the meeting was sent to select NGOs, deliberately avoiding the ones who are critical of its policies, or are working on the social and environmental impacts of the projects funded by the World Bank.

This is typical World Bank conduct. It has consistently followed a non-transparent and undemocratic procedure for previous CAS' (2005-2008 and 2009-2012) consultations. It chooses a few select NGOs into a process of so-called multi stakeholder consultations. After similar meetings with various Government departments (such as the Ministry of Finance) it then puts out the next CAS citing widespread 'democratic' consultations across the country and how the new CAS reflects a consensus among 'civil society' for the World Bank's strategy of rapid growth and privatisation.

It is about time to change this business as usual approach for the

2013-2016 CAS. The World Bank is at its most vulnerable in recent years and continually unable to meet its stated objectives. Many of India's vibrant people's movements and civil society organizations argue that the World Bank has no legitimate role in development policy. This was amply evident at the 2007 Independent Peoples Tribunal on the World Bank in which over 60 national groups and some 600 people participated. The World Bank is unclear about its role in India – its budgetary allocations amount for a miniscule amount of India's development budget (the World Bank contributes only about 3.3 percent of the Central government's development spending, and its loan volume is only about 0.2 percent of India's GDP) and its reinvention as a climate bank from a development bank has been an abject failure. And lastly many of the World Bank's own evaluations cite that many of its projects don't meet their objectives.

The signatories to this statement, several of who question the very need

for the existence of such an undemocratic institution as the World Bank, demand that the 2013-2016 CAS process be put on hold. The next CAS should be subordinated to deep and detailed consultations and wider process of debate in the Parliament, among other elected representatives and with a wider set of people – project affected communities, academicians and civil society groups. The new CAS should be finalized only after a detailed review process and a much required assessment by the Indian Parliament of the 2009-2012 CAS and of the broader need for World Bank finance and advice for the future development of the country. The Parliament should initiate such a consultation and evaluation process on the CAS involving project affected communities, parliamentarians and other elected representatives, academicians and civil society groups. Their inputs should form an integral part of assessing the previous CAS and informing a democratic debate on the need for new set of funding from the World Bank.

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Creating Social Democratic Voters

D.K. Giri

One can argue that the massive victory of Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh has come about with socialist votes. In the new 'politics of identity', if Mayawati, the former Chief Minister, used Kanshi Ram, and Dr. Ambedkar as icons of dalits, the current Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav is using socialist leaders like Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, and Karpoori Thakur, which obviously mean consolidating and attracting socialist votes. Critics would question the socialist credentials of Samajwadi Party by drawing a caste angle to its politics. But, whatever may be the electoral praxis, Samajwadi Party calls itself socialist, has a socialist constitution and is following the footprints of great socialist leaders. So, arguably, there are socialist voters in Uttar Pradesh, but how do we create socialist voters across the country is the burden of my exercise in this article.

Voters' Perception

Anywhere in the world, voters perceive reality in two ways. One, voters see issues as they fit their political affiliation and their party orientation. They would like to avoid inconsistency in their perception, what is called, in psychological terms, cognitive dissonance. The second way for them is to see reality in terms of their own interests and values. However, Indian voters' perception changes fast. They make up their minds on single issues such as authoritarianism (1977), stability (1986), communalism (1984), corruption (1989). Interestingly, since the single party hegemony ended in

1989, and multi-party coalition governments came to power, the single-issue-election turned to multi-issue, which created scope for politics of development (Bihar), social justice (UP), modernization (Andhra Pradesh), industrialization (Orissa), and good governance (West Bengal). Consequently, national politics became sum total of regional politics as regional parties constituted the governing coalition at the centre. This scenario creates conditions for constructing profiles for a social democratic voter. No doubt, social democracy thrives in political pluralism.

Profiling a Socialist Voter

So far social democracy has been associated with eradication of poverty, securing the legitimate rights of working class, demand for equity, economic nationalism, tolerance and communal accommodation (secularism) and so on. So, bulk of the social democratic voters is found in underclass and working class. Amongst the hugely growing middle class, and the neo-rich, there are not many social democratic voters. Also, it is hard to distinguish between social democratic and communist voters. How do we create social democratic support across the social segments?

Different social classes will have different social and political dimensions. The poor and working class will aspire for economic upliftment and social security, the middle class (middle + upper) will like to follow rules and aspire for law and order, environmental protection

and the neo-rich will seek individual autonomy, to put it differently, they may like to have new ideas and be creative. While some of these areas need to be addressed, articulated by social democrats in terms of policies, another issue of importance is how their party is formed, how it functions internally, and how it is perceived externally. So a good mix of party policies and positioning with party organizing principles will create or lose social democratic votes.

Law and order, environment

For good many people, law-and-order is becoming a major concern. Crimes, such as rape, intimidation, extortion, murder, kidnapping, violence, are becoming the order of the day. Statistics are galore to indicate the growth in crime. One interesting indicator is the rapid growth in private security sector, it is said to be 35 percent annually. Decline in law and order situation, and social degeneration are inversely proportional to growth in private security services. In Uttar Pradesh, law and order has been a decisive factor in electoral outcomes. Mayawati's BSP scored over Samajwadi Party in law and order until the advantage was upset in the last election due to her corruption and profligacy. In West Bengal, political violence became so intolerable that, finally, the voters threw out the communists. In Orissa, law and order has become terribly shaky due to Maoist insurgency and displacement of people by mining companies. None of the political parties has any clue on how to deal

with Naxalites, or how to adopt an inclusive mining policy. I have attempted to suggest a format for 'Negotiating with Naxals', (*News portal, livenewsbee.com*).

Protection of environment is linked with law and order, and general attitude to living styles. Both these influence middle class social and political dimensions. Reckless man-made deforestation fuels Naxalism, and iniquitous natural resource allocation and bad management cause social conflicts. These have to be addressed. Most of them can be redressed through environmental education and instigation of change in life-style. This will create social democratic voters amongst middle class.

Individualism and economic pluralism

Critiques of political mobilization would argue that in India, there are mainly three groups of people : individualists (all-for-myself attitude), consumerists (wanting a good life, a hedonistic attitude), and cynicists (nothing changes, non-conviction attitude). These three categories roughly correspond to neo-rich, middle class, and underclass. This division can be seen in another perspective, in a positive way. While Social Democratic or Left politics relates to class categorization, and class communication, there is room and need for promoting individualism, which one could call social and economic entrepreneurship, not self-serving aggrandizement. This would lead to innovation, creativity and the growth of the "New Man". One could not construct a class without self-confident individuals. Social Democrats have, sadly, confused it with the neo-liberal approach, but it is certainly different.

Social Democratic voter across the world is confused about the globalised economy. Global capital formation has caused deprivation, impoverishment, and marginalization. Globalizers would argue that it has generated, growth, goods, innovation, and in many cases, employment. However the backlash to globalization in the form of economic nationalism is gaining ground. Without going into the vexed debate of globalization, one can safely and surely argue for economic pluralism. It needs no intellectual persuasion to suggest that the core of social democracy consists of pluralism – social, cultural, political, and economic. At the same time, it requires a closer and deeper look at economic nationalism and how it is linked with social and cultural pluralism. A few years ago, in 1990s, when globalization was really spreading, Lord Bhikhu Parekh, a professor of political philosophy in England, protested to the Americans that their International economic policies (globalization) was destroying national cultures and pluralism. He was invited to the American Senate to argue his case, Economic pluralism consisting of different sectors – large, medium, tertiary and small, he argued, is ideal for inclusive growth, and pluralism. These sectors can work in integration, not in competition. Social democratic votes can then be found in all sectors of economy and society.

Reforming the parties

I, and many others, have argued consistently that a social democratic party has to be distinguished from other parties as one running on democratically rational organizing principles. But party-reform debate has to be made recurring, as the

political party organization has become a very critical issue in Indian democracy. To elaborate on the point, just one trait running through the parties will suffice. Dynastic politics militates against democracy. Yet, the devil of dynasty has devoured most major political parties of the country. Even the Samajwadi Party is not immune to this virus. If Lalu Yadav, a socialist by origin, put his simple, politically hapless wife as the Chief Minister of Bihar, Akhilesh Yadav, who inherited the leadership from his father, a socialist again, is putting his wife into the Indian Parliament. Thanks to modern-day Gandhis (Indira Gandhi clan), the dynastic politics is being legitimized by the electorate, as each party is pointing out the dynasticism of the other.

Even if Indians are made to or they choose to live with dynastic politics, as it seems to "hold a party together," there are other reforms in urgent need of discussion and adoption. For instance, one is generational change in leadership. Even the Congress party, in which all the top Ministers are 70 plus, has asked in its recent central working committee meeting, for promoting young leaders. But, the main point or strategy missing in the call to the next generation is the "loss of youth and youth organization", youth that symbolizes spirit of sacrifice, dedication, and honest work. As ever, the youth organizations represent an important reservoir for the recruitment of the next generation. In the past, the youth underwent training and grooming for taking bigger responsibilities in future. They were provided with required political and organizational skills to run the parties and the government. But now the youth are skilled in wheeling and dealing, intrigues and factionalism. This

distortion of youth needs to be corrected. There are commendable initiatives taken by organizations like Yusuf Meherally Centre who are schooling youths in “good work”. Their network of youths called “*Yuva Biradari*” (Youth Fraternity) provides human and social skills, which if and when translated into political action will produce desired results. This will also meet another need – bringing in people from outside politics. Career politicians do no longer inspire confidence and enthusiasm. It is therefore necessary to bring in people from other walks of life, so-called career changers in order to infuse new blood into political parties. Whatever may have been the motivation, Rajiv Gandhi did bring in a good many people into high positions in his party. It is arguable whether such people without, grooming in “rough and tumble” of politics can handle high positions, as is sadly evident in the case of the current Indian Prime Minister, who despite his “good intentions and credible personality” is failing to provide leadership. But, a fair level of mobility between politics, academic, development and business world should be encouraged.

To conclude, a social democratic voter needs to be found, or created in the context of pluralism, socialism, regionalism, caring politics, an all-class approach, and distinctive party organization. A party that is modern, inclusive, caring, or organizationally recurrently reforming, puts strong emphasis on membership – training, skill building, nurturing in loyalty and discipline. Social Democratic voter treats politics as a passion, not a profession, and social democracy as a way of life. One is aware that so-

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Dissent is virtue too

Harsh Mander

The right to dissent is central to the idea of a democracy. This is true not just for ordinary citizens, but equally for civil servants in the employ of government. I believe that a democracy guarantees to civil servants not only the right, but even enjoins on them the duty, to dissent in response to the call of their conscience.

In my two decades in the civil service, obedience was repeatedly upheld as the paramount virtue of a civil servant in a democracy. It was commonly advocated that the duty of a civil servant was to obey orders of political masters without questioning these dictates. Officers who dissented were not just inconvenient, but were seen to be stepping outside the boundaries laid down for the permanent unelected executive in a parliamentary democracy.

Common practice

But I believe that the duty of obedience is at most only to lawful official publicly espoused objectives of the government, not to unlawful directives of elected political or administrative superiors. Let me illustrate. The official position of governments is that legislated land reform laws should be faithfully implemented. But the unstated orders of political superiors are almost invariably that powerful landowners should not be dispossessed of their land holdings. Whenever we tried to distribute ceiling surplus agricultural land to the landless, or restore land illegally expropriated from tribal land holders,

Ministers and local elected representatives would instruct us to stop implementing progressive land reform laws. These orders were patently illegal.

The same chasm between the stated legal policies and the actual will of the executive can be found everywhere. The stated policies are for fair and non-partisan action in communal, caste and gender violence, but the unstated political or administrative directives often advocate biased action against vulnerable and oppressed castes, religious and ethnic minorities and women. The law enjoins respect for human fundamental rights, but there is often open and unapologetic political endorsement even at the highest levels of the executive for torture and encounter killings. The law makes corruption a criminal offence, but in practice this is endorsed as the grease that makes the giant sluggish state machinery function.

Reality is different

In fact, if officers are faithful to the stated policies and laws of government, then the officer will then be bound to implement land reforms and other progressive legislation, to protect oppressed and dispossessed minorities, castes and women, fight corruption and respect human rights. But the reality is that in obeying and implementing in letter and spirit these stated lawful policies, the officer will frequently be disobeying the unlawful goals of members of the superior executive. Civil servants who choose to obey these unlawful directives

cannot claim ethical defence in the duty of obedience. Far from it being their duty to obey, their obligation is to resist and actually disobey these orders. Only in so doing will they safeguard democracy and the Constitution.

In the early, relatively idealistic decades after Independence, the civil service organised relief camps for millions of refugees uprooted by the country's bloody Partition, and organised their rehabilitation. It also succeeded in restraining divisive and communal organisations and politics, as a result of which the troubled and wounded country was remarkably free of communal riots after Gandhi's assassination in the hands of extremist Hindutva radicals.

This era of communal peace endured for more than a decade, until the Jabalpur riots in the early 1961. Fault lines had of course already begun to appear – such as when the District Magistrate Nair in Ayodhya opened the locks of the Babri Masjid for Hindu worship in 1949, laying the foundations for a communal dispute which was to tear apart the country three decades later – but these were relatively rare. The country could still rely on the higher civil service to act without communal partisanship in religious and ethnic disputes, despite other failures – including growing corruption.

Spectacular mass betrayal of the civil service occurred during the Emergency imposed on the country in 1975. A judicial commission led by Justice Shah which later investigated these traumatic and shameful 18 months of suspended freedoms, famously observed that when the civil service was asked to bend, it crawled.

In later decades of freedom, the same failure to resist illegal orders growingly marked official behaviour in later hours of major national challenges, such as: the 1984 massacre of more than 3,000 Sikhs in the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in the hands of her Sikh bodyguards; failures to hold criminally accountable the Union Carbide in the poisonous gas leak which killed thousands in Bhopal in 1984; the slaughter of unarmed Muslim youth at Hashimpura by paramilitary soldiers in 1987; the riots in Bhagalpur in 1989; the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the slaughter that followed in its wake in Mumbai; and the state-sponsored massacre in Gujarat in 2002; the active complicity of the permanent executive in the denial of human rights, fake encounter killings and suppression by brute force of separatist and left-wing insurgencies; and burgeoning collaborative corruption with private industry and politicians.

Bureaucratic betrayal

As the years passed, greater and greater sections of the civil services have capitulated and obeyed illegal instructions to deny people their constitutional rights, including to life, liberty and democratic dissent, and to fail to extend equal protection of the law to people because of their religious or ethnic identities or economic powerlessness. The unsung and mostly unknown heroes from within the bureaucracy who swam bravely against the current, refusing to obey unjust and illegal orders, could never gather sufficient critical mass for the permanent bureaucracy to act as a decisive bulwark against divisive and communal politics, corruption and injustice.

The civil service must carry therefore historical blame for failures of the state to extend equal protection of the law to religious and ethnic minorities and to impoverished people in general. Unless it reclaims its fundamental duty of conscience, it must relinquish its claim to the helm of governance in the country.

–*Aman Biradari*

(Continued from Page 2)

Signed by National Alliance of People's Movements, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, National Fishworkers Forum, Urban Research Centre, Bangalore, Matu Jansangthan, Uttrakhand, South Asia Network for Dams, Rivers and People, New Delhi, Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, Madhya Pradesh, Environment Support Group, Bangalore, Intercultural Resources, New Delhi, Delhi Forum, New Delhi, Programme for Social Action, New Delhi, Machimaar Adhikaar Sangharsh Sangathan, Gujarat, Odisha Chas Parivesh Surekhsha Parishad, Indian Social Action Forum, New Delhi, Rural Volunteers Center, Assam, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Maharashtra, Water Initiatives Odisha, North East Peoples' Alliance, Manipur, Citizens Concern for Dams and Development, Manipur, Toxics Watch, New Delhi, DICE Foundation, Nagaland, Institute for Democracy And Sustainability, New Delhi, Focus on the Global South, New Delhi, Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee, Bindrai Institute for Research, Study and Action, Dynamic Action Group, Kerala.

Anguish of Kashmir and the Way out

Ram Puniyani

Time and over again while interacting with the youth from Kashmir what comes forth straight and striking is the pain and anguish of the youth, their frustration, their realization about the brutality of the system in which they live in Kashmir. Youth from Kashmir coming to different parts of India for various meetings and interactions generally display a high level of understanding of the issues involved and are vocal about the restlessness over their present and future. What have we done to be labeled as 'terrorists, is one of the questions on their mind and lips. Why we in Kashmir have to face the torture from different quarters, including the one from Indian army. The restlessness is so much on display that one can gauge the depth of their feeling about the role of armed players, the militants and the Indian army both in different measures.

What are the causes of the frustration of the youth and others from Kashmir and what is the way out? Recently, (May 2012), the recommendations of the group of interlocutors, Dileep Padgaonkar, Radha Kumar and M. M. Ansari have been made public. This team has given its recommendations about which the Government is non-committal at the moment, while the BJP has rejected them on the ground that it is a dilution of the accession of Kashmir to India. The separatists find it insufficient saying that there is no political settlement of the issue. Essentially while the team has rejected the return to pre-1953 position, it has also made significant

recommendations which are in the direction of restoring the autonomy of Kashmir. Being close to the pre-1953 position, the team suggests that the parliament will not make any law for Kashmir unless it relates to the security, internal and external of the state. Significantly it gives the status of 'special' instead of 'temporary' to the article 370, which is the bone of contention for the ultra nationalists like the BJP. Very correctly the team says that the proportion of officers in the state should gradually be changed to increase the weightage of the local officers. It also talks of creating regional councils with financial powers, and measures to promote cross Line of Control (LoC) cooperation while talking of resuming dialogue with Huriyat and Pakistan both.

It seems the team has done quite a bit of its homework and while addressing the issue of discontent in J&K, they have also tried to register the realities which have emerged during last six decades. It seems to be a major effort around which debates for initiative needed to restore the calm in the state can be seriously discussed. Undoubtedly the people of Kashmir have suffered a severe violation of their human rights all through. The treaty of accession giving full autonomy to the J&K had come under heavy strain from the communal forces in India. Right from the beginning the right wing elements, the future founder of Bhartiya Jan Sangh, the previous reincarnation of BJP, Shyama Prasad Mukerjee supported by the communal groups had initiated the move to merge it

fully with India, doing away with the provisions of autonomy, which were part of the agreement between India and the Kashmir. The pressure of communal elements and the sentiments of emerging Indian nationalism forced the Indian government to keep diluting the clauses of autonomy of Kashmir over a period of time. The culmination of this was downgrading the status of the Chief of the state, from Prime Minister to Chief Minister.

