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The Liberal Magazine

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Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine

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Between Ourselves...

The Afzal Guru hanging controversy, while continuing to be a very emotional issue in the Kashmir Valley, is gradually dying out in the rest of the country. Much of the flames were fanned by the electronic media. For *Freedom First* the rule of law takes precedence above all else and with it firm governance. Viewed from this perspective did the trial and sentencing of this man who planned the logistics of the attack on parliament, and that too while it was in session, fair and did it strictly adhere to the due process of Indian Law. From all accounts this was so. If at all there could be some debate it is on the issue of the death sentence. As we are not some sort of 'bleeding heart liberals' and therefore not against capital punishment *per se*, we do consider that the death sentence is justifiable if there is direct or concrete evidence, as was, for instance in the case of the terrorist Kasab or in the assassination of Gandhiji. In the case of Afzal Guru while his guilt was convincingly proved to the satisfaction of the Supreme Court judges, it was largely circumstantial. Perhaps the ends of justice could have been served if he had been sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour, no parole, and for the rest of his life. There are some other issues like the other controversy about sending the information to his family by "Speed-post". Absolutely ham-handed. This is at best an "excuse" – and a stale one at that. We have all used this as an excuse at one time another for one reason or another. Also why all this secrecy? One can understand the secrecy shrouding the hanging of Kasab but why Afzal Guru?

Editor

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From Our Readers

On *Freedom First*

The February 2013 *Freedom First* is dedicated to the memory of “NIRBHAYA”. It is very appropriate. Also the three articles published on the tragedy.

I am writing this letter mainly to express my views on Mr. Arun Modi's article on 'The Gujarat Assembly Elections'. In public life 'success has many fathers, but defeat is an orphan'. As numbers matter in a democracy and the results have favouring Narendra Modi, all the virtues pointed out by him may have many takers. But the fact is otherwise. In fact, factionalism in the Congress helped Narendra Modi more and his manipulative skills helped him to return more than his virtues.

I was in Gujarat during second week of October 2012 and visited some forest areas. Whoever I met was sure of Narendra Modi's return. But none of them were seen saying this with a happy or smiling face. The normal answer was “of course he will return because there is no alternative”. He turned to his advantage the internal dissensions in the Congress. It was Ahmed Patel, the political secretary of Congress supremo Sonia Gandhi who came to Narendra Modi's rescue.

Ahmed Patel is a key power center at present and it may be difficult for anyone to believe for that he was response for Narendra Modi's return to power. Also it may be difficult to believe that Modi succeeded in managing a deal/understanding with Ahmed Patel, who is currently a member of the Rajya Sabha for the seventh consecutive term, but never dared to contest in direct elections.

Only to facilitate Narendra Modi, Ahmed Patel successfully avoided projecting a Congress Chief Ministerial candidate. He himself distributed party tickets in Gujarat provoking intense internal revolts. Moreover he was behind the move to encourage Keshubhai Patel to revolt against the BJP leadership, and start his own regional party and putting up candidates to contest all constituencies

Many news papers reported that due to Keshubhai Patel's Gujarat Parivarthan Party (GPP) candidates, that the BJP was defeated in about 12 seats. But the reality is otherwise. Keshubhai Patel succeeded in attracting anti-Modi voters, thus causing immense harm to Congress. According to an analysis, Congress lost about 20 seats due to the presence of GPP candidates. This shows that had GPP not been in the race, the BJP's tally may have been below 95 seats. Several reports suggests that it was Ahmed Patel who provided financial and other logistical support to GPP.

Apart from political games, praising Narendra Modi's administrative skills and his concern for the poor and

marginalised are mostly spread by Corporate beneficiaries, more than ground realities. For example, Gujarat is lagging behind in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act. As against 1.80 lakh claims received from tribals, the government rejected as many as 1.30 lakh claims, without attempting to probe ground realities. Even the civil administration and police kept silent before the authoritarian attitude of forest administration, who normally do not want to lose their hold on forest lands and empower tribals with land rights. It was only after a PIL, the government was forced to announce a review of all rejected claims.

As a social activist from Baroda told me, the normal belief is that Narendra Modi is not simply against minorities, but he is against every section of population: women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, farmers etc. He is even against the BJP and the RSS. Democracy is a system of governance where collective wisdom needs to prevail. But he never allows any officer, political activist or individual to improve his influence.