In the face of the communal elements showing their sharp teeth in India, in the form of murder of Mahatma Gandhi and intimidation of minorities, Sheikh Abdullah wanted to explore other options for Kashmir and he was imprisoned for 17 long years. This alienated large sections of Kashmiris, youth in particular. Equally serious was the threat posed by interference from Pakistan. Pakistan's support to the disgruntled youth and support to the militancy in the initial phases added to the problem in no mean way. Pakistan was duly supported by the imperialist designs of United States which wanted to impose its hegemony in the region. Kashmir being a geographically strategic place the US did its all to worsen the possibility of a peaceful solution of the issue.

The situation was to worsen further in the decade of 1980s, when the Al Qaeda elements and clones, started infiltrating into Kashmir. They are the ones who communalized the regional problem. The issue of Kashmiriyat was

converted into *Jihad* against *Kafirs* by the US trained Al Qaeda. Both the words, Jihad and Kafir, were distorted by the US supported Madrassas where these terrorists were trained. The increased militancy was matched by the suppression of democratic norms by and by and the state government was reduced to a satellite of the central government. The parallel process of Indian army being sent in large numbers to curb the militancy was to become the main problem in times to come. Military was to add to the problem as it dug its feet in the state, and the force which is meant to fight the external enemy was ruling the roost in civilian areas. The torture of the innocent Muslim youth knew no bounds. The military methods ran rampage in the state with the phenomenon of widows, half widows coming to the fore. Every youth was a suspect, ruining the lives and careers of many of them was *passee*. Somewhere along the line the communalization of the issue also led to Kashmiri Pundits feeling insecure and encouraged by Jagmohan, the then Governor of the state, left the valley in lakhs. Not to undermine the fact that a large number of Muslims also left the valley to escape the intimidation from guns of different forces.

Today the major obstacle to the normal growth of the state is the conversion of the civilian areas into military barracks, army breathing down the necks of civilians all over. In India the communal forces made this as another Hindu-Muslim issue. An issue with purely regional ethnic character came to be looked at through the prism of religion, adding to the misery of the Muslim population. Today what we need utmost is the proactive peace in the region and this peace can only begin

with the internal withdrawal of military, supplemented by a process of dialogue with dissidents and Pakistan. Kashmir has been looked at as a real-estate issue by India and Pakistan both. The people of Kashmir need to be given primacy while thinking of solution to the vexed issue affecting the peace all over. What we need to keep uppermost in the mind while discussing the recommendations of interlocutors is

that will these recommendations reduce the anguish of Kashmiri people in general and Kashmiri youth in particular? Nearly two generations of Kashmiri youth have suffered at the hands of military and militants. US-Pakistan nexus have also been the major players in spoiling the broth. A healthy debate around this report can be a good starting point to restore peace in the region.

Man gets two-year jail term for torching house during 2002 riots

Ahmedabad: A decade after the incident, a local court on Monday convicted a person and sentenced him to two-year jail term for torching a house in Madhavpura area during the 2002 riots.

Additional sessions judge B J Dhandha awarded imprisonment to one Kunjan alias Kalio Patel, who was tried in connection with a complaint filed by Shamshuddin Shaikh (78), whose house was burnt on March 21, 2002.

He had accused eight persons for the mischief, and police charge-sheeted them after investigation. The court has also slapped a fine of Rs 1,500 on Patel.

The trial came to be initiated against five of them last year only, but Shaikh could identify only Patel during the proceeding. He did not remember most of the things due to old age. He used to supply decoration material on rent and along with his house, his business establishment also caught fire. Shaikh was the only eyewitness to the incident, as the other locals had fled the site when they sensed mob

coming towards the chawl.

The court separated trial against three others because they were not regular in attending proceedings and went ahead with the case against the five. After the trial, the court found Patel guilty under section 435 of IPC for committing mischief by fire or any explosive substance with intention to cause damage to some-body's property.

After the incident, Shaikh had no means of livelihood and was supported by a civil rights organization in his legal battle, said his counsel Yasin Mansuri (Nyayagrah Advocate)

—*Times News Network*

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called pragmatists will take their swords out and say, this is platitudinous and non-practical - such ideal social democratic voters are hard to be created. But in current politics of "everything passes in the name of success", the ideal is practical, and let comrades try to implement their ideals.

A petition submitted to Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairperson, NCERT Textbooks Review Committee, by leading Dalit and non-Dalit writers, scholars and activists :

When NCERT's Class XI Political Science textbook, *Indian Constitution at Work*, came to the attention of some Dalit activists, they objected to the manner in which the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, had been depicted riding a snail representing the Constitution, with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wielding a whip behind him and an entire crowd smiling and watching the spectacle. Six weeks later, the issue was raised in Parliament and a chorus of MPs cutting across party lines sought the withdrawal of the cartoon, and some even of the NCERT textbooks. Many sections of the public had not been privy to the contents of the textbooks in the past six years. It is only now that these textbooks are being debated.

We, the undersigned, are dismayed by the two polarised sets of reactions that have emerged. Firstly, many members who were part of the textbook advisory committee for the senior secondary level, including Chairman of the committee Prof. Hari Vasudevan, and Chief Advisors Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav, have since protested against the demand for reconsidering the use of this insensitive cartoon. Subsequently, many members who have been part of various textbook development committees have argued that the textbooks should remain unchanged; and have been silent about the violence of the cartoons. This is a rather untenable position. We find it insulting when some intellectuals suggest that people protesting the

cartoon fail to understand the “productive power of laughter” or that there's a “fear of cartoons”. The textbooks, however good they are and even if they mark a radical departure from past efforts, cannot be above criticism, discussion and improvement. This logic, in fact, goes against the stated aim of these textbooks: to engage sceptically and critically with what one reads. Indeed, each of the new NCERT textbooks solicits feedback, criticism and suggestions. The textbook writers may have tried their best to overcome their caste bias, but none of us is exempt from the baggage of caste, gender or other interests. As the feminist movement has so clearly shown, humour is by no means exempt from prejudice. Cartoons and jokes can be vicious about minorities. Hate speech often masquerades as humour. Jokes and cartoons need to be subjected to critical scrutiny.

Secondly, we do share the fear that in the name of handling the contentious cartoon on Dr. Ambedkar, the UPA government might attempt to remove many cartoons and other visual/textual material from the textbooks. Crucially, these textbooks feature several posters from the women's movement, the Dalit movement and the environmental movement. Also to be commended is the inclusion of a wide range of literary texts by Dalit writers. However, the textbook writers must realise that they have not done a favour to Dalits by such inclusion, which was long overdue. There's a lot that is good about these textbooks — a result of the pressures

that the women's movement, the Dalit movement, environmental and farmers movements, anti-SEZ mobilisations exerted — that may be lost if the final say about what may or may not appear in a textbook is to be with the state.

These textbooks have been drafted collectively by a wide range of social scientists, including some academicians who happen to be Dalit, and in consultation with activists, NGO representatives and educationists working at the field level. However, it is not as if these textbooks are completely error-proof. Besides the offensive cartoon, the text in the Class XI textbook does not ever properly introduce Dr. Ambedkar. The text does not inform the students that a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. Ambedkar drafted the Constitution. In the absence of a proper discussion of Dr. Ambedkar's role in the Constituent Assembly, the violence of the cartoon is all the more palpable. We urge the Thorat Committee to make the necessary changes in the text as well.

We wish to express dismay over the adamant attitude of some of our academic friends who seem to treat the cartoon as sacrosanct. The implication that “dalit intellectuals have unwittingly played into the strategies of politicians” is indefensible to say the least. The lack of understanding expressed by the “intellectual classes” towards the Dalit viewpoint has been saddening. The Dalit question has always been historically deflected and postponed in this manner. When Dr. Ambedkar

and the early Dalit movements raised the question of caste, the nationalist movement said the anti-colonial struggle was more important; when the issue of caste was raised in the feminist or Left movements, it was considered divisive; when Adivasis raised the question of representation in the leadership of dam evictees' movements, the stopping of the dam was made paramount.

We wish to bring to your attention that many Dalit activists and scholars, including some young Dalit students in the University of Pune, not only condemned the act of vandalism at the office of Prof. Palshikar, but even guarded his office from further attacks. This went unreported in the media.

We are also deeply saddened that because of this one aberrant act, the otherwise democratic and rational engagement with this issue that Dalits and some non-Dalit intellectuals opposed to the cartoon have engaged in—through news media, blogs, Facebook, and the Internet—has been portrayed as emotional and infantile. The Dalit movement has been one of the most democratic movements in this country. And for Dalits a whip is a vulgar reminder of everything feudal and casteist about this society. As the dalitbahujan feminist blog Savari says: “The whip is inseparable from violence against slaves, dalits, women, animals and children. Almost all histories of protest against injustice, be it feminism, anti-slavery, anti-caste or anti-apartheid movements have protested and continue to protest the symbolic violence in imagery that uses instruments of violence such as the whip, noose or chains.” That the advocates of critical pedagogy do not see this as such is regrettable.

It is time we realised that there is a permeable boundary between the symbolic violence of such a cartoon and the tolerance of such cartoons by academics on the one hand, and atrocities like Bathani Tola, Melavalavu, Chundurur or Khairlanji on the other. Quite often the iconicity of Dr. Ambedkar has been used by Dalits to assert their democratic rights. And the struggle against the cartoon is indeed a democratic struggle—even if the mainstream and alternative media have portrayed it as otherwise.

At this stage, we petition the Thorat Committee set up to examine the textbooks to reconsider the Ambedkar cartoon (and possibly other such insensitive material). While we demand that the NCERT take into account the wide range of criticisms and feedback the textbooks have elicited, we also urge Kapil Sibal, the Union HRD Minister, to desist from seeking any major overhaul of the basic NCF framework of the textbooks.

We also think this is the occasion to seek fair representation of Dalits and other social minorities in NCERT's various committees, as well as in the Senates and Syndicates of Central and State Universities; and to introspect on why Dalits and Adivasis, despite constitutional provisions for 22.5 per cent reservation, occupy less than three per cent of faculty positions .

—**Omprakash Valmiki, Namdeo Dhasal, Bama, Siddalingaiah, Urmila Pawar, G. Kalyan Rao, Imayam, Ravikumar, K. Satyanarayana, Susie Tharu, S. Anand, M.R. Renukumar, Rekha Raj, Ajay Navaria, Rajni Tilak, Gogu Shyamala, P. Sivakami, Paul Divakar, Sharmila Rege, Raj**

Kumar, N. Sukumar, Sanal Mohan, Ajay Skaria, Radhika Menon, Meena Kanasamy, V. Geetha, S. Japhet, Uma Chakravarti and Bharat Patankar.

Withdraw Haj subsidy; Include deserving Muslims in SC category

Another important aspect of Haj subsidy must also attract our attention. We, the Muslims of India, are surely living a better life in our country as compared with our co-religionists in many other countries. Yet, in some areas of life, we suffer constitutional violations. Our constitution prevents religion-based discrimination or favoritism by the State. Still we were excluded from the definition of scheduled castes under the Constitution Scheduled Castes Order of 1950. As a result, we were externed from the reserved seats of the parliament, assemblies and the bureaucracy. It is difficult to fathom the resulting grave and multiplied sufferance of the community and how this has undermined our well-being and prosperity. That is the reason that the Sachar Committee reported that, compared to the followers of other faiths, we Indian Muslims are lagging much behind in the educational, economic, and social fields. So, why don't we get the issue resolved once and for all through our parliament, assemblies, and the governmental machinery: Make the definition of the scheduled castes religion-neutral and withdraw the Haj subsidy. That way, the pilgrimage of more than a hundred thousand of Muslims can invoke greater divine pleasure. At the same time, the six decade old State discrimination against millions of Muslims can come to an end.

—**Dr Syed Zafar Mahmood**

Constitutional Vision of Democratic India - II

B. Sudershan Reddy

Our Constitution is both long and extremely complex. Nevertheless, there is a way of conceiving it in a manner that facilitates agreement, collective action and sustenance of hope. It makes the ontological assumption that people are willing to sacrifice and set aside their own self-interest in order to achieve greater social welfare, especially for the most deprived. Two visions have informed political theorizing, in the West, about nature of man, and the limits to possible political institutions that can and ought to be formed. The first one views human nature as essentially and primordially selfish. Such an ontological specification consequently views any attempts by collective bodies, such as the State or other social formations, to order social interactions with even small expectations that humans can and ought to also take into consideration communitarian interests, as doomed to failure, and in fact even evil, because they run counter to human nature. The link between such a view of human nature and its limits and laissez faire free market proponents ought to be apparent. The other model of socio-economic organization, communism, is also based on the same assumption of primordially selfish human nature. It concludes that any socio-economic organization that is based on giving precedence to it would necessarily be unstable, and that a stable order can only be created through severe limitations on personal liberties of individuals.

Another strand of enlightenment thought viewed human nature as inherently capable of empathetic resonance to the misfortunes of others, and socio-economic organisations ought to be ordered in a manner that emphasises the same. The greatest example of the feasibility of that proposition was the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. For decades he articulated the belief that human beings, even under gravest provocations, can resist violence by tapping into their own inner reserves of love for fellow human beings. Think of it. This was a country that was mired in an ocean of poverty, where ignorance and disease was rampant. Most of those generations of people and leaders had very little, and yet they sacrificed the little they had, and followed the Gandhian path, howsoever imperfectly, but certainly, to some measure. That is what led to the greatest success of this nation as a people in its history. If there were a greater demonstration of the feasibility of forming a national purpose, and an inexhaustible national resolve, I am not aware of it.

Much has been made of the fact that specific programs advocated by the Mahatma have not been included in the Constitution, and those that have been included have been marked only by tokenism. However, as one reads through the Constitution, and conceives the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of State

policy, and the remaining parts of the Constitution that sets forth modes and forms of governance, not as discrete unrelated parts, but as explicated elements in a concrete whole, the chief belief of Gandhian mode of conceiving human beings, as empathetic individuals, shines through. For the Mahatma, neither the rabid laissez faire free market model nor the inherently violent communist order was natural or inevitable. He believed in the human capacity to create a social order based on the inherent capacity to empathise with others and that any other mode or organization is doomed to failure. At its foundation, when the Preamble talks about achievement of dignity of the individual, and fraternity amongst groups of them, it is that Gandhian ontological specification that it speaks about.

Many scholars, academics and politicians doubt the feasibility of such a vision guiding a national project. They claim to be realists, and they claim to be guided by pragmatic considerations of what can be worked on the ground. I believe that they are fundamentally wrong and Mahatma Gandhi was right.

About half a decade ago, a young lawyer narrated a stark distinction that he perceived in the manner in which human beings respond to social tragedies. Apparently, on January 26, 2004 he was on his way to Bihar to adopt a young infant who had been abandoned by her mother at a road side tea stall. That was the

day that a tsunami hit, amongst other places, south eastern coast line of India. Upon reaching Bihar, and while receiving the child in adoption, he also began to actually perceive the magnitude of the problem of discrimination against the female child, including the grotesqueness of female infanticide and female foeticide. At the same time, he also narrated how many of his friends from Bangalore, mostly youngsters, who had of their own free volition rented vans, bought as many medicines, blankets, and food packets as their resources would permit and rushed off to lend a helping hand. For them, the idea that another human being was suffering and needed to be helped was instinctual. They were responding empathetically to fellow human beings. The contradiction that the young lawyer was trying to draw was between a tragedy that unfolds amidst our lives, on a daily basis, and is of such a gargantuan proportion as to make many millions of women disappear from our demographic reality over a decade, and our collective response of befuddlement, and indeed a desire to turn a blind eye to it, versus another tragedy, that is caused by an accident of nature, also involving massive human suffering, and yet evokes amongst human beings a desire to help.

It is a contradiction worth exploring. Obviously, the fact that youngsters took off of their own volition to help out tsunami victims indicates the presence of an ingrained sense of empathy, and the capacity to react to the misfortune and suffering of others. Yet, seemingly an entire nation has turned a blind eye to the massive human tragedy unfolding, in the form of female infanticide and foeticide, wherein millions of fellow human

beings are being prevented from coming into being or not being allowed to exist.

One of the great butchers of human history, Joseph Stalin, is supposed to have said: "One death is a tragedy. A million deaths a statistic." Obviously, Joseph Stalin made that comment as a part of his justification of the dance of death, both during World War II, and also in the post-war USSR. Nevertheless, it reveals a fundamental truth: that when human tragedy becomes a part of one's daily life, almost like background noise, to borrow a new fangled phrase being used by youngsters these days, human capacity to tap into its empathetic core, and sustain a drive to help out others, an instinctual part of our very persona as human beings, gets diminished.

Whether it be under dictatorial socialist regimes, or under fascist neo-liberal world orders, one of the principle means used to keep the people from expressing their outrage at the unconscionable misery suffered by vast swaths of humanity, which they surely must if their instinctual response is empathy for other human beings, is to normalise that suffering and sweeping it under the carpet away from critical cultural gaze. Either by assuming that the suffering of the poor to be insurmountable, or by suggesting that the poor deserve to be poor because they have been weeded out of the share of the social product because of societal evolution, vast injustices that are prevalent are sought to be normalised in our conception.

Amartya Sen, in his lifelong work has argued that given the technological mastery that human beings have accomplished, and the

existing resource base, there is no reason to have such misery abound. His argument is that how the product of social action is distributed is not some natural or necessary outcome, but is a function of the particular values we choose, collectively, to order our socio-economic lives. Indian Constitution is essentially based on that ontological assumption, and mandates that collective action be directed towards the achievement of equality of opportunity and status, and social, economic and political justice for all. These were recognized to be sine qua non for ensuring dignity to all individuals, so that they and the groups that they belong to can live in a fraternal atmosphere. Indian Constitution also posits that ensuring minimal levels of dignity for all the citizens and thereby engendering fraternal relations amongst them is a necessary condition for the security and integrity of the nation.