Of course, he realised his weaknesses more than any one. Realised that how his self-centered functioning style makes him isolated in the system. As against 2008 polls where about 40 per cent sitting candidates were denied re-nomination, this time he hardly denied seats to more than 10 MLAs. Others who were unable to get seats were mostly due to the reorganisation of assembly constituencies, and not due to Narendra Modi's intervention.

Of course many of Narendra Modi's initiatives helped Gujarat to prosper. More than the common people a selected few Corporate Houses are dearer to him. They have been given red carpet reception, ignoring the interests of the common people or that of Gujarat. He refused to give the same treatment to other competitive Corporate houses. In reality, few Corporate houses having little say in Gujarat administration. Nowhere corporate houses stand for public service. Their principle object is to loot natural resources, manipulating people in key positions.

Ch. Narendra, Hyderabad.
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*

The front cover of *Freedom First* (February 2013) could not have been designed any better to express the anguish of the people hurt by the news of the gang rape in Delhi. Perhaps it could have been equalled only by a cartoon depicting rising flames to indicate the indignation felt by the people on hearing about the barbaric act.

K. Vaithinathsamy, retired Headmaster,
Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu.

Aadhaar: Good or Bad?

Sharad Bailur

A Nation State, especially a liberal democracy, is an untidy hold-all of compromises. This is true anywhere in the world, and it must be, to take conflicting interests into account. And this applies much more to a bewilderingly diverse and huge nation like India. It is for this reason that no form of government other than a liberal democracy can work for a country like ours. The question, therefore, is how much power and how much privacy should be ceded within reasonable limits and with proper safeguards.

I recently received two separate missives on the business of the Aadhaar Card. The first is a well thought out article by Anumeha Jha titled, “Unique Identification Project – A touchstone or a curate’s egg?” in the July-September issue of *Common Cause* (Vol. XXXI No 3). The article goes into the background, its projected benefits, costs, controversy surrounding it, and the experience of other countries in similar attempts to give to their citizens a national identity card. The article is well referenced objectively written.

The other is a monograph by Mathew Thomas titled variously as ‘The Omni shambles of UID’, ‘UID is not yours’, and ‘Your ID under Government / political / private company control’. Thomas is a former Defence scientist. The titles themselves explain the tone set for the ten articles it contains. The authors are Mathew Thomas himself, Sunil Abraham, Somasekhar V. K., Vickram Crishna, Gopal Krishna and Samir Kelekar.

There are two issues that I think need to be stated before I proceed.

First, the basic premise of the State is that human nature is bad so we have the State and its laws to prevent human nature from doing its worst. The State has the police and armed forces to enforce it. This is true of any State, whether it is liberal or totalitarian. Second, for better or for worse, India has for the past 65 or more years lived under a liberal democracy. A democracy’s basis is distrust; distrust of that very same human nature that gives rise to the State in the first place. And therefore distrust of those who rule over us. A Constitution is a social contract by which we, the citizens, temporarily cede to our elected representatives, limited powers to govern us for a limited period after which they must seek a new mandate to either

continue, or step aside for new representatives elected by us. To that extent democracy is based on deep scepticism. It is also based on an agnosticism that allows for a change of opinion. To prevent the misuse of powers ceded to the State we also have Fundamental Rights that are inherently justiciable, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Libertarians would, perhaps, in the first place, argue against having a State at all. But anarchy inevitably results in the use of force and of dictators at the business end of gun barrels. Since that cannot be allowed to happen if citizens are to lead a civilised existence, libertarians would perhaps concede that the State must be given the bare minimum power to hold the State together, both internally and externally, not an iota more. In an ideal situation this may work. But no country lives in an ideal situation. A Nation State, especially a liberal democracy, is an untidy hold-all of compromises. This is true anywhere in the world, and it must be, to take conflicting interests into account. And this applies much more to a bewilderingly diverse and huge nation like India. It is for this reason that no form of government other than a liberal democracy can work for a country like ours. The question, therefore, is how much power and how much privacy should be ceded within reasonable limits and with proper safeguards.

Anumeha Jha has dealt with the whys and wherefores of this issue in the context of the Aadhaar card adequately. In a growing economy of the sort that India finds itself in, the growth, to begin with, is haphazard, but acquires over time and with the education of its people, a certain order and inclusiveness. But free enterprise and the inventive entrepreneurship of our people, and I might add, our undoubted talent for circumventing laws, or not obeying them at all, leaves a large part of our burgeoning population behind in the economic race. The communications revolution sweeping the country in hi-tech devices adds to the sense of being left out or left behind. This makes for rising and unfulfilled aspirations growing to a full-throated roar. Clearly it also makes politics a much more risky proposition in the context of our democratic process. The Aadhaar card, or any other similar exercise, is in that sense an inevitable consequence of this emerging situation.

To condemn the Aadhaar card and say that it leads to a data based State; or that it will make for incessant intrusion, or that the UID makes tall claims and is a tomfoolery; or that it is both impudent and imprudent; or

that it is a bundle of self-contradictory myths mirages and misconceptions and so on, as is done in the monograph, might sound like excellent alliterative English but amounts to little more than artificially manufacturing a miasma of fear with the sole purpose of discrediting the Aadhaar card. This is neither constructive nor necessary. And more importantly it does not solve the growing problem of expectations that can get out of hand.

The issues that need to be considered, therefore, lead elsewhere and call for examining some history. When we got our Independence in 1947, the economy was largely unorganised. The revenue received by the government came from land and some excise duties. The tax collection, including income tax, leaked like a sieve and the means to collect taxes remained both primitive and grossly inefficient. The first step in efficient tax collection is in the identification of tax payers. In a largely agricultural country this was an impossibility. Besides, agriculture and the marketing of produce were so inefficient that the rural economy mostly functioned at a subsistence level and in degradation that is unimaginable today. Collecting taxes from this sector was not just impossible but considered tyrannical too. As a result the government of the day decided to exempt agriculture from income tax. As a consequence the output in the agricultural sector rose steadily over the decades. Though the marketing facilities have improved, the rural economy to this day remains largely unorganised even if the proportion may have reduced from 99.9% to about 65%. That apart, a large number of mostly landless farmers continue to survive in abject poverty for various reasons. But the other side of the coin is that a considerable number, a small minority no doubt, are prosperous enough to purchase the world famous automobile marques and use facilities of modern farming that we hear about only from economically developed countries. Yet agriculture continues to remain untaxed even for them. Besides the government, in order that the poorest of the poor get the benefits of modern farming, offers all farmers, including the rich few, huge subsidies for fertiliser, power and irrigation. The rich few have the means to ensure that they do get their subsidies, while the poor illiterate farmers do not have the wherewithal to get theirs. This is an issue that must be dealt with and not be dismissed with innuendos about impracticality. The question is whether Aadhaar is the panacea or the touchstone as Anumeha Jha describes it. Or is it the curate's egg? On balance I am willing to give the government the benefit of a chance to prove that Aadhaar will do what it promises. The benefits expected to accrue outweigh the drawbacks by more than just a mile.

Security

When the UIDAI was first mooted and Nandan Nilekani was named to head it, I wrote to him. My first

concern was security. I suggested the name of a top former DRDO official who now works for the private sector as a person whose help he should seek, since he has the necessary expertise. Mr. Nilekani, who knows the person concerned on a personal basis, wrote back thanking me and said he would consider the possibility if required. Security by its very nature is such that it cannot be discussed in public, because that itself compromises security. While concern for security is justified, which Samir Kelekar deals with in his monograph, to call it flawed without the necessary background information, which, by definition, Mr Nilekani cannot share with him, is little more than condemning without evidence. One major reason I wrote to Mr Nilekani had to do with the problem of refugees and illegal immigrants. As India improves its economic condition, it is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for refugees and immigrants from our neighbouring countries, namely Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. There is also, in view of what goes for relations with Pakistan, the issue of terror related activities connected with such refugees. I think such concerns should be taken care of adequately. It is not my case that no non-citizen should slip through. The most organised country in the world cannot guarantee this completely. We have porous borders with all our neighbours and the sheer numbers of such people, especially from Bangladesh, makes this even more difficult. The government has not explained how it plans to tackle the issue in areas where such people reside; how it plans to verify citizenship (since benefits from the Aadhaar card should accrue only to bona fide citizens). Or indeed whether non-citizens are actually also entitled to Aadhaar cards!