We stand at an inflection point in history. Great technological and scientific advances promise the power to guarantee for all human beings a social existence marked by at least some minimal levels of dignity, such that each, and in groups, can seek to self-actualize their potential. Nevertheless, we need to fundamentally rethink as to how we want to organize our socio-economic orders, and the values by which we seek to distribute the social product. The model that popular culture seeks to prioritize, of unending upward spirals of consumption by the rich, eventually lifting the incomes of the poor so that they can consume at levels consonant with some acceptable notions of human dignity, is turning out to be false. Environmental stress, and indeed the possibility of a global climate change, raises fundamental questions about

such a model of organisation of distribution. Consequently, we have to rethink in terms of both the levels of consumption that we should seek to aspire for, as well as the need to redistribute the social product, so that the social compact can be maintained.

It is that great challenge that most of you will face. Some of you will move forward to seek solutions in inventing machines that consume less energy, and yet others may look to find ways to extract more resources from the bowels of the earth at as low a cost as possible. Nevertheless, in all of those endeavours, your constant challenge would be the same: how do we make the present more humane for those who are dispossessed and disempowered. The challenging voices from those quarters are rising in volume and intensity. How you respond to those voices would ultimately be determined whether you continue to tap into a quality that defines your very human essence: empathy. I trust that you will always strive to live up to the expectation of that great soul, Mahatma Gandhi, whose name this institution has borrowed, that that human beings are capable of being true to their empathetic core. To teach our youngsters the means of being in touch with that core, and to always remain true to it, would be the greatest, and the true, role of education.

Towards the ending, let me recite to you the words of a great Indian, Swami Vivekananda:

“So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.”

If we were to not heed the voices of the poor, those living with very little and even lesser hope, we would ultimately be betrayers of our conscience, and our own humanity.

I have been offered a grant of Rs 5 lakhs by the GITAM Foundation. I must express my surprise at the choice and being humbled by it. It is a great honour that an educational foundation has chosen this humble servant of India for such a grant. I am the son of parents who were both humble and uneducated peasants. It was their exhortation, and the countless helping hands extended by others along my life which has enabled this peasant boy to serve this country. In that sense, whatever modest success I may have enjoyed in the service of my nation was only enabled by a

community, comprising of individuals from all social backgrounds, which believed that a boy from a village background should also be educated. Consequently, it would be extremely ungrateful on my part to accept that grant for my personal use, especially when it comes from the resources of an educational institution. Hence, I humbly request the members of the GITAM Educational Foundation to use that amount to give scholarships to some youngsters from the socially deprived segments. There can be no better way to honour those who have helped me in my life than to ensure that a few more youngsters from the socially and educationally backward segments of our population are enabled to become a part of the hope and dream of India.

(Concluded)

Youth Camp

A national youth leadership capacity building camp was organized at Lohia Academy in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on 18-21 May 2012, jointly Yusuf Meherally Center, Rashtra Sevadal and INSOCO. The theme of the camp was ‘youth in local politics’. About 70 young persons from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh participated in the camp. This was the second camp on the theme – the first being the one in Jammu, J&K in March, 2012.

The objective of the camp was to provide a space for youth to understand contemporary development and politics. The daily schedule consisted of self discipline through Yoga in the morning, fellowfeeling through cultural programme in the evenings, lectures and discussions during the

days well as group discussions and presentations and games. Various groups such as newsletter committee, cultural committee and accommodation & logistics committees were formed to give first hand experience of team work and decision making process to carry on the activities of the camp.

The inaugural session was attended by Prafulla Samantarai, Jaya, Dr. Sunilam, G. G. Parikh and Guddi. The sessions organized in the camp were – Human Right Education (by Pparadhipthe Nayak), Challenges and Alternatives before Youth (Dr. Sunilam), Youth and Development (G. G. Parikh), Women’s movement and Empowerment (Jaya Salru and

(Continued on Page 15)

Memorandum submitted to Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of India on May 28, 2012 by Dr. Prem Singh, General Secretary, Socialist Party (India) on FDI in Retail

The members of the Socialist Party sat on a dharna today at Jantar Mantar against the decision of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in retail sector and in favour of retail traders, consumers and farmers of the country. We would like to submit this memorandum to you for your kind attention and action.

The decision to allow 51 % FDI in multi-brand retail trade was announced by the UPA government in late November 2011. The combined opposition - NDA, CPM-CPI, AIDMK, BSP, SP – and UPA's biggest partner Trinmool Congress opposed the decision in one voice. They demanded immediate revocation of the decision of the government stating it a blow to 96 % traders in the country. While there was a logjam in the parliament on this contentious issue, the trade unions/organisations of the retail sector came out on the roads in protest. The government, in a gesture for truce, suspended the decision. It was promised by the government that the decision would not be implemented without wider consultation, debate and consensus.

The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that she had FDI on agenda while meeting Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal during her 3 day visit to the country in early May. Mrs. Clinton's love for Wal-Mart is not unknown. She has served on Wal-Mart board as its director for six years. Jean Noel Bironneau, the Indian head (MD) of the French retail giant Carrefour, called on Commerce and Industry Minister

Anand Sharma a few days ago. It is understood that Mr. Bironneau raised the issue of allowing FDI in retail at the earliest. There are reports, that facing strong protests on hiking fuel prices, the government may speed up reforms and implement the so far withheld decision of allowing FDI in retail sector.

These reports raise apprehensions that the government is planning a new push for FDI in retail and also in aviation. It will be catastrophic for the small traders and farmers because academic debates prove that FDI in retail will benefit only the MNCs such as Wal-Mart, Tesco, Carrefour and big Indian players in the field. It is further proved that the decision is not in tune with the spirit of India's Constitution and was made under the dictates of neo-liberal forces. The tongue-in-cheek argument by the government that allowing FDI in retail would benefit the consumers, the farmers, would

increase employment and lead to fall of prices has been dismissed as baseless in various studies made by experts and scholars. The unethical character of multinational organised retail chain companies, in relation to the welfare of employees and democratic/transparent functioning, has been exposed time and again.

In view of this, we humbly request you to advise the government to scrap this anti-people decision permanently.

The Socialist Party would like to suggest that retail trade should be reserved only for the small sector. Not only foreign MNC's, but even the big Indian corporate/industrial houses should not be allowed in retail trade. Retailers, particularly vendors and road-side shopkeepers should be protected from the extortion by the local body officers and the police. A well thought-out plan should be made by the government to strengthen and modernise the retail sector.

Socialist Party in Bihar

An organisational meeting of the Socialist Party was held on 1st May 2012 at Bhagalpur with Dr. Prem Singh as chief guest and Dr. Ashwani Kumar as observer. Socialists from eight districts participated in the meeting and a 24-member ad hoc committee for Bihar was formed after the due deliberations. Senior socialist activist and writer Dr. Yogendra has been nominated as the convener of the committee and its members

include Bhanu Udayan, Dr. Umesh Neeraj, Mohammad Bakir Hussain, Dr. Uma Shankar Bharti, Ganesh Datta Singh, Satish Chandra Sinha, Gautam, Dr. Sudhanshu Shekhar, and Rajiv Rai from Bhagalpur; Dr. Ashwani, Jeevan Chaudhary and Prasad Yadav from Banka; Anil Paswean and Deep Prakash from Purnia; Dr. Sushil Kumar and Ashok Kumar Thakur from Patna; Yogendra Sharma from Lakhi Sarai; Dr. Subodh Kumar and Devanand

from Munger; Akhilesh Kumar Mahto from Kishan Ganj and Saket Kumar Bihari from Muzaffarpur.

It was decided in the meeting that members of the newly formed committee would contact socialist cadres in all districts of Bihar in order to form a strong Bihar state unit of the Socialist Party by the end of November 2012. The committee further decided to hold the state convention of the Bihar Socialist Party in the first week of December 2012 in Patna.

A separate discussion was held with young women and men participants to form Bihar unit of the Socialist Yuvjan Sabha (SYS) at the earliest. Young socialist comrade Gautam has been assigned the task of forming Bihar SYS committee in consultation with Bihar Arogya Sena members and senior party leaders. Veteran socialist leader, Prof. Vinod Prasad Singh sent his

(Continued from Page 13)

Sujata Mohapatra), Youth and Politics (Prof. Biswanath Rath), Local Participation in Urban Governance (Kanu Charan Behura and Gururaja Budhya), Familiarization Games and Interactions (Gururaja Budhya), Khadi Gramodyog Andolan (Kalyan Anand).

The newsletter committee presented 'news' every day in the morning and the cultural committee organized programmes late evening. Yoga was taught by Kanu Charan Behura.

—Nishikant

best wishes to the newly formed committee.

A seminar was held on 'Dr. Lohia's Socialism and the Present Scenario' in the second session with Dr. Prem Singh as the key speaker. Dr. Upendra Saha, Devendra Singh,

Diwakar Ghosh, Anil Paswan, Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Udai, Dr. Umesh Neeraj, Dr. Farookh Ali, Dr. Ashwani, Sachidanand Insan and Ganesh Datta Singh expressed their views on the topic. The seminar was conducted by Dr. Yogendra. Bhanu Udayan.

—P.S.

In India the private expenditure is 60 percent of the total expenditure on health care.

In the rich countries it is less than 20 percent. And in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Maldives, Thailand and Bhutan it is respectively 49, 44,

41, 26, 15 and 13 percent only and in Myanmar and Bangladesh it is 83 and 65.

A World Bank report says 3.2 percent of our population (three crores and ninety lakhs) go below the poverty line due to expenditure on health care and according to the Lancet, in 2004, about 30 percent did not take treatment as they could not afford a reputed medical journal.

—YMC

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Endangering peace in Punjab

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Apoorvanand

A Vice Chancellor's Agenda

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When the Akalis are out of power, they indulge either in a dharam morcha or some act which would evoke religious passions among the Sikhs. But when they adopt the same tactics while in authority, it means that they want to divert attention from problems like unemployment, drug trafficking and farmers' lessening incomes.

To the horror of the country, Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal filed the other day a mercy petition on behalf of Balwant Singh Rajoana, the killer of former chief minister Beant Singh. This week, Badal's son, deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh, is among those who have honoured the insurgents and a few others involved in resisting the army which was deployed to flush them out from the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Both Badals are in charge of law and order. In a way, they are the custodians of the state. They have not realised even yet that they cannot carry out their duty if they side with militants.

I have been told they had to bow before "pressure." If the rulers have to act under the direction of insurgents, the state is in for uncertain times. Punjab has been through the phase from the mid-1070s to mid-1980s when the extremists had upper

hand and instilled fear among the Hindus that they were not safe in the state. A hiatus between the two communities began to be visible from that time. The insurgents have now founded a memorial for Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who, once sponsored by the Congress, challenged the state from within the precincts of the Golden Temple.

Sukhbir's explanation that the memorial was laid by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) is not credible. The Akali Dal itself controls the SGPC. In fact, the government of India should go at the roots of the problem and scrape the Gurdwara Act. Let the entire Sikhs community, not those who are on restrictive electoral rolls, run the gurdwaras.

The problem with the Akali Dal is that it does not differentiate religion from politics. Bhindrawale committed the same mistake and Punjab paid the price. I do not know what the Akalis have in mind because they are traversing the same dangerous path.

How embarrassed must have been Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, a Sikh and the new Chief of Army Staff, Bikram Singh, also a Sikh, over what the ruling Akali Dal did to glorify

the insurgents who polluted the Golden Temple, the Sikhs' Vatican? The government had to employ the army to destroy the barricades and the bunkers that Bhindranwale's men had built to fight against the army. How can a memorial be built to perpetuate those who wanted to disintegrate the country and give a bad name to the Sikhs who are proud citizens of India?

Lt. Gen. K.S. Brar who led the force during Operation Bluestar has spoken in pain about this operation. In an interview to a daily he has said: "The Akalis are allowing a move to revive terrorism. Siropas are being offered to the kin of the terrorists. Militants and their families are being garlanded. Are the Akalis attempting to get the sympathy of militants by allowing such activities?" Brar's question should better be addressed to both the chief minister and his deputy who have not yet understood that they have to crush the divisive forces which believe in separatism.

I do not know why no Sikh organization or a non-political person of consequence from the community has condemned the honouring of a killer and the laying of the foundation. The Akalis are creating a Frankenstein which will one day devour the peaceful citizens of Punjab.

The silence of the Bhartiya Janata Party surprises me. It is a partner in the state government. The BJP is either giving its tacit support to the radical fringe or sticking to ministerial postings for their personal gain. Both ways, they do not serve the interest of the party or the country. If they are really "unhappy," as some reports say, they should quit the government. But then they too, like the Akalis, have

(Continued on Page 5)

Not the best of times

S. Viswam

India is undoubtedly going through a bad phase. It is, so to speak, besieged on all sides. All the factors by which one judges the mood and temper of a nation seem to be ranged on the negative side of the plate. There is hardly a sight on the horizon which has the potential of bringing a spot of cheer to the people. The outlook for the immediate future seems bleak though there have been assurances galore from a variety of sources, including some non-official ones, that the long-term outlook is not all that discouraging. However, it may be true to say right now that along with recession, India is also in the grip of deep depression.

The news of a steep fall in the growth rate of the GDP was bad enough. But a number of well-informed economists rushed in to say that since the vital economic parameters had a sound base, the GDP would again grow even up to the ambitiously projected level of eight percent. Then came the stunning news of the threatened downgrading of India's investment rating by the global agency Standard and Poor's, accompanied by the warning that the next step by the agency could well be the consignment of India to the junk category. Last April the same agency had revised down the rating to the last step, and hence the latest move was almost the last straw.

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherji, waiting in the wings to be named the ruling combine's presidential candidate, tried to put a brave front on the bad news, by

raising the hope that fresh damage control measures by his ministry would reverse the falling trend in the GDP growth. He seemed to have spoken too soon. Further disappointment was to follow in the shape of some more bad news: the industrial output growth rose a paltry 0.1 per cent in April as the mining sector declined and the manufacturing sector went sluggish. The economy was truly in doldrums. Mr. Mukherji could no longer evade the reality that the country was in the grip of a serious economic crisis.

Fortunately, the Finance Minister did not run away from facts. He admitted that the situation was grave and the government had to act in order to send positive signals to investors. What these steps are may become known by and by, but there was no denying that an element of urgency had crept into the situation. What must have been particularly galling for the minister was the dismal prospect (threat?) that India would be the first BRIC nation (Brazil, Russia India and China) to lose investment grade rating. What was till now a mere matter of domestic economic health was assuming international touches.

The catch phrase in government corridors is that the fundamentals of the economy are still sound and that India cannot go down to the pits that soon or that easily. Even if this sentiment is aired periodically to boost the nation's sagging morale, the fact is that the sheer momentum of growth can still pull India upwards provided, and

this is a big if, bold decisions are taken in time.

It is here that the responsibility for redemption passes from the economists to the politicians. The country's businessmen and industrialists are waiting for just that kind of stimulus which the government alone is in a position to give that would reverse all the current negative trends. Senior government officials have taken exception to some comments by Standard & Poor's in regard to the country's leadership. It has said that the capacity of Sonia Gandhi to act to restore confidence among the people is limited by the fact that she holds no office, and that the Prime Minister no longer is in a position to influence his colleagues and spur them to action. We think that this assessment has a substantial element of truth in it. There is no point in being ultra sensitive to such criticism. The "arrangement" under which the UPA coalition functions is such that the Prime Minister is restrained from exercising full authority and discretion. It is not surprising that a policy paralysis should have overtaken governance. It can be nobody's case that a seasoned economist, and the father of Indian economic liberalization to boot, is overwhelmed by a series of negative developments on India's economic development. He is quite capable of taking corrective action provided Sonia Gandhi discharges her responsibilities as political leader overseeing the "arrangement" helps the prime minister to take and implement hard decisions to tighten the economy. Conditions must be created on the political front for the prime minister to take the necessary remedial action to restore the balance in the economy.

European Socialism Old and New

D. K. Giri

A major ideological debate on Social Democracy began in Europe in the beginning of this century. The debate was instigated by adoption of the Third Way in the United Kingdom and The New Centre in Germany. Both these approaches were adumbrated in a joint statement, "Europe, the Third Way/ Die Nieu Mitte (The New Centre)" – issued on 17 June 1999 by the Prime Minister of UK, Tony Blair, and the Chancellor of Germany, Gerhard Schroeder. There were two grounds – one experiential, and the other contextual – which necessitated this debate. The Blair-Schroeder document argued that 'Social Democrats, at that time, were in government in almost all the countries of the European Union, only because Social Democracy had begun to renew its ideas and modernize its programmes while retaining the core values. Those in government experienced that Social Democracy found new acceptance as it changed to adapt to the new reality. That led to the contextual reasoning for revising Social Democracy. It was realized that the neo-liberal approach predominant in 1980s and 1990s – marked by free-marketism, and less-state as well as traditional social welfarism driven by principles of social justice and equality have proved to be ineffective to tackle the challenges of globalization and individualization. Hence there was a quest for a 'middle way', and the 'Third Way' was found. Ever since, the 'Third Way', has become the reference point for any debate on future of European Social Democracy.

The Blair-Schroeder document has been controversial raising a lot

of arguments in terms of politics, policies, and perspectives and so on. The principal perspective shift in the document is that Social Democracy not only "stands for social justice, but also for the economic dynamism, and unleashing of creativity and innovation". There are many elements of Social Democracy that has been covered in the document with new formulations. I would restrict in this essay to three principles that mark a clear departure from the old Social Democracy. First, according to Blair-Schroeder, old Social Democracy equated social justice with big public spending that needs to be rectified. Second, old socialism overvalued citizens' rights in comparison to obligations and duties. Third, the traditional Social Democrats got their economic theory wrong; that is the State alone can manage the economic growth and social development. Let us deal with the debate on these three vital social democratic principles in a greater detail.

Social Justice

The paper attempts to redefine the promotion of social justice. It starts by arguing that the old Social Democracy confused promotion of social justice with imposition of equality of outcomes. This resulted in the neglect of the importance of rewarding effort and responsibility. The old Social Democracy became associated with conformity and mediocrity, rather than celebration of creativity, diversity and excellence. The old Social Democracy believed that social justice could be achieved through higher and higher public spending regardless of the outcome. It sought to impose taxes to fund social services, and living standards.