Issues of Implementation

With the Aadhaar scheme gathering steam, it has resulted in and will continue to cause huge issues of implementation. The government has given an assurance that these issues will be dealt with as they occur. Most people are confused by the contention that getting a card is not compulsory; but that the benefits that accrue from the card cannot be accessed unless you get the card. This is another way of putting pressure on the population to get themselves the card which is understandable. Much like a ration card, the Aadhaar card, is not compulsory. By telling the people that the card is meant for their benefit, and not to strong arm them into an army of automatons, the UIDAI has done what a democracy does best – persuade rather than compel. Any attempt to make it compulsory would have resulted in a major revolt all over the country.

Let us presume that the subsidy of Rs.450, after paying more than Rs.900 upfront for a gas cylinder, gets deposited in one's bank account smoothly. Only time will tell. Most people from the middle classes may be able to

fork out the cash up front. Can the poor afford it? Unfortunately when the decision was taken to offer cylinders at subsidised rates it had an element of politics in it. Now the politics has come home to roost. It is a painful decision, like the decision on petrol or diesel or kerosene that needs to be dealt with – unless you want to run our public sector oil companies to the ground.

The next issue is that of serpentine queues waiting to get their Aadhaar details registered, of which I have firsthand experience, in Mysore where the scheme was first started. The scheme got off the ground some 18 months ago amidst a flurry of publicity both in the print and the local language electronic media. Everyone from the literate and educated middle class and even domestic servants were aware that there was something called the Aadhaar card and that they should get it. Oddly enough not too many appeared to have gone into the details of the benefits that would result from getting the card. And no deadline was set. As a result few, if any, went to the trouble of getting the card. My family and I did. The centres were then in a number of schools and the queues were not too long. Our cards arrived in about two weeks. Now when the people have come to understand, having read the fine print, that benefits accrue from the card and that there is a deadline, they have rushed to the centres that are operating for a last minute attempt to get their cards. It is a matter that is being dealt with, as are any number of other such problems connected with implementation.

For most people who stay put in one house offering proof of residence is not too onerous. My family and I shifted to Mysore just before the Aadhaar business came

on stream and getting the address proof for a number of other matters like a passport (renewal), or a driving licence became a huge exercise in infructuous running around. I have again shifted residence but my Aadhaar card shows the old address. And the whole rigmarole will have to begin all over again. Since with core banking and internet access, a bank account can now be operated from anywhere, even from abroad, most people do not, as a rule, close their bank accounts and then re-open new ones in their new places of residence. That makes a bank account and its number a much more stable and less impermanent reference point than an address proof. In any case for the subsidies to filter in, Aadhaar needs your bank account. The address proof business should therefore be done away with.

Political considerations

Propaganda about the UPA trying to bribe the electorate and other such political issues must be taken with a pinch of salt. If the BJP and its allies had been in power, the Congress and its allies would have made the same allegations. Not everything that the Congress and its allies do is, by definition, a bad idea; the nuclear deal being one such case in point. But the fact remains that the urgency that is now being shown has an element of politics in it in view of the impending election of 2014.

In conclusion and with a number of provisos and provided the entire scheme goes through, I would regard the Aadhaar Card as an unmitigated blessing.

MR. SHARAD BAILUR author, freelance journalist and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First* was Senior General Manager, National Dairy Development Board. Email: sharad.bailur@gmail.com

Aadhaar on FF Facebook Page

This issue's cover features *Freedom First* web editor Sharad Bailur's article on Aadhaar. Meanwhile, he has raised the issue on our facebook page seeking a discussion on the merits and demerits of the Aadhaar Scheme and all that it implies. He writes *inter alia*: "We will welcome all comment so long as it is reasoned and avoids abuse. Discussion should be under two separate broad categories: One Issues of Principle; two Issues of implementation" As we go to press we have received the following from Sameer Panje on "Issues of implementation" :

1. Biometrics : There are no contingencies specified in cases where the citizen is corneally blind or has unrecordable fingerprints. While the former is not a highly rampant issue, the latter is fairly common amongst manual labourers as fingerprints wear out in many cases.
2. Data pilferage : There are no systems in place to check for data pilferage from the enrolment centres, which is a severe privacy & security concern.
3. False/Redundant data : The government claims that the UID card will eliminate bogus cards from the system. The checks & balances put in place to this end work on the principle of establishing that the applicant is a real person and there are no duplicates. However, this does not trap errors in data like ineligible people (illegal immigrants, for example) getting Aadhaar cards or people representing false incomes etc. to claim benefits. These 2 issues are amongst the primary factors leading towards the conception of Aadhaar but ironically, the implementation structures leave enough room for these problems to persist.