Blair-Schroeder agreed that decent public services are important for social justice, but, “social conscience cannot be measured by the public expenditure alone, the real test for the society is how effectively this expenditure is used and how much it enables people to help themselves to have a decent life.

Blair-Schroeder definition of social justice and its promotion was countered as rotary-club, unethical approach. Critics agree that the origin of the concept of social justice is correct as it was the Western liberal idea to equate social justice with “equality of opportunity”. But it was often used in defense of inequality, rather than other way round. Likewise, concepts, ‘excellence’ and ‘creativity’ are contentious. Both devoid of morality which underpins social justice could lead to entrepreneurs adopting wrong means to achieve results, as was evident in European food scandals. Likewise, the concept of ‘social conscience’ propounded in the document reeks of a neo-darwinist society, where everyone is permanently active. Also, the ethics of the elite is imposed on the common people who are expected to work all the time, and the unemployed should also work to claim the meager social security money and have no right to sit in the park or enjoy any leisure.

Rights and Responsibilities

The paper argued that the rights were privileged over responsibilities. It was the State that was held responsible for the well-being of the individuals as well as communities, what in India is called a *maai-baap* (state is the father and mother). The responsibility of an individual to his or her family, neighborhood, and society is not stressed. It further argued that as the concept of mutual obligations was forgotten, there

was decline in community spirit, social capital and rise in crime and vandalism.

The critics argue that this is purely a communitarian approach, which is to an extent acceptable, but comes in tension with market-liberal influence. Any market would call for abandonment of social and personal commitments. Again the ‘responsibilities’ conceived in the document resemble traditional European nationalist conservative slogans, such as “For God, the family, and the fatherland, which is replaced with family, neighbourhood and society”. The individual has no moral responsibility to family, neighbourhood and society, and they can themselves be either good or bad, his/her moral responsibility is to do good.

Management of the Economy

Management of the economy has been perceived to be the weak point for Social Democrats. The paper deals extensively with economy that is undergoing significant changes in the context of globalization and changes brought about by new science and technologies. The main reform argument put forth in the document is that the political action should support the market, not hinder it. The State should do all it can to support an enterprise, not substitute it. The New Social Democrats support a market economy, not a market society. The paper contended that if the State steps in to correct market failures all too often, it could lead to unnecessary expansion of the State and bureaucracy which slowed the economy. The Old Social Democrats have exaggerated the ability of the national governments to fine-tune the economy to generate growth and jobs as they had undervalued the importance of individuals and enterprises for creation of wealth and

employment. Furthermore, in the context of rapid globalization and scientific changes, the State should create conditions for the existing businesses to adapt and prosper, and for new businesses to start and grow.

On new technology, the paper suggested that it has changed the nature of work and internationalized the pattern of production. On the one hand, it de-skills people and has put some businesses out, on the other, it creates new skills and new business. The way to cope with it is to invest in human capital and enable the people to work in the knowledge based economy.

The public sector must be reformed and modernized so that one gets the value for money. It must serve the citizen and be subjected to competition, efficiency and performance. Bureaucracy at all levels of the public sector must be reduced. Objectives and performance targets for them must be set, and their outcomes must be regularly and rigorously monitored, and non-performers must be punished.

In the past, Social Democrats have been identified with high taxes, especially on businesses. New Social Democrats realize that, in right circumstances, tax cuts and tax reforms can be important in stimulating growth and in meeting the social objectives. Corporate tax cuts incentivize investment, higher investment increase economic activities, which help create a virtuous circle of growth increasing resources for more public spending for social development. But for those who cannot pay taxes, there should be provision like it was made in Germany, the Tax Relief Act. The Old Social Democrats gave the impression that growth and employment can be achieved through successful demand

management in the economy. The New Social Democrats believe that supply side economy is equally important. There has to be balance between demand driven and supply side economic policies, a balance between macro-economic stability and micro-economic flexibility. While macro-economy can ensure stable growth, avoid boom and bust, micro-economic flexibility will lead to growth and job creation.

The paper puts great emphasis on building entrepreneurship. It suggests that people should honour their entrepreneurs as they do to their footballers and artists. People in different walks of life are aspiring to become entrepreneurs. Self-employed people like lawyers, computer experts, medical doctors, craftsmen, business consultants, people in sport and culture and so on. The governments should make it easy for them to set up business, access finance, by reducing administrative burdens, opening and expanding capital markets. These individuals and small enterprises will create employment. As they take risks in setting up new business, the governments should manage their risks.

The critics contend that the whole economic approach is to facilitate business in response to the global market. There is not much original content. For instance, if all other countries were taken over by agrarian communities, would Blair and Schroeder argue that it was now necessary for Britain and Germany to be communists also?

To conclude, the document at the time was not endorsed by any Social Democratic leader. The French Socialists publicly dismissed it in their Congress; Swedish Party resisted it, and even Holland's Wim Kok regarded as new Social

Democrat did not support it.

Blair-Schroeder document threw the gauntlet to rest of the Comrades in Europe over the need to change in response to globalization and technological innovation. It certainly made a break with the past. For

(Continued from Page 2)

electoral considerations in view. And the victory at municipal polls must have strengthened their decision to stay with the Akalis.

Whether the Akalis realize or not, there is a wave of indignation against what they have done at the Golden Temple. But the main anger is directed against the Badals who have gone along with those who had held the integrity of India to ransom. Both the Akali Dal and the chief minister owe an explanation to the nation.

It would be, however, pertinent to know whether the Intelligence Bureau warned Punjab about what the radicals and insurgents were up to. Although Home Minister P. Chidambaram is pre-occupied, he should have pointed out in writing to the Punjab chief minister about the ramifications of what was contemplated at the Golden Temple. It amounts to the failure of the constitution and the state government should have been taken to task.

The Punjabis are oblivious of why the Akalis are supporting groups like Damdami Taksal and the Dal Khalsa, both known to be terrorist organizations. On the one hand, the party is talking of development and requesting the centre for a special package and, on the other, it is endangering peace without which no development is possible.

instance, it was no longer advocating taming the untethered capitalism by some control and regulation but was suggesting to support neo-capitalism with political action, in essence a new role of the State, as an enabler, not provider. However, the debate must continue.

The Akalis should not forget the second innings the people have given them in the recent polls. The reason why they preferred it to the Congress was the promise of development which the deputy chief minister made at every election meeting. People are so puzzled over the presence of the same person in the ceremony at the Golden Temple. His projection as the future CEO of the state is being doubted. How can he guarantee social harmony and development when he himself presented saropas?

The Akalis are playing with fire which may push them to a point where they may feel the heat. The party has too much at stake. It cannot afford to fritter away the goodwill it created in its earlier innings. Faith in a pluralistic society is a commitment which cannot be diluted for placating the radicals.

Secularism is not a fig leaf to be used by the Akalis for their wrong belief that religion and politics are two sides of the same coin. Even otherwise, the ideology of theology is archaic and outdated. Not long ago, it looked as if the Akalis were changing their outlook to imbibe progressive ideas and modern thoughts. The loss is that of the Akali Dal if it wants to cling to gurdwara politics. The Punjabis will assess them and vote accordingly at the general election in 2014.

Response to the Petition on NCERT Textbooks

Apoorvanand

The petition against the Ambedkar-Nehru cartoon makes for sad reading. Sad, because it bears the signatures of some of our best scholars, universally admired for their rigorous scholarship, who nevertheless chose to sign a petition short on facts. The petition asks the Thorat Committee to “reconsider the Ambedkar cartoon (and possibly other such insensitive material)” and urges “Kapil Sibal, the Union HRD Minister, to desist from seeking any major overhaul of the basic National Curriculum Framework on which the textbooks are based.” Perhaps the petitioners are not aware that the particular cartoon is now beyond the purview of the committee. A decision to remove it had already been taken by the Minister himself, and a commitment made to this effect on May 11 by Kapil Sibal on the floor of the Rajya Sabha. It was after this announcement that the parliamentarians intensified their attack and targeted other cartoons in all the textbooks claiming that they mocked and ridiculed the political class in general. It was in response to this outrage that the government announced the formation of a review committee to be chaired by Prof. S K Thorat to find out if there is any ‘educationally inappropriate’ material in the textbooks.

In fact, one expected the petitioners to criticize the manner in which the cartoon was removed, even before setting up of a review committee, disregarding all established procedures. Without such a critique, without making a strong demand for making NCERT

academically autonomous, so as to enable it to deal with such issues through its own autonomous, established procedures, how do the signatories expect the Minister to honour their urge not to overhaul the NCF 2005? If he can delete the cartoon without any consultations and go unchallenged, what prevents him from ordering an overhaul of NCF?

It should be clear by now that the second part of the demand to reconsider “possibly other such insensitive material” is now the only substantive thing left with the petition. That too, without doing any homework, without citing examples! What could other such insensitive material be? One has already been pointed out by Mr. Vaiko and the DMK. A cartoon supposedly ridiculing the anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu deemed to be insensitive from the point of view of Tamil pride. In this case too, a reading of the chapter in which this cartoon is located will demonstrate that the anti-Hindi agitation has been seriously discussed in the context of Periyar and his politics. But who cares to read the textbooks themselves? A section in Rajasthan has expressed its hurt over inadequate representation of Maha Rana Pratap and would possibly use this opportunity to petition the committee with its own set of complaints against the textbooks. The right wing Hindu educational machine is in motion round the clock, scrutinizing the textbooks and curriculum to find sensitive spots. Ask the NCERT

that has to deal with continuous petitions from this section. Till now the NCERT has been firm with them. However, with this storm, the NCERT has been made so vulnerable that it would be impossible for it to face any charge of “Insensitivity to sentiments” with academic self-assurance.

While talking about ‘possibly other such insensitive material’, it would be educative to recall a similar debate which took place six years ago, in August 2006 in the same Rajya Sabha. Portions from Prem Chand and Om Prakash Valmiki were read as violating Dalit and Constitutional sensitivity. Then followed hurt to girls, Hindus and nationalists by poets Dhumil and Pash, novelist Pandey Bechan Sharma Ugra, painter M F Husain and dramatist Jagadish Chadra Mathur. All political parties unitedly demanded action against those guilty of putting these passages in the textbooks. The result was formation of a review committee. Despite a well-argued defense of the textbooks and rejection of the objections against them by the committee, which had Yash Pal, Ananthamurthy, Krishna Sobti and Nirmala Deshpande as members, most of those texts were replaced. What is the lesson then?

We know from a long history of such interventions – although up to now, only from right-wing forces of different sorts - that once ‘sensitivities’ are made bench marks, democratic processes of debate and dialogue are the first casualty.

Another surprising point made by the petitioners is that many sections of the society were not privy to the content of the textbook and it is only now that they are being debated. The textbook is not a secret document. It has been practiced in the schools for the last six years across India, adopted by more than 17 states, translated in different Indian languages, available in public domain through different media. Students and teachers have been discussing and debating them all along. It is quite different a matter that they did not have the privilege of the attention of our colleagues all these years, who have discovered them only now, via the debate in the Parliament.

The petition is unhappy with the inadequate representation of the role of Ambedkar in the textbook and asks the Thorat committee to make necessary amends in the text. It seems that over-obsession with the cartoon did not allow it to appreciate that this is not a stand-alone book. The NCF that the petition wants to defend has set some curricular goals, and the syllabus for different stages of schooling is designed to achieve these goals. Textbooks like other pedagogical devices and strategies are geared towards this end. Thus, *all* students, not only the ones who are studying Political Science as an optional subject in Class XII, are expected to develop an understanding of the issues of diversity, discrimination, identity, equality, fight for self-respect and empathy. They engage with these ideas and concepts not only in the Political Science periods but across subject areas. This is the unique feature of this NCF.

At every level then, students *compulsorily* come across Dr. Ambedkar in different chapters and subjects, and by the time they reach Class XI and choose to study Political Science, they are well aware of the significance of Ambedkar not only for the Constitution making process, but also for Dalits and other struggling classes and identities. Much before encountering the now deleted cartoon, they have established a good visual familiarity with him with the help of photographs and sketches. They have gained a conceptual confidence to engage with the textbooks, questioning and critiquing them. The textbooks do not present themselves as The Text. At the very least, this is what the NCF aspires to. But to understand this, one will have to patiently engage with the curricular process and look at all its stages at a relaxed pace. Getting fixated on one cartoon in one text-book does not help.

In their rush to condemn this textbook, the petitioners missed what students have already studied from Class VI onwards. The very first Unit of the first textbook (Part I for class VI) is entitled 'Diversity'. The second chapter of this Unit, 'Diversity and Discrimination' discusses notions such as 'prejudice', 'stereotypes' and the problems of inequality and discrimination. This section (pages 19-23) discusses the term 'Dalit' – who are dalits, why they reject terms like 'untouchable' and then goes on to say this about Dr Ambedkar, quoting from his own words after this passage: "Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, one of the great leaders of India, shares his first experience of caste-based discrimination, which took place in 1901 when he was just nine

years old. He had gone with his brothers and cousins to meet his father in Koregaon which is now in Maharashtra."

Chapter 3 of the Class IX textbook, which would have been read by every student, including those who may not go on to study Political Science in Class XI-XII, has a chapter titled Constitutional Design. Section 3.3 of this chapter (Making of Indian constitution) introduces prominent members of the Constituent Assembly. Here that the student reads that: "The Constituent Assembly worked in a systematic, open and consensual manner...A drafting committee chaired by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar prepared a draft constitution for discussion."

Sketches of fourteen members of the constituent assembly accompany the text. Ambedkar is one of them, introduced with these words: "The Chairman of the drafting committee, social and revolutionary thinker and agitator against caste divisions and caste based inequalities."

In the section 'Guiding values of The Indian constitution' students read the views of only three national leaders, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nehru and learn that "The dream of an India that has eliminated inequality was shared by Dr. Ambedkar, who played a key role in the making of the Constitution but he had a different understanding of how inequalities could be removed. He often bitterly criticized Mahatma Gandhi and his vision."

A student entering Class XI is already thus well-aware of the significance of the role of Ambedkar.

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Ambedkar and Socialism

Bapu Heddurshetti

Attempting to write on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Socialism is like trying to explain the obvious. Still the temptation is too alluring to be ignored. Many have attempted it. The title of Ambedkar's biography by Dr. J. S. Lokhande, 'Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar - A Study in Social Democracy' is not without significance. The interactions of Ambedkar and the socialists can be examined and analysed on three planes: one on the plane of socialist ideology in general and two, on the plane of social inequality as manifested by the caste system in India in particular and three on the plane of political relations between them.

Starting as a critique of the feudal society, the French revolutionary, Babeuf, arrived at Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the normative ideals of socialism. Starting as critiques of capitalist society, Robert Owen, Louis Blanc and others also arrived at socialism.

Ambedkar was a victim of the rigours of the social inequality as manifested by the caste system in India. Mahatma Gandhi gave a better expression to the isolation and humiliation heaped on the untouchables into whom Ambedkar was born, when in a letter written to Mathuradas on 5th December 1932, he said "We have harassed the Harijans so much that if, on becoming free, they harass us twice as much, we should endure that patiently".¹ Starting as a critique of such a heinous caste system in India, Ambedkar also arrived at socialism.

Critique of Capitalism and Communism

Like Bertrand Russell's 'Roads to Freedom', Ambedkar also discussed three roads to freedom in his speech 'Workers and the Constitution'.² The Roads were Capitalism, Socialism and Communism.

He said that workers could not opt for capitalism as the workers would lose their freedom in such dispensation and hence he rejected capitalism. He even wondered if the downtrodden would be able to use the power of their numbers in a democracy under capitalism.

So far as communism is concerned he rejected it outright. It goes to the credit of Ambedkar that he, who had suffered the atrocities and violence inflicted on his community, could still steer clear of violence not only as a political tool for the emancipation of his people but also as a means of seeking vengeance against the perpetrators of such atrocities and violence. Early in September 1937 he presided over a District Conference of the Depressed Classes at Masur where he declared that "he was a confirmed enemy of the communists who exploited the labourers for their political ends".³ This attitude he retained all his life. In an interview to the Press Trust of India on 7th January 1951, he said that 'his party would not in any case align with the communist party "for the plain reason that I do not believe in Communism"'.⁴

In addition to ideological reasons he had practical reasons for such an attitude. He had experienced dishonest communist methods during his first election from Mumbai where the communists had misled the people that both the votes in a double member constituency could be cast in favour of the same candidate which had led to his and his socialist poll-mate Asoka Mehta's defeat. Ambedkar and Asoka Mehta had filed an election petition challenging the election of the Congress candidates in the election but had made the Communist leader Shripad Amrit Dange as the first Respondent.

Ambedkar also rejected the concept of class struggle. Socialist leader Nanasaheb Goray says that having rejected the idea of class struggle, even when the progressives all over the world were enamoured of the Russian revolution, Ambedkar advocated peaceful and constitutional caste struggle.⁴ Ambedkar had another reason, religious reason, to reject Marx. He said "I claim that Buddhism is a complete answer to Marx and his communism".⁵

In 1936, the year in which Ambedkar had written down his speech 'The Annihilation of Caste', the socialists in their conferences at Meerut and Faizpur, were declaring Marxism as the creed of their Congress Socialist Party. Ambedkar was critical of Marxism and hence became critical of the Marxism of the socialists. His criticism of the socialists in 'The Annihilation

of Caste' can be taken only as the criticism of their Marxism.

Sridhar Tripathi who has compiled an 'Encyclopaedia on Ambedkar' mentions that Ambedkar had once stated that there was hardly any difference between socialism and communism.⁶ It may be noted here that the same was the case with Mahatma Gandhi also. But Sridhar Tripathi's statement is hard to believe that a person with the intellectual caliber, incisive analytical reasoning and profound scholarship like Ambedkar, - even a cursory glance at his paper 'Castes in India' written when he was just 25 years old would convince any one of his these qualities of - would so confuse between socialism and communism. More so when he had come under the influence of the British Labour Party and the Fabian Socialists when he was in England.

Be that as it may, Ambedkar said "The path of social reform, like the path to heaven (at any rate, in India), is strewn with many difficulties. Social reform in India has few friends and many critics. The critics fall into two distinct classes. One class consists of political reformers and the other of the Socialists". When Ambedkar said 'socialists' he had in mind not democratic socialists but Marxists among socialists.