Addendum to the issues of principle :

3. The Big Brother angle : The Aadhaar database will be one of the 21 databases slated to be a part of NATGRID (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATGRID>). This coupled with the erosion of protection against arbitrary surveillance by the state through the Information Technology Act, 2008 enhances the possibility of a very powerful Big Brother with untrammelled powers.

Major Change in Male Mindset – Need of the Hour

J. S. Apte

According to the 2001 UN report the period 1990 - 2000 saw a 58 per cent increase in rape cases. The report states that every fifth women is a victim of violence. With 24,206 cases in 2011, rape cases showed an incredible rise of 873 per cent from 1971.

The 16th December 2012 gang rape in New Delhi sent shock waves of deep resentment, anger and outrage in the minds of the public across the country. Such incidents have happened and are still happening in rural and urban India. In a male dominated Indian society and a patriarchal family system, women are given a secondary subordinate role and importance. She is expected to look after the children and take care of the daily chores of family life. Rachana Johri of Ambedkar University, Delhi, says that rape is an expression of the extreme tyrant masculinity operating within patriarchal countries. This cruel phenomenon has been happening all over the world. In India, there are more rapes in rural areas, mostly unreported, compared to those in the cities.

During the last four decades there has been a growing consciousness among women all over the world about participation in the employment market, empowerment and environment. 1975 was observed as the International Women's Year and then it was extended till 1985 as the International Women's Decade. This period 1975 -1985, saw in our country an upsurge of women's activities in the field of employment, education and redressal of injustice and emphasis on equal opportunities. New projects, programmes, initiatives were commenced in this period for the welfare, betterment of women's life in all strata of society particularly the deprived, disadvantaged and marginalised, who were neglected for a long time. Rays of hope were seen for them.

The declining child sex ratio in the States – Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra – is a stark example of men's irrational craving for a son. The disproportionate emphasis on having a son in the family has led to an increase in violation of the Preconception and Pre Natal Sex Determination Test. Unfortunately the main culprits in this heinous act of encouraging the decline of Child Sex Ratio are some medical professionals. The so called noble medical profession has tarnished its own image for the sake of money.

Figures Speak

According to the 2001 UN report the period 1990 - 2000 saw a 58 per cent increase in rape cases. The report states that every fifth women is a victim of violence. Every 21st minute shows a women being harassed in some type of incident. According to a study conducted by the National Crime Record Bureau(NCRB), in 2006 the number of women affected by rape was 19,348. Madhya Pradesh had the highest number of rapes – 2,900. Highest among the affected were 3,364 girls below the age of 5. Of those affected 11,131 (66%) women were in the age group 18 to 36.

These figures indicate the sorry state of affairs and a darker side of women's status in India. With 24,206 cases in 2011, rape cases showed an incredible rise of 873 per cent from 1971. When NCRB started recording cases of rape, Delhi emerged as the rape capital of India accounting for 25 per cent of cases. Rape underlines the evil and vicious attributes of men towards sex, women and family and demonstrates an attitude of dominance, superiority, authority and dictatorship towards women in general and women of lower class, caste community in particular.

Men who dare to rape are mostly near relatives, members of the family, or neighbours. According to the statistics given by Dr. Satyapal Singh, Police Commissioner of Mumbai, out of 219 reported cases in 2012, only 13 individuals were not known to the affected women. Of the remaining 206 cases, the accused were either father or brother (6), relatives (9), neighbours (26) known persons (108), luring women with promise of marriage (57). Rapes occurred in the house. Women's safety begins at home and in the nearby community. It emphasises the urgent need to bring about a major change in the attitudes and mentality of male members, especially the male children, in the family and the neighbourhood. Vigorous orientation and gender sensitivity training programme alone can curb this menace. This is the need of the hour.

MR. J. S. APTE formerly Director Family Planning Association of India, Mumbai, is based in Pune.

Pakistan's Barbaric Act

Suresh Sharma

*The Home Minister announced that there would be no change in the liberal visa policy.
His police force brutally attacked peaceful protesters in New Delhi but is prepared
to meet the barbaric acts of Pakistan with a smile.*

Beheading of two soldiers on 8 January in Poonch sector in J&K has roused the nation. Rage seethed amongst all ranks from generals to soldiers. E mails within army groups posted a headless body. Personnel of their unit, 13 RAJ RIF, performed duties without food for three days. The military leaders were busy restraining the men so that their anger and grief would not boil over. The Colonel Commandant of the most decorated regiment talked to the boys to reassure them.

Our Foreign Minister's reaction

Pakistan's Foreign Minister termed India's complaint as baseless and not deserving a reply. India's Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid made a statement four days later that he would not give in to any talk of revenge and would do what was in the best interest of the country and peace. The Home Minister announced that there would be no change in the liberal visa policy. His police force brutally attacked peaceful protesters in New Delhi but is prepared to meet the barbaric acts of Pakistan with a smile. They are vociferously supported by a section of the media and the civic society. The ministers failed to appreciate the agony of the troops on the frontline when one of their own, who willingly courts death to save his buddies, fell to treacherous assault. They have no understanding or regard for the feeling of camaraderie in a regiment which is a family to all men. It is surprising that the NSA and the Defence Secretary, and not the Army Chief, briefed the cabinet. It was the fast by the widow and mother of Hem Raj that triggered a delayed response from the cabinet members.

The Security Forces have been suffering casualties since Independence. There have been more than ninety funerals in one year. They did not complain. When one jawan died, another took his place. They continued to walk over mines, face shelling from across the border and bullets from hostile elements. The deaths were in the line of duty. They lived or died to keep up the honour of the paltan. What shook the nation was the barbaric act of beheading of soldiers by Pakistan Army and the bending over by the cabinet ministers in India. More than the deaths, it is

the mutilation of bodies in peace time which is a highly sensitive issue. The torture and mutilation of soldiers' bodies has been overlooked by India in the past. In the 1965 war at Dograi, Pakistanis tied the body of an officer to a tree and bayoneted him. In the Kargil operations, Lt Kalia and five soldiers' bodies were mutilated and the Pakistanis claimed that it must have been done by wild animals. Are those heights inhabited by animals? A year later, seven soldiers were killed and eighth beheaded. Ilyas Kashmiri presented the head to Musharraf who is reported to have given Ilyas one lac rupees. In the Kargil War, the plane of Squadron Leader Ahuja was shot down. A post-mortem examination conducted at the Srinagar Base Hospital revealed that he died of three gunshot wounds. It was clear that he had landed safely after ejecting from his plane, but had been killed later by the Pakistani soldiers. His death was a cold blooded murder. On 15 June 1999, the Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistani was summoned and a notice for the breach of Geneva conventions was submitted for the torture and killing of the Prisoners of War during the Kargil operation. The Government of India lodged a protest accusing the Pakistani paramilitary forces of having fired at Ajay while still descending in his parachute. Pakistani authorities denied the accusations and suggested Ahuja was killed due to accidental injuries during the ejection or landing. No further investigations were carried either by government or by impartial, outside entities and the case remains unresolved.

Is Retaliatory Action Required?

A mild protest note gets no results. A retaliatory act is effective. The social media is replete with reminiscences of veterans narrating how instant retaliation brought peace for the tenure of their unit at the LOC. Peace was maintained along the LOC by immediate counter-action. A rifle fire was silenced by machine gun bullets and field guns by medium guns. According to M D Nalpat, intelligence reports say that conversations about the Prime Minister in military messes 'verge on the scatological'. The soldiers talk of a country without a head. What else can be expected from officers and men? They are not fools. To crown it all, Musharraf appeared on a TV channel in

India and shouted at the anchor for exposing Pakistan Army's role in beheading soldiers or of involvement in Kargil. He went on to assert that the Indian Army must be indulging in such barbaric acts. He boasted that Pakistan would continue to support insurgency in Kashmir. His solution is vacation of Kashmir by India. Are our rulers listening?