His main objection to Marxism was its emphasis on the economic structure of society and its formulation that the economic structure determines the super-structure. In the 'Annihilation of Caste' he said: "The Socialists of India, following their fellows in Europe, are seeking to apply the economic interpretation of history to the facts of India. .. They

therefore preach ... that economic reform by equalization of property must have precedence over every other kind of reform." Ambedkar did not agree with this. The futility of the formulation was not lost on a person who had suffered social isolation and humiliation in the Hindu community. He said: "that the social status of an individual by itself often becomes a source of power and authority, is made clear by the sway which the Mahatmas have held over the common man. Why do millionaires in India obey penniless Sadhus and Fakirs?"

But then he said, "But I recognize that the economic interpretation of history is not necessary for the validity of the Socialist contention that equalization of property is the only real reform and that it must precede everything else." It is this understanding which drew Ambedkar closer to the socialist ideology. But he still had objections to what socialists were preaching. He asked "However, what I would like to ask the Socialists is this: Can you have economic reform without first bringing about a reform of the social order? The Socialists of India do not seem to have considered this question."

However, Ambedkar appears to have been aware of the departure that the Indian socialists had made from this Marxist formulation. He said "I do not wish to do them (Socialists) an injustice. I give below a quotation from a letter which a prominent Socialist wrote a few days ago to a friend of mine, in which he said, 'I do not believe that we can build up a free society in India so long as there is a trace of this ill-treatment and suppression of one class by another. Believing as I do in a socialist ideal, inevitably

I believe in perfect equality in the treatment of various classes and groups. I think that Socialism offers the only true remedy for this as well as other problems.'" Ambedkar was rightly reading 'caste' for 'class and groups' in the above letter.

Nanasaheb Goray echoed the same views. He said: "Is it really necessary that we should choose between these two philosophies (of mind and matter dichotomy, i.e., the Marxian dichotomy between the basic structure and super structure) or should we accept that both the principles existed and were at work from the beginning and that they were interacting over one another? It is necessary that, without giving primacy to any one of them in the evolution of mankind over millions of years, we should accord equal importance to both as the same appears to have been happening in the human society."⁷

However in spite of such reservations Ambedkar remained a socialist. It is in this context that Sridhar Tripathi says: "Despite his ambivalence and reservations about the emphasis on the economic dimension in socialism, Ambedkar broadly remained a socialist. ... notwithstanding his variant conception, there should not be any doubt about his socialistic antecedents."⁸

Perception of socialism

What is Socialism? Acharya Narendra Deva, the doyen of the Indian socialist movement says: "Socialism aims at fostering real liberty, equality and fraternity through the creation of an exploitation-free society and by removing the present state of slavery, inequality and intolerance"⁹ Referring to his journey from Civil

Disobedience, through Marxism and democratic socialism onwards to Sarvodaya, Jayaprakash Narayan says, “The same old beacon lights of freedom, equality and brotherhood that had guided the course of my life and brought me to democratic socialism, drew me onwards around this turning of the road.”¹⁰

And what does Ambedkar say. In ‘The Annihilation of Caste’ he says, “What is your ideal society if you do not want caste, is a question that is bound to be asked of you. If you ask me, my ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. And why not?” These normative ideals of socialism, i.e., liberty, equality and fraternity remained a passion for Ambedkar throughout his life.

However, while the ideals of the Socialists and Ambedkar were the same, the nuances were slightly different. Acharya Narendra Deva had also said “The ideals of equality etc., are not absolute and unchanging. Their meaning tends to change under changing circumstances”.¹¹ While for Babeuf equality meant the annihilation of the feudal inequalities, for Marx it meant the annihilation of class inequalities, for Ambedkar it meant the annihilation of social inequalities, i.e., the caste system of the Hindu society which buttressed social inequality. While abolition of the caste system in India was one of the priorities of the Socialists, it was ‘the priority’ for Ambedkar.

Hence, unlike other socialists, Ambedkar reversed the order of the normative ideals of socialism. While the socialists spoke about Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, Ambedkar spoke of Fraternity, Liberty and Equality, reflecting his priorities.

In his speech ‘Annihilation of Caste’, he said that his ideal society would be a ‘society based on liberty, equality and fraternity’, but preferred to discuss fraternity first, liberty next and equality last, which is not without significance.

Ambedkar also scored over Gandhi in this respect. Gandhi’s concern was to liberate the untouchables from the shackles of the upper castes and to establish equality between the untouchables and the caste Hindus. Gandhi had said “I do not want to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should be reborn an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition”. Gandhi’s biographer Louis Fischer says “How could Gandhi, fresh from his fight for the equality of Indians in South Africa, countenance a cruel inequality imposed by Indians on other Indians in India”.¹²

But Ambedkar yearned for ‘fraternity’ between the untouchables and the upper caste Hindus. The nuances Ambedkar placed on the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity underline his concern for social fraternity through abolition of the caste system. Fraternity for Ambedkar was synonymous with social endosmosis, a process of internal foliation. He equated it with democracy in that sense. Both democracy and fraternity were for him “primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards one's fellow men”. Even in the Buddha he read concern for fraternity – the Sangha. Ambedkar said that the “Buddha

gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty and equality and fraternity, .. which was another name for religion”.¹³

The instances of sub-human treatment meted out to the untouchables by the upper caste Hindus, particularly in and around Pune, which was Ambedkar’s area of work also, mentioned in ‘The Annihilation of Caste’ would convince any one as to why Ambedkar yearned for fraternity. Perhaps if confronted with the Hobson’s choice of a better terms of economic equality with upper caste Hindus and better fraternal relations with them, Ambedkar would have chosen the latter.

Both Ambedkar and the Socialists were critical of the liberal understanding of liberty. For Socialists, Liberty meant “destruction of the dominion which one man holds over another”. Ambedkar was critical of liberty confined to the liberty of life, limb and property etc. But did it include the liberty of choosing one’s profession, he asked. This was an important question for Ambedkar. One of the stringent rules of the caste system was that the persons born in a particular caste were confined to a particular profession. Many castes have even been named after the professions they pursued. That is why Ambedkar asked “The supporters of Caste, who would allow liberty in the sense of a right to life, limb, and property, would not readily consent to liberty in this sense, inasmuch as it involves liberty to choose one's profession... But to object to this kind of liberty is to perpetuate slavery.... It is found where, as in the Caste System, some persons are compelled to carry on

certain prescribed callings which are not of their choice”.

Ambedkar joined issues on this also with Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi had said that “callings of a Brahmin—spiritual teacher—and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance carries equal merit before God, and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both were entitled to their livelihood and no more”. Ambedkar ridiculed the formulation. Referring to ‘saints’ including perhaps Mahatma Gandhi he said “They did not preach that all men were equal. They preached that all men were equal in the eyes of God—a very different and a very innocuous proposition, which nobody can find difficult to preach or dangerous to believe in?”

On equality Ambedkar said “Equality has obviously been the most contentious part of the slogan of the French Revolution. Equality may be a fiction, but nonetheless one must accept it as the governing principle. A man's power is dependent upon (1) physical heredity; (2) social inheritance or endowment in the form of parental care, education, accumulation of scientific knowledge, everything which enables him to be more efficient than the savage; and finally, (3) on his own efforts. In all these three respects men are undoubtedly unequal. But the question is, shall we treat them as unequal because they are unequal? This is a question which the opponents of equality must answer”.

Equality was also dear to Ambedkar. When, as the first Law Minister of Independent India, he introduced the Hindu Code Bill which enshrined the principle

of gender equality in relation to inheritance, marriage etc., and there was no support for his efforts, he resigned from the cabinet.

When Ambedkar was in England perhaps he came under the influence of the Labour Party and the Fabian Socialists. “Ambedkar till the end could not completely remove the Fabian influence on him” says Sridhar Tripathi. Ambedkar’s commitment to socialism was indubitable. I.A.Vidyasagar mentions that Ambedkar criticised the objective resolution prepared by Jawaharlal Nehru for adoption by the Constituent Assembly, as it did not include the substantial program of socialism. In an election meeting at Shivaji Park in Bombay on 25th November 1951 Ambedkar invited Shri Nehru to leave the Congress and “join hands with socialists and people like me for the good of the country”.

The ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity which in the words of Jayaprakash Narayan had guided him all through his political life starting from the civil disobedience of Mahatma Gandhi through Marxism, Democratic Socialism and ultimately to Sarvodaya, also guided Ambedkar all his life. Starting from his ‘Annihilation of Caste’ written in 1936, through his Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation, Republican Party, down to his steering of the drafting of the Indian Constitution, the socialist ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity remained his beacon lights.

The object of the Republican Party, according to Ambedkar was “to realise the aims and objects set out in the preamble namely Justice, Liberty, equality and fraternity

(which) would constitute the aims and objects of the Republican Party: It will treat all Indians not only as being equal before the law but as being entitled to equality and will accordingly foster equality where it does not exist and uphold it where it is denied. .. it will uphold the right of every Indian to equality of opportunity subject to the provision that those who have had none in the past shall have priority over those who had”.¹⁴

Urging the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949 to adopt the Constitution as drafted by his committee he enunciated his philosophy of socialism. He said “The third thing we must do is not to be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian Society. One of these is

equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality with elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. 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 continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in 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 to laboriously built up”.

Ambedkar even defined Brahminism in terms of his socialist ideals. In the conference of the untouchable railway employees held on 12th and 13th February, 1938 Ambedkar said “By Brahminism I do not mean the power, privileges and the interests of the Brahmins as a community. By Brahminism I mean the negation of the spirit of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.”

But while the socialists inherited the ideals of socialism, i.e., Liberty, Equality and Fraternity from the French Revolution and Gandhi claimed their origin in

Hindu Religion, Ishopanishad and Bhagavadgita, Ambedkar denied that he had borrowed the ideals from the French Revolution but had derived the same ideals from his Master the Buddha. He said “Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Let no one however say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. I have derived them from the teachings of my Master, the Buddha”.¹⁵ According to Ambedkar “Buddhism opposed inequality, authority and division of society into various classes which Brahminism had introduced in India...equality is the main feature of Buddhism”.¹⁶

Castes and Class–Caste Equation

The socialists in Europe had concerned themselves with the classes in the capitalist society and the creation of a class-less society. Actually Marx himself had noticed the caste system in India and had accurately listed its characteristics. In the ‘Capital’ he had said “... the conversion of fractional work into the life-calling of one man corresponds to the tendency shown by earlier societies to make trades hereditary either to petrify them into castes or whenever definite historical conditions beget in the individual to vary in a manner incompatible with the nature of caste, to ossify them into guilds. Caste and guilds arise from the action of the same natural law that regulates the differentiation of plants, and animals into species and varieties except that when a certain degree of development has been reached the heredity of caste and the exclusiveness of guilds are ordained as a law of society”.¹⁷ But Marx neither elaborated on the system nor thought of means to end the system. However, the socialists in

India had concerned themselves not only with the classes but also with the castes. While classes stratified the society on economic basis, castes stratified the society on social basis. Was there any organic relationship between the two?

(to be concluded)

1. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 52 Page 121
2. See ‘Thoughts on Ambedkar : Ed: L.R.Byale. P – 52-54
3. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 3, Page 163
4. Narayaneeyam, P - 157
5. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 3, Page 515
6. See Encyclopaedia on Ambedkar: Vol : 1
7. Narayaneeyam, P - 157
8. Encyclopaedia on Ambedkar: (Vol 1 P -69)
9. Towards Socialist Society : Ed. Brahmanand, P - 209
10. Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy : Ed. Bimla Prasad, P - 152
11. Towards Socialist Society : Ed. Brahmanand, P - 210
12. The Life of Mahatma Gandhi - Louis Fischer P 185
13. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 3, Page 503
14. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 2, Page 151
15. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 3, Page
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17. Vol - 1, Page 321.

A Vice Chancellor's Agenda

Interview of Lt. Gen. (Retd.) **Zameeruddin Shah,**
Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University with Jasim Mohammad.

Q. After rendering services to the armed forces, how are you feeling heading an academic institution?

A. It is totally a misconception of the people that army men cannot run academic institutions or they do not understand academic activities. I have been educated in the army but I can confidently say that AMU is not a new one to me. I had been member of the management committees of five institutions and I had rendered my services with full devotion to them. I do not think that I will face any hardship in AMU.

Q. According to a survey, AMU now stands on fifth place among top ten Universities of India. Are you satisfied with the position? Are you feeling the need to upgrade roads and other facilities?

A. I am too much happy as I had not expected fifth place for AMU at all but I feel dejected why we are not on first position itself. We will carry on AMU to the top position in the country.

Q. What are your plans for achieving academic excellence in AMU?

A. I think much emphasis should be given to research work. Academic excellence will be only when our teachers will devote themselves to research. I have to ensure that the teaching community discharges its obligations in a meaningful way. Students reflect the work of teachers. If the teachers will do their duties in true manner then

there will be no problem from the students. Students should be provided better academic facilities and they should be made busy in their studies. In this way, we will not face any disciplinary problem from students.

Q. Founder of AMU, Sir Syed had incorporated character building along with education in his mission but the concept is dying out lately. Have you any programme for that?

A. No doubt Sir Syed had given much emphasis to character building with education. I shall give an example of myself. I always say that adopt the army rule and that is "follow me". It means that I will show you right direction and just follow me. I am sure nobody will have chance to raise accusing fingers to me. When students will see that the commitment and behavior of the vice-chancellor and the teachers is fine and strong then I feel that they will also embark upon the same way.

Q. Issue of discipline is very complicated in AMU, what will you do to restore discipline in the campus?

A. Discipline always begins from top. When I am not punctual to the time then how I may expect others to be punctual. I have already given message that we all should be punctual to time. I have come to know that there are allegations of corruptions too. That is also a part of discipline.

It is on top of my agenda. If I get any such information, I shall not excuse anybody. I shall take strict action. Another issue is of dress code. When I was in National Defense Academy, I had visited AMU forty five years earlier and I found that large number of students and teachers were in sherwani. If you don't shave and walk in Kurta-Pyjama then your total behaviour will be of that standard. We will certainly pay attention to dress code. Residential facilities are worst. They will be upgraded. When students will realize that the work is going on in university then they will pose no problem.

Q. Are you aware that Aligarh Police had complained to AMU administration that students are demanding money from shopkeepers of adjoining areas. What steps will you take to stop the practice?

A. I am inquiring about that. We will try to provide canteen in every hostel, so that students do not waste time outside. If I come to know that any student has demanded money from anybody I shall immediately take strict action against him.

Q. When elections of the students' union are held, there are some people who finance the candidates. Regionalism also prevails. Now elections of AMUSU will be held and that too on the recommendations of the Lingdoh Committee. At that

time discipline will not be in sight. Lakhs of rupees are spent and some times candidates take money from contractors. How you will stop them?

A. First of all disfiguring of walls will be strictly stopped. We will enact rules like the Election Commission and those who will violate the rules will be imposed heavy fines. Secondly less time will be given for electioneering. Process of election will be simplified, so that candidates are saved from heavy expenditure. As the term of the AMUSU has already expired, fresh elections will be held in the beginning of the next academic session.

Q. President of the AMU Students' Union has given a statement in the media saying that next election of the Union should be held as per the AMU Act and not according to Lingdoh Committee Recommendations. He also said that the office bearers of the Union remain in office till the next Union is constituted. What are your views?

A. The term of AMUSU ends when the academic session ends and the academic session has ended on 31 May, 2012 and along with it the term of the union is also completed.

Q. It means you will follow the orders of the Supreme Court?

A. Certainly, we will follow orders of the Supreme Court only.

Q. What you will do to tackle the problem of regionalism?

A. I don't think about regionalism at all. I will follow only rules. I have spent my time in whole country and I felt it is not important who comes from

where or who belongs to which religion. If I will myself not practice regionalism then I hope it will finish to the core.

Q. Are you planning to introduce some new courses in the University as per the demand of time?

A. In this connection, I have already constituted a committee to study the requirements. Some old boys settled in USA have also expressed desire to render their services. Presently I am studying the matter and unable to speak in detail. No doubt changes must come as they are the demand of changing times.

Q. What is your stand on AMU Centers in other provinces? Will these Centers affect minority character of AMU which was the dream of Sir Syed?

A. AMU Centers are now a fact. They have been approved by the Academic Council, Executive Council and AMU Court. Now there is no going back. If a mother has no proper health to bear children, she should not deliver them but the children already born cannot be abandoned. It is a wrong conception that due to the Centers AMU culture will dilute. Why not spread it to the Centers? What is harm if that culture spread to Bengal and Kerala. As for as the question of minority character is concerned, has the AMU fulfilled the objective for which it was founded? We all live in a secular country but the basic aim by which Sir Syed has established the institution will be safeguarded. Those who think that the Centers will negatively affect minority character are wrong. I have statistics to show as to who is benefiting from

the Centers? The Centers have been established in the areas where Muslim youths have no access to higher education. But the health of AMU is quite well, we will not favour establishing AMU Centres at other places. The resources which are meant for AMU should not be diverted to the Centers. We must have separate resources and finances for the AMU Centers.

Q. An appeal pertaining to the minority character of AMU is pending in the Supreme Court since 2006. The advocates to whom university has paid lakhs of rupees do not remain present on the dates in the Court. How you will deal the matter?

A. I will not comment upon that as the matter is sub-judice but I shall ensure that legal process goes on smoothly without delays. I shall accept the verdict of the Supreme Court. I was also a member of the Armed Forces Tribunal, so I know the value of justice and the justice on time. I hope to accelerate the legal process and hope for a quick decision.

Q. Followers of Sir Syed are scattered all over the world. It is very unfortunate that AMU does not have 'Sir Syed Chair', though in 2007, a committee had submitted a report to that effect?

A. I will see, why AMU lacks Sir Syed Chair which should be here. If the rules permit then Sir Syed should be extended the honour. I see no reason why Sir Syed chair should not be established? I shall study the issue.

Q. In the bygone era, AMU had a share in the civil services but

presently our boys are lagging behind. What you will propose to that?

A. Every Vice-Chancellor has his own agenda. Every Vice-Chancellor has left his imprints. My first priority is that the students of AMU join not only civil services but also army, reputed industries and high profile jobs and I shall take personal interest in ensuring to achieve the target. If we want that our children face challenges of the outside world then we will have to prepare them accordingly. They must receive right guidance, develop confidence etc. and we will have to invite people from industries to come to AMU and evaluate our boys as being done in IITs and IIMS. My first aim is to spread message that the students of AMU are best.