Furore all over India and the Army Chief's stand forced the Prime Minister, after a week, to announce that 'after this barbaric act there can be no business as usual with Pakistan'. He fails to appreciate that military prowess depends on morale. Soldiers gain or lose morale easily. Let us not forget the difference between shame of 1962 and the glorious victory of Kargil. The Prime Minister should have spoken to Zardari and demanded court martial of the culprits and reminded him of the agreement of 6 January 2004 which said that Pakistan would not allow its territory to be used for terror attacks. He could have pointed out that the Chiefs of Staff have warned of suitable action. The Army Chief statement came too late and he expected his commanders to take retaliatory action. It may sound strange that he has not given a clear direction and has left the option to the local commanders. The only saving grace is that the instructions ensure that no adverse

action will be taken against local commanders who take bold retaliating action. Till today, there has been no action on the ground. The Prime Minister has been bending backwards whenever Pakistan carries out or supports a violent act against the people of India, the results of which, during the last 15 years, are not hard to see. His team is proud of continuing peace talks with Pakistan. Is that not business as usual?

A flag meeting in the Poonch sector on India's request did not yield any positive results. Pakistan stuck to its denial. Pakistan talks of peace and practices terror attacks. When cornered by facts, it claims rights over Kashmir. At one time these peaceniks influenced the Indian Army to issue instructions that permission of corps commander was necessary to open fire by machine guns. Pakistan takes full advantage of this attitude. A Pakistani naik [corporal] arrested in Indian territory had the audacity to boast that he carried orders to fire in his pocket while the Indian soldiers guarding the LOC have to get the same from New Delhi.

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The Congress Conclave and the Chinese Congress

Nitin G. Raut

If the Communist Party of China has its own “Red Aristocracy”, the Indira Congress has its exclusive club of Nehru Royalty. Both are immune to public scrutiny and are above criticism.



9th November, 2012: The Surajkhanda conclave of the Indira Congress (IC) anointed Rahul Gandhi as its would be Prime Minister by putting him in charge of its Election Coordination Committee thus catapulting him to the coveted post of Prime Minister long considered a Nehru family inheritance. Giving charge of the election Coordination Committee to Rahul Gandhi puts at rest the elevation of any Congressman to No.2 slot which in any event no Congressman dares to dream of.



November 8-14, 2012: The 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) year enthroned Xi Jinping as General Secretary of the (CPC) and Chief of the Central Military Commission the launching pad to become President of China in March, 2013. Control of the Central Military Commission stunts the rise of others in the closely knit hierarchy of the CPC.

Modern Day Aristocrats

Both Xi Jinping and Rahul Gandhi come from politically influential

families. At a time when elitism during Mao's Cultural Revolution was considered a sign of decadent capitalism, Xi got a university education due to his father, Xi(senior), who was a part of the “New Class” of the CPC. “Family connection also helped Xi to get a job as personal secretary to an important military leader. He later took a major position as party Secretary in Fujian and Shanghai that helped him garner further influence”¹ (*TheTimes of India*, 16th November 2012). In Rahul Gandhi's case it is his family connection that ensures his effortless elevation to the top slot in the Congress Party hierarchy. ‘Nameocracy’ rules the IC even if Rahul Gandhi fails to deliver, for every failure ensures a kick upstairs.

If the CPC has its own “Red Aristocracy”, the IC has its exclusive club of Nehru Royalty. Both are immune to public scrutiny and are above criticism. The writ of both commands absolute submission and obeisance like the autocratic medieval kings of yore or modern day despots.

The IC wants continuity of the Nehru dynasty while

the CPC wants continuity of the authoritarian Politburo Commu-nist regime. The only difference is that in the Congress it is a family dynasty, in the CP of China it is the exclusive club of Politburo Fuehrers. Neither wants a change in the political hierarchy except within the chosen few. It is continuity of family control in one and Communist bosses in the other. Neither the ‘aam aadmi’ nor the proletariat has any say. Economic factors are never the issue as much as the cult of hero worship in the IC or the abject submission to the Politburo czars in the CPC.

Both are intolerant of an independent press and of autonomous and constitutional bodies as watchdogs of the elected or the selected as the case may be. In fact, in China it is the CP that controls government and its Ministries as in the Congress which manipulates statutory bodies. In the Congress dissent is alien while conformism is the order in the CPC. The IC has often misused the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and is uneasy with the autonomy and independence of constitutional bodies like the Comptroller and Accountant General (CAG).