Q. Output of AMU Urdu Academy is almost zero. The university has spent huge sum on the building. Have you any plans?

A. Urdu Academy will be re-constituted and will be run smoothly as we have to re-establish importance and prestige of Urdu.

Q. Have you done any planning to develop the Urdu? Can the future of Urdu be brightened in this age of information technology? Have you any programme to link it with employment?

A. You must understand one point. Urdu is our language but it cannot provide a good employment. There is no doubt that we all read and use Urdu at home but we have to go to English language. Until and unless, our English is strong, we cannot expect respectable

jobs and may not compete with others.

Q. Section 5(2)(c) of AMU Act has entrusted extra responsibility on AMU to enhance social and educational status of Indian Muslims. Such a responsibility has not been entrusted to any other Indian University. Madarsa system needs modernization. What is your opinion?

A. Madarsa system should be based on the religious as well as modern education. No doubt we should impart religious education but at the same time we must prepare our children to face the world. I think modernization of Madarsa should not be opposed and Madarsa students themselves will not oppose it.

Q. Often brawls and incident of violence take place between attendants of patients and doctors in the Medical College and in some cases doctors go on strike and subsequently AMU administration bows down to their dictates. What will be your stand?

A. I shall ponder over the whole issue. I don't want that people comment that military rule has come. I hope that when university community will observe the work culture of army men they themselves will demand to depute army personal. I am exploring possibilities to bring any capable and efficient Medical Superintendent from army background.

Q. People believe that doctors in the Medical College do not discharge their responsibilities in befitting manner and prefer to give time to private nursing

homes. Often costly tests from outside are recommended. Have you any plan to bring the administration of medical college on rails?

A. My first priority is to implement medical ethics strictly. Doctors are receiving Non-Practicing Allowance and I hope that they will stop private practice. I have already issued orders to the Dean of Medicine faculty to stop the unhealthy practice. If I come to know about any doctor who is practicing privately, I shall take stern action against him.

(Continued from Page 7)

It is also disappointing that the physical assault on Prof. Palshikar has been described as an 'aberrant act'. It has been suggested that over-discussion of this minor incident is a design to divert attention from the atrocity of the Shankar cartoon. Counterposing this with his being defended by Dalit students leaves one with a deep sense of disquiet. We have seen similar assaults on the Head of the department of History in Delhi University by some overzealous Hindu youth distressed by the Ramanujan essay. It was similarly underplayed by interested parties arguing it was more important to discuss the hurt caused to Hindus, than this "minor" and "aberrant" assault.

It is very clear now that the hapless textbooks and the whole vision of the NCF 2005 are up against different kinds of sensitivities, all of them formidable and equally valid for the state. The ultimate loser in this battle would be the new curricular vision and the children who might have benefited from it.

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Gilani: Sati or suicide

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The judiciary has played havoc with Pakistan. Often it has justified the military coup in the country through the dictum of necessity and at few times it has supported the democratic ethos. Every time the people have paid the price.

This time it has not been different. Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani has been disqualified and he had no option except to resign to make place for a new prime minister. Yet the people have to bear the brunt. With no electricity, no water and no reprieve from increasing prices, the people would have expected the government to attend to their problems - they even came to the streets to protest - but the ruling Pakistan People's Party, or its boss, President Asif Zardari, have a different priority. Their all attention has been focused on how to secure their loyal successor to Gilani.

Coming to Gilani, he sacrificed himself to protect Zardari who had been held guilty for having stacked billions of dollars in Swiss banks. The Supreme Court asked Gillani to write to the Swiss authorities to get information about Zardari's bank account. Gillani refused and joined issue with the Supreme Court which held him guilty for contempt of the

Court. This was as far back as April 26 this year. Gilani neither went in for appeal nor did he bother about the punishment for contempt.

Instead, Gilani went to Pakistan's National assembly to get endorsement for his stand and, surprisingly, the house gave him full support. Even the Speaker, Fehmida Mirza, who had no business to comment on the judiciary, and an independent arm of the Parliamentary system, said that the Prime Minister did not have to comply with the Supreme Court's order, laying down a new dictum that Parliament was superior to the judiciary.

It was a civilian coup of sorts. The arrangement would have come to stay if the army, the real power in Pakistan, had sided with the government. But the army was angry with the Gilani government which had vainly tried to bring ISI under the civilian authority. Even otherwise, Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Parvez Kayani does not have an appetite for a direct military rule. He has found back seat driving useful because in this way he rules without having any responsibility. Had he sided with Gilani he would have taken on the Supreme Court, more so Chief Justice

Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry who has caught the imagination of people after forcing through a popular agitation former Chief of Staff General Pervez for the restoration of the supremacy of the judiciary. Since then the Supreme Court has been the custodian of the Constitution.

The outgoing Prime Minister Gilani, a believer in the rule of law, could have saved himself by telling the Supreme Court that he would write to the Swiss authorities about Zardari's hidden wealth. But he preferred to be a Sati, a custom among the Hindus in Rajasthan where the wife burns herself along with her dead husband.

I can understand a person staking everything on principles. Gilani did so not to bring Zardari to the book. In Gilani's case, the more apt word is hari-kari (suicide). Maybe, he had political compulsions. Probably Zardari chose him because he found in him the best stalking horse available. The next Prime Minister would also have to keep quiet on Zardari's money abroad. This is the requirement which the Pakistan President must have laid down before selecting the Prime Minister. That means that Zardari's confrontation with the Supreme Court will have no respite.

The fallout of Gilani's ousting is positive and it means that the independence of judiciary has come to stay in Pakistan. This rectifies the earlier practice when the Chief Justices would succumb before the military's pressure. Chief Justice Chaudhry has rightly said in his judgment: "Where will be the independence of judiciary go if the executive examines ruling of a seven-judge bench".

(Continued on Page 5)

BJP and Minorities

Asghar Ali Engineer

The BJP President, Nitin Gadkari said, in the BJP Executive Committee meeting in Mumbai a few days ago, that 'we should try to woo minorities to win forthcoming 2014 General Elections.' He gave the example of Goa saying that 'we wooed the Christian minority there and won the Goa election. We, therefore, should try to woo Muslims too, in the country, to win 2014 General Elections.'

Shri Gadkari, who is an RSS appointee as President of BJP should know the difference between winning Goa, a small Union Territory, election and the General Elections in India as a whole. Also, Goa has some specific problems whereas India as a whole with 15 percent Muslim population is very different proposition. The two are far from comparable. Also, Goan Christians' attitude towards BJP is not the same as Muslim attitude towards BJP. And BJP's sins against Christians in Goa are not the same as BJP's sins against Muslims in different parts of India.

In 2014 BJP is desperate to come to power. In the last General Elections BJP got 19 percent votes and the Congress got 27 percent and the Congress formed UPA II Government with the help of its allies. Thus between Congress and BJP there was difference of 8 percent votes and BJP is desperate to make up this difference and if it can get a section of Muslim vote it can make up the difference.

BJP' mathematics unfortunately depends on communal concept. It thinks Muslims and Hindus are homogenous communities and they

vote on communal considerations and not on the basis of their regional, linguistic and class interests as it happens in a democracy. It incited hatred against Muslims throughout the post-independence India on the assumption that it could polarize voters into Hindus and Muslims and Hindus will vote for the BJP and it would come to power. However, it never happened and BJP remained outside the charming circle.

It then merged with the Janta Party under the leadership of Jayprakash Narayan and took a vow for Gnanthian secularism and socialism and vowed never to resort to communal politics. However, under the dual membership controversy its members in Janata Party refused to resign from RSS and ultimately Janta Party Government under Morarji Desai's leadership fell and BJP once again resorted to communal politics with vengeance.

It was during this phase that it raised the issue of Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy during late 1980s and polarized Indian population along communal lines as never before. Its vow not to resort to communal politics was thoroughly exposed. It was nothing but sheer opportunism. Its secularism was thus very short lived. There was no genuine change of heart or in other words its decision was not based on inner conviction but merely on political tactics.

The BJP never misses any chance to attack any scheme or project which can benefit Muslims even remotely. It has been opposing implementation of Sacchar Committee scheme

under its well-known theory of appeasement of Muslims and year after year Narendra Modi Government has been refusing to utilize scholarship amount sent by the Central Government for Muslim children under the pretext that his Government does not believe in any 'religious discrimination' in dispensing scholarship amount.

Also, the BJP Governments in M.P. and Karnataka have passed stringent laws against cow slaughter which are directed mainly against Muslims and police will have one more weapon to harass them. I am not saying that Muslims should eat beef; they should renounce it voluntarily as Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind also has advised them but anyway all cannot be compulsorily stopped from doing so and even if they do not eat the police will harass them. The law is very very stringent and even dalits, who too eat beef, are opposing it and in Hyderabad University these dalit students even organized a food festival and ate beef in the University Campus.

The M.P. Government has also been introducing Hindu rituals in schools like *Surya namaskar* and others and hardly cares for any religious sensitivity of minorities. Thus wherever it comes to power it imposes Hindu rituals over other religious minorities. Not that there is anything wrong with Hindu rituals but question is of others' religious sensibilities and of imposition against will.

Also, the Sangh Parivar has hardly any love for democracy. In Gujarat Hitler has been glorified in textbooks. In Rajasthan when BJP was in power in class XI text book of social science Fascism was glorified and it was stated that fascism suits India as a fascist leader can take right

decision at right time. It is utterly shocking but true. I myself drew , the then Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh's attention to it and he could not believe that such a thing had been included in the Rajasthan text book.

Fascism and Nazism are strongly anti-minorities and highly intolerant of religious pluralism. Such text books are anti-democratic and go totally against our own cultural traditions of pluralism and tolerance. It is anti-constitutional too. Also, the Sangh Parivar has been inciting violence against Muslims since the day one of independent India. It has accused Muslims of being not loyal to India and being pro-Pakistan.

With horrible massacres like Gujarat in 2002, Narendra Modi refused to take any responsibility, let alone express any regret and apologies to Muslims for what happened with them in that state. He, on the other hand, expects Muslims to forget and go ahead. Instead of apologizing he pretended to promote what he calls *sadbhavna* (communal harmony) and sat on one-day fasts in several districts of Gujarat. Muslims of Gujarat refused to fall for his pretensions and despite all efforts they did not take part in his *sadbhavna* rallies except the Bohra Muslims whose head Syedna Muhammad Burhanuddin is placating Modi for his personal vested interests (The Syedna has huge income from various mausoleums and waqf properties in Gujarat which goes unaccounted).

Now Narendra Modi's rival Sanjay Joshi is accusing him of organizing communal riots in Gujarat in 2002 to retain his chair. Shri. Joshi's supporters put up a poster which said "I am an RSS member, I don't sell/ purchase land,

I don't do genocide for power, I don't change my color for power (reference to *sadbhavna* rallies).

Keshubhai Patel, the former Chief Minister, has also come out attacking Narendra Modi and is appealing to his Patel biradari to rise against Modi and defeat him in coming assembly elections. This is the condition of BJP which once claimed while the Congress was a party with differences, BJP was the party with difference. Now the shoe is on the other foot. It is the BJP which is a party with differences. It is as corrupt, if not more, as Congress. It supports Anna to defeat 'corrupt Congress' and Anna and his team obliges BJP by targeting only the Congress and keeping absolutely mum about corruption in BJP.

Whatever if BJP is desirous of Muslim supports it has to first of all apologize to Muslims and the nation for demolition of Babri Masjid and allow Babri Masjid to be reconstructed at the plot where it once stood. Also it should compel Narendra Modi to apologize to Muslims for organizing their genocide in Gujarat in 2002. Also the BJP should convince the nation and Muslims that it would not resort to communalism and communal violence and would not betray the nation this time round in any case.

This also cannot wash away BJP's sins but at least pave way for reconciliation and we altogether – Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, tribals and all others can raise our Indian nation and make it peaceful and prosperous. It should also apologize to Christians for organizing riots in Kndhamal district, Orissa. Then only we can become a true nation without any distinction of religion, caste and creed.

The duty of disobedience

Harsh Mander

The minorities then will surely give BJP a chance to come to power and prove its worth and that unlike in seventies it would not betray its promise. And if BJP really apologizes the minorities would magnanimously forgive and forget all that happened in the past and go ahead. This is what happened in South Africa and *Satya* is very much part of our Indian culture and forgiveness too is our precious heritage. If at all BJP is proud of our rich cultural heritage it should not mind following this course.

A superficial approach like promising Muslims to salvage their waqf properties as suggested by Nitin Gadkari will not attract Muslims to the BJP fold. For more than 60 years they have suffered at the hands of BJP and its politics of communalism. Only salvaging waqf properties is not going to do the trick. And let BJP leaders be also reassured that the Congress will also be not be able to use fear of BJP to get Muslim votes. Its communalism will also be exposed and it will also have to work hard to woo Muslims. It would then be real competition between two big parties to bring about great unity and solidarity between all people of India – the ultimate goal of our politics. Long live our nation and our unity!

In my last column, I argued that civil servants have the duty to disobey unlawful orders of political and administrative superiors. But I would go further, and suggest that the duty to dissent of civil servants extends even to orders which are strictly legal, but which the civil servant regards to be unjust.

I believe that public officials are not servants of their administrative superiors, or of elected representatives, or even of the government that employs them. They are servants firstly of the people — especially of the disadvantaged and oppressed — and of the Constitution. In the service of these masters, they would do well to heed Gandhi, who declared that he recognised only one dictator, and that was the still feeble inner voice of his conscience. If the voice of their conscience so compels civil servants, their highest duty indeed is to dissent. Only if they act consistently with their conscience and in conformity with the Constitution, would the people whom they serve be in safe and caring hands.

Not all statutes or government policies are just and conforming to the interests of disadvantaged citizens. There is a whole body of laws and policies that I believe to be wholly unjust, such as those that vest security forces with special powers in troubled regions, laws that enabled acquisition of land on highly inequitable terms, laws that criminalise beggary and destitution, and policies to demolish urban slums, to name only a few.

Does the civil servant have the right to dissent and refuse to implement such laws and policies if these contravene his or her conscience? I have always believed this to be the case. The civil servant does not surrender this inalienable right to individual conscience even after joining public service in a democracy, precisely because it is a democracy; and a civil servant does not cease to be a sovereign citizen even while accepting the responsibility of becoming the instrument to implement the will of the sovereign collective of people, as reflected in the will of their public representatives. For instance, when in my career I believed that certain “lawful” official directives were unjust, such as to use force to crush democratic dissent, whether against discriminatory displacement or for labour rights; or to demolish urban slums; or to drive away or lock up the homeless and destitute, I feel that my duty was indeed to disobey, and acted on this conviction.

But I acknowledge that it is reasonable to be uneasy about endorsing the ethical right of all civil servants to act in obedience to their conscience rather than the directions of the political executive, even when these conform to the law and policies of the government. It can be argued that if every public official was free to disobey laws and policies which they regarded to be unjust, then this could be a prescription for anarchy. But I would counter that if every civil servant was bound to obey every official law and policy even if this contravened her conscience, then this could lead ultimately to

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fascism. And if the ultimate choice for my country is between anarchy and fascism, my choice would be for anarchy! A story is told of the training of young recruits by the Nazis, who were given puppies to rear, and later commanded to strangle them to death. Only those who complied without flinching passed the test of being reliable Nazi workers. On the contrary, many of us would find reliable not only an officer who would flinch, but who would stoutly refuse to obey such an order. Only such an official would have had the strength of character to defy say the Emergency of 1975-77 or the carnage in Gujarat in 2002.

But it is not my claim that this right to act by one's conscience is not unlimited and unqualified for civil servants. Suppose a civil servant believes, say, in the Maoist project of the violent overthrow of the State, or secession to form, say, Khalistan, and uses his offices to actually protect militants and promote insurgency; likewise, an official's conscience may lead to active complicity in the demolition of the Babri Masjid. I believe these officials cross dangerously, even criminally, the ethically permissible limits of dissent in public service.

The ultimate limits to dissent by public servants are laid down by the letter and spirit of the Constitution which declares India to be a socialistic, secular democracy. I believe that when one joins the Civil Service, one must subscribe fully to the Constitution, and its basic features and values. There is no legitimate space for dissent with the Constitution itself, in one's duties as a civil servant. Civil servants cannot ethically act on their beliefs if they dissent with secularism for instance — as interpreted as equal protection under the law and equal legal

citizenship rights to all regardless of their faith, gender, caste, language, ethnicity and wealth. They cannot differ with other core features of our Constitution, such as the principle that the State must intervene to defend the rights of disadvantaged people including through affirmative action; or reject universal adult franchise as just a sham democracy. They cannot uphold untouchability, or violence against women and discrimination because of gender, or communalism, or bonded labour, or the deployment of violence as a legitimate instrument of political aspirations.

(Continued from Page 2)

I recall the time when the eminent lawyer, Aitzaz Ahsan was offered the prime ministership. But he correctly said 'no' because he told Zardari that there could not be two parallel authorities in a country. Aitzaz has been proved correct. Zardari cannot play a second fiddle, although the office of President he occupies makes him a figure head.

I think that Aitzaz was not justified in defending Gilani because the latter was in the wrong and had refused to write to Swiss authorities about Zardari's money which runs into billions of dollars and which rightly belongs to Pakistan. Aitzaz may have won on some technical point but the question was not legal but moral. Yet all marks to Gilani who knowingly took his stand which he knew would not stand the scrutiny of law.

The best course now is to have elections after Ramzan and in the meanwhile the administration should be entrusted to an interim government, an arrangement that the Pakistan constitution provides.

The Constitution therefore sets the non-negotiable limits of dissent of public servants. It defines for those to who accrue the powers of the state the frontiers of conscience and discretion. Civil servants must obey faithfully, defend and uphold the Constitution and all it stands for. But in the commodious spaces within the four walls of the Constitution, I believe the civil servant retains the rights of conscience and dissent, of course against illegal orders, but even against lawful orders, policies and programmes that the civil servant believes to be unjust to the true masters — the people of this land.

Aman Biradari

PPP has been caught on a wrong foot and the Gilani episode is going to hurt the party at the next polls. Its performance too has been below par and the electorate will not forget this, more so Zardari's money at Swiss bank, on the polling day.

The petitions by Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan to the Supreme Court brought the government down crashing. Otherwise, Gilani would have continued as he did after April 26, when he was found guilty for disobeying the Court in committed to contempt. Although the sentence was for one day but as the petitioner had pleaded, a Prime Minister who had been sentenced even for day could not continue in office. The Supreme Court upheld the plea.

Yet I sympathise with Gilani and I think that the statues should be built in Pakistan to remember that there are still some people who sacrifice all theirs for loyalty. These are very rare things and they should not go unnoticed, unapplauded. Whether he should have declined to be a Sati is a matter for him to decide. But there is no doubting about his sacrifice and his loyalty.

The sea breeze in Karachi

Jawed Naqvi

As a visitor from provincial Delhi, I always feel refreshed by the sea breeze in Karachi and the varied lives it governs and enriches.

It was refreshing last fortnight, for example, to meet Rajinder the room boy at the city's colonial-era Sind Club. He helped me decode a scribbled Urdu note left for me by the club's senior member Iqbal Siddiqui.

In a way Rajinder, whose ancestors came from a small town in Uttar Pradesh (as did nearly all the room attendants at the club), showed a better grasp of the script over mine. His skill reaffirmed the view I have used to slam India and Pakistan — that a language has little if anything to do with religion. It has stronger roots in geography and assorted ethnic linkages that thrive as cultural oxbow lakes, of which a part of Karachi is.

It is an inescapable fact that Urdu was foisted on Pakistan just as Hindi was forced on unsuspecting Indians as a perverse or at least hurried interpretation of what a link language ought to be between our linguistic oxbow lakes. In all probability, the author of the scribbled note himself would testify to my submission.

His sister Salma Siddiqui who lives in Mumbai is a writer in her own right. She was married to Krishan Chander a celebrity of Urdu literature in India and Pakistan. So, we don't have to go all the way to Chakbast or Sarshar to plead that though they were Hindu they wrote beautiful verse and prose in Urdu.

The 'though' is wrong.

Examples are legion, but it's safe to say that Nehru's Urdu was inevitably better than Jinnah's or Rajendra Prasad's. Geography and job hunt played a role. Nehru's Kashmiri forebears came to work in the court of Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar. They had to be skilled in Persian, and later in Urdu too.

Karachi asserts the point emphatically. Ghazala Rehman who I met during a seminar on 'history and war' is busy researching 'Sind Abhyas'. She startled me by claiming that the Sindhi language was older than Sanskrit. In India, Lal Kishan Advani, whose fractious politics feeds on stressing the primacy of Sanskritised Hindi over other linguistic and cultural motifs, which include his own Sindhi language, would squirm. His reaction to the claim by an ostensibly Muslim scholar who challenges a potentially exaggerated notion about Sanskrit's primacy would be interesting. There was not enough time for the Sindhi scholar to share the burden of her argument with me. However, if a Dravidian language such as Brahui could be still extant in Balochistan in Karachi's neighbourhood then anything is possible.

Karachi tests common axioms. One of its popular figures B.M. Kutty runs what his friends jokingly call a one-man Baloch Separatist Party of Kerala. How this scholar and left-wing activist came to ensconce himself in Karachi is recorded in his very readable autobiography *Sixty Years in Exile: No Regrets*. Kutty

Sahab is best known for editing the autobiography of Mir Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo from the notes left behind by the iconic Baloch leader with whom he apprenticed as a young communist.

Last fortnight, I waded into a sea of his admirers who had assembled to celebrate him. Kutty was embarrassed by the ovations. I found time to wander off in my mind about the targeted killings and the so-called ethnic divide that has tormented Karachi of late. The city needs to be urgently deweaponised, but it's easier said than done. As an Indian, I know how there are huge political stakes in keeping the 'identity pot' boiling.

Listening to Kutty's friends was a treat in contrast to the banal politics of murder. There were Baloch comrades and there were their Urdu-speaking sympathisers. There were Punjabi communists and Pushto-speaking critics of religious sectarianism. Kutty, of a remote village in Malabar, had become their anchor and hero.

The lanky Usman Baloch, jailed frequently for his radical albeit secular idealism, merrily mocked the failure of the left in Pakistan. "Marx made the mistake of going to Punjab first," he guffawed. "They gave him lassi and put him to sleep."

A visit to Karachi can never be complete for me without a meeting Saleem Asmi who retired as editor of *Dawn* a few years ago. His convivial life in Dubai and later in Karachi was packed with painters, musicians,

poets and liberal dilettantes. There are fewer of them going around these days. In any case Asmi Sahab has painted himself into a corner by indulging the liver with all its cravings. But he feels as engaged with life in his recently acquired wheelchair as he once did in the editor's chair.

Asmi reminds me of the difference that Noam Chomsky noticed between Indian and Pakistani journalists though there are exceptions on either side of the border. Human rights activist and senior journalist I. A. Rehman spoke at a function at the Karachi Press Club to celebrate his friend Asmi. Both had been to jail a few times.

It is almost a tradition for good Pakistani journalists to have been to jail. They face threats from religious extremists and the state alike. There are journalists who work for both though. But disappeared journalists are not a new phenomenon in Pakistan, and Daniel Pearl was just one who met a gruesome end.

Unlike the leading editors and former editors I encounter in India, journalists like Asmi and I.A. Rehman lead simple lives, which is restricted to Pakistan's unending struggle for justice for all — chiefly for women, religious and ethnic minorities, and not the least for journalists and their right to speak and write freely. Rehman Sahab flew in all the way from Lahore to lead the speakers, while I was there, at a three-day seminar on media challenges.

It was organised by the department of mass communications of the Federal Urdu University. Was there a single speaker who did not impress with a plan to

thwart the encroachment of business corporates, about the need to recast the media as a secular and concerned

body of people? As usual, the sea breeze in Karachi was refreshing last fortnight..

Text of the letter addressed Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister of Bihar, by Bhai Vaidya, President and Prem Singh, General Secretary of the Socialist Party (India) on June 19, 2012:

The Congress chief ministers Sheila Dikshit, Prithviraj Chavan, Bhupendra Singh Hooda, Tarun Gogoi have mounted pressure to implement the decision of allowing 51% FDI in retail sector. The Union Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma is running post to pillar to garner the support of non-Congress chief minister for the immediate implementation of the decision. As you know, the UPA government was forced to withhold the decision, announced at November end last year, following united and stiff protest by the non-Congress political parties and trade union bodies. The Congress chief ministers and Anand Sharma, who championed the proposal, are giving same untenable arguments in favour of FDI which have been refuted by the experts and concerned citizens in the debate raised after announcement of the decision.

In early May the US Foreign Secretary Hillary Clinton visited India with this agenda at top priority. Mrs. Clinton has served on Wal-Mart board as its director for six years. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was most furious against the decision. That is why Mrs. Clinton first went to Calcutta to meet and praise Mrs. Banerjee. Indian MD of the French retail giant Carrefour called on Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma and raised the issue of allowing FDI in retail at the earliest. In fact, the UPA government is bent upon to implement this decision in favour

and benefit of foreign multinational retail chain companies at the cost of the interests of retailers and farmers of the country. The government, adhering to its neo-liberal policies, can possibly declare any time that it would implement the decision anyway. In case this decision is implemented, it would be disastrous not only for the retailers and farmers of the country but for the culture of the Indian society.

In view of this descending danger, the Socialist Party held a day-long dharna at Jantar Mantar on 28 May 2012 against the government's decision and submitted a memorandum to the President requesting her to advise the government to scrap the decision conclusively.

Ours is a new party and we do not have members in the parliament and legislative assemblies. That is why we wrote to the president/general secretary of your party a few days ago requesting to place pressure on the government through the parliament and through other democratic means to scrap this decision immediately. Now we write to you to kindly declare on your part that Bihar will not implement this anti-people and anti-national decision.

A copy of the memorandum, submitted to the President, is attached for your kind perusal.

With best regards

Ambedkar and Socialism - II

Bapu Heddurshetti

In his paper presented at an Anthropology Seminar at the Columbia University on 9th May 1916 entitled 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', Ambedkar, who was then only 25 years young, argued that the "Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians and Scythians who came to India...settled down as peaceful neighbours and... through constant contact and mutual intercourse they evolved a common culture that superseded their distinctive cultures" and hence he defined caste and its genesis as "a parceling of an already homogeneous unit, and the explanation of the genesis of Caste is the explanation of this process of parceling..." He said that caste cannot be considered in the form of an "isolated unit by itself but only as a group within, and with definite relations to, the system of caste as a whole".

He then said that "prohibition, or rather the absence of intermarriage - endogamy, to be concise - is the only one that can be called the essence of Caste when rightly understood". He hence defined caste as "an artificial chopping off of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy". But then, an erudite anthropologist that he was, he distinguished caste from other endogamous groups like Red Indians by saying that those endogamous groups were not parts of a homogeneous unit but were themselves heterogeneous and hence were not castes.

Giving the example of Sagotras being exogamous, Ambedkar said that endogamy is foreign to the people of India and hence concluded that "Castes, so far as India is concerned, means the superposition of endogamy on exogamy". "Thus the superposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste".

Ambedkar said that "in a normal group the two sexes are more or less evenly distributed, and generally speaking there is an equality between those of the same age. ... for the group that is desirous of making itself into a caste the maintenance of equality between the sexes becomes the ultimate goal, for without it endogamy can no longer subsist". However when the balance between the two sexes is disturbed due to death or otherwise, surplus men and surplus women are created who will tend to violate the principle of endogamy. Hence the "problem of Caste, then, ultimately resolves itself into one of repairing the disparity between the marriageable units of the two sexes within it... Sati, enforced widowhood and girl marriage are customs that were primarily intended to solve the problem of the surplus man and surplus woman in a caste and to maintain its endogamy".

Ambedkar summarised his views on the caste system as follows: "My study of the Caste problem involves four main points: (1) that in spite of the composite make-up of the Hindu population, there is a deep cultural unity; (2) that caste is a parceling into bits of a larger cultural

unit; (3) that there was one caste to start with; and (4) that classes have become Castes through imitation and excommunication".

Ambedkar's analysis of the genesis of the castes and the caste system pointed to an equation between class and caste. Ambedkar denied the formulation that a society consists of individuals and asserted that every society, including Hindu society, consists of classes, the basis of which may be economic, social or intellectual, and that an individual in a society is always a member of one class or the other. He said that "class and caste are next door neighbours". He then theorized that a class gets enclosed and becomes a caste. "A Caste is an Enclosed Class" he said.

Ambedkar considered the four varnas of the Hindu society, namely, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shoodras as the classes and said that the sub-division of a society into such classes was natural. "But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes". While some classes adopted endogamy and closed their doors on others and thus became castes, others were forced to adopt endogamy as they were not allowed exogamy by the endogamous classes and hence became castes. According to Ambedkar a single caste cannot exist, it has to exist in a group of castes, i.e., a caste system. So he said "caste in the singular number is an unreality. Castes exist only in the plural number. There is no such

thing as a caste: There are always castes". This in short, is the genesis of the castes and the caste system according to Ambedkar.

However, having said that a caste is an enclosed class, Ambedkar had developed so much of a dislike for the caste system that he did not propose to open the doors of the castes and convert them into classes. He proposed to destroy the castes and the caste system itself.

Socialist perception of caste system

Socialists, though influenced by the western concept of socialism, were aware that in India there were, in addition to economic inequalities, social inequalities also. They perceived that the social inequalities in India had many dimensions and the most important of them was the caste 'system' in which some castes were considered superior to some other castes. The caste 'system' conferred privileges on some and deprived some others of them, on the basis of their birth. Being votaries of equality, socialists aimed at the abolition of the hierarchical structure of the caste system which buttressed inequality. Starting from a refusal to accept the social inequalities of the caste system to the drawing of programmes for abolition of the inequalities between the castes, their strategy for abolition of the caste system and establishment of social equality evolved gradually over a period.

In the objective section of the Programme of the Congress Socialist Party, the Party said that there would be "no recognition of any distinction based on caste or community". While Jayaprakash Narayan in his book 'Why Socialism' explained many other objectives, he said that the objective on caste and community was self-explanatory.

Constitution of the Socialist Party as also of the Praja Socialist Party later stated that a person can become a member of the party if he, among other things, 'does not believe in nor observe caste and communal distinctions'.

In the alternative Constitution for India which the socialists drafted, they said, "Equality to be real must be not only legal and political but also social. It should be the foundation of the whole structure and the fundamental principles of all public activities". Then they elaborated: "Harijans are provided special facilities for educational advancement. Special schools are opened for them and freeships and scholarships are liberally granted to them by the state and various public organisations. All this has, no doubt, promoted their educational advancement. But it is generally recognised that separate schools are a hindrance to social assimilation and education should be imparted to Harijans in common public schools. Of course, they may be granted special fee concessions and scholarships. When untouchability in all forms is prohibited, special schools are not needed.

"It is also necessary to make it clear that constitutional guarantees regarding equality in all forms, does not absolve the state of its responsibility to provide special facilities to aboriginal tribes and other backward peoples for their economic and cultural advancement. It is obvious that without such facilities real equality will never be achieved by them, and legal equality assured to them by the constitution will serve only a negative purpose".

Policy statement of the Socialist Party adopted in 1947 under the heading "Caste" said "In India, apart

from economic inequalities, there are social inequalities, particularly among one of the communities, namely, the Hindus. The system of caste is anti-social, undemocratic and tyrannous, inasmuch as it divides men into high and low, touchable and untouchable, curtails human liberties and interferes with economic activities. In socialist India, this system cannot exist and no distinction or discrimination based on caste is permitted".

In their first election manifesto entitled 'We build for Socialism' issued for the first general elections in 1952, the socialists said: "Castes have stratified Indian society. There are groups of men who enjoy hereditary privileges and there are castes that are hereditarily underprivileged and suppressed. Freedom must mean the tearing down of these traditional barriers, it must mean free mobility for talent. The Socialist Party offers the following programs: ... a vast program of education costing Rs. 100 crores, over a period of ten years providing educational opportunities to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will help to remove the cultural and educational lag between the advanced and backward castes. It will also remove the barriers confining them to hereditary occupations". Even in 1971 election manifesto, the PSP said "The PSP's efforts to usher in equality will not be restricted to economic field alone but will be extended to the social plane as well".

Acharya Narendra Deva was also unequivocal on the issue. Even though a Marxist to the core, he recognised the caste dimension of the social inequality obtaining in India. He said: "The Hindu social organisation is a hierarchy of castes and perpetuates social inequalities.

We have also placed vast sections of our people beyond the pale of civilisation and we treat them as sub-human beings...and unless we start a crusade against these institutions and customs which perpetuate inequalities and sanction inhuman treatment to our fellowmen, we cannot hope to make any progress towards the realisation of our new objectives".¹⁸

When Gandhi started his periodical 'Harijan' and Ambedkar was asked for a message, he said that he could not give a message. He said "The out-caste is the by-product of the caste system. Nothing can emancipate the outcastes except the destruction of the caste system. Nothing can help Hindus and ensure their survival in the coming struggle except the purging of Hindus' faith of this odious and vicious dogma". But then in reply Gandhi said "Untouchability is the product not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low, that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is an attack upon this high and lowness",¹⁹ which position was nearer to the socialist position on the issue.

The one issue on which Ambedkar and the socialists differed sharply was on their perception of the nature and role of village panchayats in free India. The socialists considered the village panchayats as units of decentralised democracy which will take governance and development to the door steps of the villagers and involve them in the process of nation building. Ambedkar, while commending the adoption of the Draft Constitution told the Constituent Assembly "I hold that these village republics²⁰ have been the ruination of India...What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness

and communalism. I am glad that the Draft Constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit". Ambedkar perhaps feared that the upper castes would control the Panchayats and use them to sustain, continue and increase their oppression of the untouchables in the villages.

When K.T.Shah, a member of the Constituent Assembly moved an amendment that the 'Union and the States shall be organised on a uniform basis of groups of village Panchayats co-operatively organised inter se and functioning as democratic 'units within the Union' Ambedkar opposed the amendment and when put to vote the amendment was negated by the Constituent Assembly.

But praising the government of the United Provinces for introducing village panchayats elected on adult franchise, Acharya Narendra Deva said "The right to vote has brought about an unprecedented awakening among the masses, the downtrodden and the suppressed for centuries and the fact that a large number of so-called untouchables and lower caste people have been returned to the panchayats defeating their high caste opponents amply evidenced it". He further said "...since India is a caste ridden country, in the first flush of enfranchisement the oppressed have justly rallied round their castes. I welcome the victory of the lower castes in the elections and the alignment of the downtrodden on the basis of their castes is a happy and an inevitable feature of the elections. It reflects that the lower castes, who are the expropriated ones consisting of landless agriculture labourers and small peasant, are rising against the vested interests and economically superior higher castes".²¹

He further wrote "...to unite the people and invoke their co-operation in preparing the foundations of a new life, we shall have to obtain the hearty co-operation of the depressed classes. Moreover, we can fruitfully use their collective power only if we let them feel that the present discriminatory social system would very soon come to an end. We must assure the people that the nation accepts their undeniable importance and that they are themselves a leading component of our political order...it is absolutely essential to end social inequalities for the proper evolution of a democratic order...we should make every effort towards social, economic and cultural advancement of the backward classes."²²

Having said that, Acharya with a master stroke, reverted to his Marxism. He said 'The growth of conscious 'casteism' however, must be arrested now since it has exhausted its utility. It is now necessary to tell the lower castes that their real enemies are the vested interests, and that the upper castes have held them under their yoke only on account of their economic superiority. The oppressed castes must be told that the remedy of all their ills lay in joining hands with the other economically oppressed people, may they be of any caste or creed to fight the vested interests even among the lower castes'.²³

And so was Jayaprakash Narayan also unequivocal on the issue: "The problem of democracy is intimately connected with such social institutions and attitudes of mind as are represented by the caste system and the practice of untouchability. A society in which men are considered high, low, or untouchable according to the families into which they are born, is very far from being democratic.

It is quite a different matter that individuals are endowed at birth with different abilities and aptitudes. That is a biological phenomenon, with which caste has nothing to do. It should be appreciated by every Indian democrat that the system of caste hierarchy and untouchability is the greatest and most stubborn enemy of democracy in this country. At the same time it should also be appreciated that vanquishing of this enemy is, again, not a political but an educative task. It is also, but to a much lesser degree, an economic task. The social stature of the depressed and backward castes will undoubtedly rise with improvement in their economic condition. But it would be a mistake to believe that economic improvement by itself would be sufficient to remove caste distinctions".²⁴

Socialists and Ambedkar

Socialists in India were nationalists and patriots and hence while advocating the establishment of a socialist society in free India, they participated in the freedom struggle against the British, courted arrest and suffered incarceration. But political liberty was meaningless to Ambedkar without social fraternity, having suffered, along with his fellow downtrodden, the social isolation in the Hindu society, was critical of the call for Liberty as a priority over equality and fraternity, which the Nationalists, including the socialists, gave during the freedom struggle. Hence his distance from the freedom struggle. His position was that "...being born in the untouchable community, I deem it my first duty to strive for its interest and my duty to India as a whole is secondary"²⁵ While he was scolding hot on social change, he was tepid to the freedom struggle. Because of his commitment to the cause of the

social equality, he had the courage of conviction to co-operate with the British during the freedom struggle, matched only by the courage of conviction, also of securing social equality that Mahatma Gandhi had, in bringing Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly and later as the Law Minister of independent India.

Thus while freedom struggle was the point of departure between the socialists and Ambedkar, social change in general and abolition of the social inequalities by annihilating the caste system in particular, were the points of rendezvous between them. Though their perceptions on the nature and the means to end the caste system differed in nuances, their goal post was the same – doing away with the distinctions based on birth. That is why while they kept a distance between themselves during the freedom struggle, once the freedom was won, they co-operated with each other and even contested elections in alliance.

While the Socialists launched their political party in 1934, Ambedkar launched his first political party in 1936. While the socialists called their party the Congress Socialist Party, Ambedkar called his party the Independent Labour Party. Was it after the Independent Labour Party of England? However, while the Socialists opposed contesting the elections and assuming office under the Government of India Act of 1935, Ambedkar's party contested the elections and won 15 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly. Even Ambedkar assumed office as a member of the Governor General's Executive Council.

Ambedkar was critical of socialists in his Annihilation of Caste because the socialists appeared to

be Marxists then. Socialists did not enter the Constituent Assembly as it had been elected on a limited franchise and not on universal adult franchise which the socialists had insisted. However, though they tried to enter the Constituent Assembly later, they could not. Ambedkar once again proved a very practical man. He had contested and won the election to the Central Legislative Assembly which was later converted into a Constituent Assembly. He accepted the Chairmanship of the Drafting Committee and contributed to making the constitution enshrine the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity in the preamble to the constitution itself.

However, he was critical of the criticism of the draft constitution by the communists and also the socialists. In the Constituent Assembly, criticising the socialists, Ambedkar said "The Socialists want two things. The first thing they want is that if they come in power, the Constitution must give them the freedom to nationalize or socialize all private property without payment of compensation. The second thing that the Socialists want is that the Fundamental Rights mentioned in the Constitution must be absolute and without any limitations so that if their Party fails to come into power, they would have the unfettered freedom not merely to criticize, but also to overthrow the State".

In the first general elections to the free India's Lok Sabha, the Socialist Party was trying to have an alliance with both the Peasants and Workers Party of Maharashtra and the Scheduled Castes Federation of Ambedkar. JP and Asoka Mehta contacted Ambedkar through Acharya Donde.²⁶ The two parties decided to have joint rallies before elections. On 18 October 1951 when

Ambedkar arrived in Bombay, the SCF and the SP together organised a reception for him. He addressed a public meeting held under the joint auspices of the SCF and the SP. On 7th November 1951, Press Trust of India reported that "Ambedkar had a talk with Jayaprakash Narayan the socialist leader, today for about an hour. The talks are believed to have centred round the question of an election alliance".

But then Ambedkar objected to the alliance with the PWP as it was perceived as a Marxist party. Hence the alliance between the SCF and the SP could not materialise before elections. However, Asoka Mehta of the SP and Ambedkar of the SCF contested from the double member constituency in Mumbai North and campaigned jointly. In the election campaign the Communists misled the voters that even in a double member constituency, the two votes to which a voter was entitled, could be cast in favour of one and the same candidate. This resulted in wastage of thousands of votes. As a result both Ambedkar and Asoka Mehta lost. Later Asoka Mehta and Ambedkar challenged this in an election petition and Ambedkar appeared in person in Court and argued the case but both of them lost the case also.

Thereafter, the Socialist Party could garner an alliance with the SCF and the Jharkhand Party of Bihar. Ambedkar said "The Socialist Party and the Scheduled Castes Federation were fighting the elections for democratic socialism, for freedom and equality". However he felt that Socialists did not have any support in rural areas and wanted to contest with an independent candidate. But then he preferred to contest along with Asoka Mehta in the bye-election from Bhandara in

Madhya Pradesh, a double member constituency. They both contested as candidates of the Praja Socialist Party and of the SCF respectively. While Asoka Mehta polled 1,49,636 votes and got elected and entered the first Lok Sabha, once again Ambedkar polled 1,32,483 votes and unfortunately lost. Obviously voters who voted for Asoka Mehta did not all vote for Ambedkar. Perhaps the stance Ambedkar had taken on Hinduism cost him Hindu votes, which were in majority.

In his report to the first conference of the PSP of Bombay city, Madhu Dandavate, who was the Secretary of the Party, said "The SCF offered us full co-operation in the general elections from the City. It must be said to the credit of that organisation that our candidates received full support from the Federation and Scheduled Caste voters also mustered in large numbers to vote for our candidates. On the floor of the Bombay Municipal Corporation SCF has been fully co-operating with us. It was proposed that the co-operation should be extended to other fields of activities also. However, sufficient efforts have not been made on both the sides to forge such a unity of action".

But then the Socialists and Ambedkar also differed on the means to realise the socialist ideals. While the Socialists and Ambedkar both were democrats, the Socialists would include the instrumentality of civil disobedience and satyagraha in constructing a socialist society whereas Ambedkar was against any such methods once constitutional methods became available.

As long back as in 1933 itself, the Odisha Congress Socialist Workers' League formed by socialists like Surendranath Dwivedi had said

that the objective of the league was "to work effectively for the establishment of an unfettered socialist republic in India...It will adopt all legitimate means at its disposal in conformity with the principles of love and dynamic non-violence as propounded and practiced by Gandhiji".²⁷ Writing in the National Herald dated 26th June 1949, Acharya Narendra Deva had said, "Gandhiji made a valuable contribution to political philosophy by laying down that even in democracy the right of individual satyagraha should be recognised. Peaceful Satyagraha has become an integral part of our life".²⁸

However Ambedkar was categorical in his views also. He said in the Constituent Assembly: "If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing, in my judgment, we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods".

The end of a dream

Both Socialists and Ambedkar dreamed of a 'class-less' and 'caste-less' society. Ambedkar said "unless a casteless and classless society was created there would be no progress in the country".²⁹ The methodology of ending the classes was well known. But how to end the social inequality that was the

caste system? The approach of the socialists was socio-economic. It was also democratic and political. Hence it was bound to be slow but may be also sure and steady. Mahatma Gandhi believed that the essence of democracy that was permeating in India and all over the world would destroy the feelings of dominance and subservience.

Ambedkar also considered different methods of ending the caste system. The two methods in vogue at the time were inter-dining and inter-marriage. Ambedkar did not value inter-dining much. He considered it an 'inadequate remedy'. He said that he was "convinced that the real remedy is inter-marriage. The real remedy for breaking Caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste". Then again he said the method was artificial. He said "To agitate for and to organise inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages is like forced feeding brought about by artificial means".

While the socialists considered the socio-economic reasons to be at the root of the caste system and hence advocated socio-economic programmes to end the caste system, Ambedkar concluded that religion was at the root of the problem and hence wanted the Hindu religion to be reformed. He said people "observe Caste because they are deeply religious. People are not wrong in observing Caste. In my view, what is wrong is their religion, which has inculcated this notion of Caste" And hence his remedy to annihilate the caste system was "to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras...You must destroy the religion of the Shrutis and the Smritis. Nothing else will avail. This is my considered view of the matter".

But Ambedkar was not against religion itself. Having advocated the destruction of the religion of the Shrutis and Smritis, Ambedkar suggested reconstruction of Hindu society. He said that "the Hindu Society must be reorganized on a religious basis which would recognise the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". He even suggested where to draw the inspiration for such reorganization. Hindu religion had to be reconstructed to reconstruct Hindu society. He said "you must give a new doctrinal basis to your Religion - a basis that will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; in short, with Democracy. I am no authority on the subject. But I am told that for such religious principles as will be in consonance with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, it may not be necessary for you to borrow from foreign sources and that you could draw for such principles on the Upanishads". How sweet this must have sounded to Mahatma Gandhi. Was Ambedkar a die hard optimist?

Nanasaheb Goray paid the ultimate socialist tribute to Ambedkar when he said "In all my life I have valued thought more than emotion, and action more than thought. That is why I consider Shivaji greater than Sant Ramdas, Jyotiba Phule greater than Ranade, Mother Theresa greater than J.Krishnamurthy, Ambedkar who inspired the Dalits to revolt against the Caste system greater than Gandhi who tried to change the minds of the caste Hindus about untouchability".³⁰

But then Ambedkar, the lion heart, who had fought against social discrimination all his life, lost his heart and health. He came to the conclusion that Hindu religion and Hindu society cannot be reformed, reorganized or restructured.

The year 1956 proved apocalyptic for both Socialists and Ambedkar. In the beginning of 1956 the Praja Socialist Party was rent asunder. Having announced as long back as on 13th October 1935 that he was born a Hindu untouchable but will not die a Hindu, on 14 October 1956 Ambedkar renounced Hindu religion and accepted Buddhism. Ambedkar died on 6th December 1956. The apocalypse brought to an end a possible alliance between the Socialists and Ambedkar that could have changed the course of India's future. The hare changed its course during the race and vanished, will the tortoise win?

(Concluded)

Excerpted from the forthcoming book "Gandhi and Ambedkar on Socialism".

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22. Towards Socialist Society : Ed: Brahmanand. P-254
23. Towards Socialist Society : Ed: Brahmanand. P-340-1
24. Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy: Ed: Bimla Prasad. P-200
25. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 1, Page 238
26. Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission: Dhanajay Keer.
27. Quest for Socialism – Surendranath Dwivedi : P 32
28. Towards Socialist Society : Ed. Brahmanand, P. 362.
29. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – Writing and Speeches – Vol 17, Part 3, Page - 495
30. Narayaneeyam : P - 276

Communism and Democratic Socialism

D.K. Giri

When I was studying in the junior college during the Emergency 1975-77, one of my relatives from our remote village in Orissa-Jharkhand border asked me about my political orientation. Before I could answer, he said, “you must be a communist”. I asked him why he thought so, he said, you are studying in a college, you are more informed than others in the village, so you have to be a communist. I was amused with his reasoning and tended to agree with him as I did not know much about ideology at that age except that communists were seen as revolutionary friends of the poor and the disadvantaged. Fifteen years later, I heard a similar comment from a professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, A.K. Damodaran. He said to a group of lecturers, “any educated person must know Marxism and appreciate it”. I came to Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1979, escorted by my senior from another village near to mine, who was an active member of Students Federation of India, the student wing of CPM, and naturally I got exposed to Marxism. But as I got deeper into it, both in practice as well as intellectually, I became disenchanted with it and moved away. At that time, Soviet Union, the cradle of communism was very much in the news, both for its communist ideology as well as its occupation of Afghanistan. CPM was also in the ascendancy having secured power in West Bengal two years ago. I had the opportunity of interacting with two comrades, Sitaram Yechuri and Prakash Karat, former students of JNU, and currently the front-line leaders of CPI-M. Many of my fellow students and colleagues wondered why I was not a communist, given my own background of poverty, deprivation and backwardness. I

have had firsthand knowledge of practice of communism and have studied Marxism with great interest. Two circumstances shaped my ideological thinking which keeps me away from communism. One, I got politically baptized during the Emergency when civil and political rights were taken away. Jayaprakash Narayan was leading a valiant struggle for restoring democracy in India. Having heard of the detention, brutality and torture from the elders during the national freedom struggle, Emergency era helped us, in a way; relive those dark days under British raj, and thus, one would yearn for freedom. To be sure nothing can compensate for the joy of freedom - be it from colonialism, culture or ideology. Second, pangs of poverty made me cry for justice, fairness and equality. Communism gives one – ‘bread’, but asks us to forgo liberty by bartering it for bread. Democratic socialism promises both, and calls for the third, solidarity, which I had experienced as a child: how villagers stand by each other through their pain and pleasure.

However, confusion at popular level continues between Marxism, and socialism (democratic socialism or social democracy) in India. While everyone claims to be a socialist in India, communists are a different lot, known as left parties. This is unfortunate, and unfair to socialism or social democracy. How everyone claims to be a socialist and gets away with it, calls for a deeper political analysis. For instance, Raj Babbar left Samajwadi Party, formed his own party and vowed to promote democratic socialism. Then, a little later, he joined the Congress party. One could ideologically grant that to Babbar, as he was in a socialist party and was in the youth

wing of socialist movement. When Pranab Mukherjee was sacked from Congress, he formed Rashtriya Samajwadi Congress (Nationalist Socialist Congress). This could not be acceptable, as Pranab Mukherjee is known for his pro-industrialist approach. It is like BJP claiming the socialist high ground by calling themselves Gandhian Socialists. The point here is that the ‘ideological distinctiveness’ of the socialists got lost as they lost their organizational identity and ideological coherence. In any event, to confuse social democracy with communism, or to concede the “left political space” to communists alone is even worse. I attempt here to make a brief discussion on the difference between communism and democratic socialism or social democracy or socialism. Let us take it that socialism in India means social democracy or democratic socialism.

What is Communism?

By communism, we mean Marxism-Leninism and its various major offshoots like Stalinism, Trotskyism, Titoism, Maoism, Castroism and Ho Chi Minism. Communism is a single-book ideology drawing from the writings of Marx and the practice of Lenin. Although Karl Marx, in the communist manifesto, chapter IV, called for the “workers of the world to unite”, there have been clashes amongst the communists across the countries. There have been Soviet military attacks on Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Sino-Soviet border conflicts, the Chinese attack on Vietnam, the Vietnamese attack on Kampuchea and so on. As Milovan Djilas observed long ago, the emergence of “national communisms” in an

avowed internationalist communist movement is the only first sign of its historic decline”.

In the last century, mass education spread throughout the world on an impressive scale, which helped people at large to think for themselves. In addition, there has been rapid expansion of the mass communication system throughout the world. Information and ideas spread from one end of the world to the other with rapidity and effectiveness that would have been inconceivable in the beginning of the last century. Stalinists’ and Neo-Stalinists’ attempts to seal the Soviet Union from “informational or cultural population” from outside proved to be technically and politically impossible. Since, sealing was not possible, Soviet Union citizens could compare themselves with others. For instance, the claims that the Soviet Union was the “most democratic country” in the world (as claimed by the Stalin constitution in 1936) or that the working class were the rulers of their destiny got exposed. Now China is adopting a similar tactic by censoring the internet and other new media.

The firebrand revolutionary of 1840s, Friedrich Engels died at the end of the 19th century as a confirmed social democrat. This development dramatized the natural evolution of the West European working class movement during that period. Marx’s and Engels’ prediction of progressive pauperization of the working class and consequent seizure of power by them did not materialise. Therefore, the ‘crisis’ that Marx and Engels had visualized did not happen and the working class did not have such a feeling of hopelessness that they were impelled to take the grave risk of seizing power by force. In fact, the orthodox Marxists in Western Europe became social democrats and their main spokesperson was Carl Kautsky.

Russia’s situation, however, was entirely different. Because of Czarist absolutism, the trade unions and political parties had no right to function; there was rigid press censorship. To check political dissent there were secret police and Siberian prisons. Although the process of industrialization had started in Russia in 1890s, by the time the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, it was still considered backward compared with some of the more advanced industrial countries in Western Europe.

Lenin’s major contribution was not in the realm of theory, as he most carefully twisted the original Marxism to suit his own brand of practice in the backward conditions of Russia. His main contribution was the concept of the party organization consisting of ‘professional revolutionaries’. This was the main contributory factor of Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. That would not have been possible had Lenin not been there on the scene to provide the unquestioned leadership to his Bolshevik faction. This faction was divided into three groups with sharply different views on the tactics and strategy to be adopted in the midst of a political crisis.

The fact that Lenin was there to lead the seizure of power made all the difference to Russia in subsequent years. After 70 years, under the regime of Glasnost initiated by Gorbachev, Soviet historians started digging up “the past buried under layer after layer of frozen lies”, as described by columnist Sham Lal.

Democratic Socialism

Unlike communism, democratic socialism does not draw its inspiration only from one or two sources. It has diverse sources. It may draw its inspiration from some aspects of the writings of Marx and Engels but sharply diverges from

Lenin’s theory and practice. It has decentralist, cooperative, egalitarian, libertarian and ethical thinking, a concrete manifestation of idealistic philosophy and religious fervor, or it could be downright pragmatic in its approach on the basis of empirical evidence of historical experience and psychological insights.

In case of democratic socialism, democracy is the pre-requisite for socialism. Democratic Socialists want complete democratization of the society. Every socialist measure they initiate must be preceded by steps towards freedom and equality desired by the majority. Underlining democracy as the nucleus of socialism, German social democratic ideologue Thomas Meyer says, “Without democracy there can be no socialism. Rule of law and freedom to criticize and oppose the ruling system are essential to any society worthy of man. Where democracy is destroyed, freedom no longer exists. The interest of workers can no longer be effectively protected. Trade union work becomes paralyzed”. There are several others who hold that democracy is inseparable from the concept, ethics and practice of socialism, hence democratic socialism.

To conclude, there are clear differences between communism and democratic socialism, both in theory and practice. It is true that Indian communists practice democracy, but do they believe in it? Have they given up the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism that separate us? A revolution can take away, for some time, some of the undemocratic and selfish elements in a society, but can it construct a new society in its place without expressed consent and active participation of the people? That is the answer we seek through our democracy, yes, not through a bourgeoisie democracy, but a Social Democracy.



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