In the IC, the generational change takes place with the connivance of the dynasty while in the CP of China, it is every few decades. Both processes lack transparency and are premeditated political exercise. The select few in both parties ensure a smooth transition. Both give the

impression that they are parties of slaves than of members, with a slave master at the top to crack the whip. The decision making bodies of both are nominated.

Politician-Crony Capitalist Partnership

Corruption is afflicting both the IC and the CPC, but both shy away from confronting this disease. At the Surajkhanda conclave the Congress stressed the need to go back to the 'aam admi' without addressing the issue of corruption. Addressing the 18th Congress of the CPC, the future President, Mr. Xi Jinping said, "Our Party faces many severe challenges and there are so many pressing policies within the Party that need to be resolved particularly corruption, being divorced from the people going through formalities and bureaucratism caused by some Party Officials"². In as much as Xi Jinping would like to keep it a secret, today the rich constitute the top echelons of the Communist Party. It is also a matter of public knowledge that under the Congress-led UPA Government, crony capitalism has ensured a politician-crony capitalist partnership for the mutual enrichment of the ruling elite. The 'garibi hatao' slogan of the IC has, in any event, long been forgotten. Today the millionaires and billionaires control both the IC in India and the CPC of China. During Mao's time, being rich was a crime and during the Indira Gandhi's 'garibi hatao' days robbing the rich, not necessarily for the 'garib', was a virtue.

At the 18th Congress, it was expected that Xi Jinping would unshackle the curbs on the press. However, speaking thereafter, Xi said that socialist principles were supreme thereby reaffirming media censorship which has drawn stiff opposition from a section of press led by the 'Southern Weekend' news paper with many journalists having struck work. The anti-censorship media has received massive online support much to the chagrin of the Communist regime.

Press Freedom

If a free press is anathema to the Communist rule, the Congress-UPA regime is no better. Stung by the spontaneous youth protest against the Delhi gang rape, and the ruling Congress in Delhi facing the heat, the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a veiled threat purporting to be an 'advisory' to regulate news content and footages on sensitive issues. Taking refuge behind Article 19 (Freedom of Speech), which imposes reasonable restriction in the Public interest, the 'advisory' was meant to impose restrictions to protect 'Congress interest' and was a naked threat to the media with a grim reminder that their licence could be cancelled. Is the IC still living in a time warp of the infamous 'Emergency' of the mid-seventies? Both are targeting the Fourth Estate to protect their partisan interests by resorting to anti-

democratic measures. If in China there are no pretences of democracy the Indira Congress is shedding whatever democratic pretences it had.

In both the parties, there are vested groups which stymie the growth of intra-party democracy but promote the ruling coteries that determine the destiny of the people. In either party there is no such thing as a contest for party office or free debate or anyone stepping-down voluntarily. In the CP of China, the politburo defines itself by an exclusive selection process. In the Congress the 'High Command' has adopted a process of perpetual elimination of everyone other than the Nehru Gandhi Clan for leadership.

Both the IC and the CPC have dominated the political scenes of the respective nations. The sad irony is that even if the system differs there is a strange convergence of political vested interest that transcends political ideologies, if at all there is still one that can be described as "ideology" in the accepted sense of the term. Corruption is a common strand that runs through both systems and both the ICs and the CPC are prisoners of Frankenstein monsters of their own creation. If the system itself thrives on corruption, why should the beneficiaries change the system? Both regimes are self serving. Perhaps history may debate: In India it will be attributed to the failure of democracy or the people at the helm of democracy. In China it would be the absence of democracy.

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(Endnotes)

¹ *The Times of India*, 16 November 2012.

² *Ibid*

Wicked World War

I hear, I see, I smell
Ringing again and again of the victory bell
People running in the streets waving our flag
The smoke of the fireworks that makes me gag
The king is about to make his speech
To the people down below within his reach
The ministers are boasting about the money
That they will take from Germany
The generals stand tall with sword and shield
But were any of them really on the battlefield
And did we really win this war
Asked the families with loved ones lost
As even the ones that came back to our shore
Will never be the same again for they have paid the cost

By 11 year old Sana Karnik,
great-granddaughter of V. B. Karnik

The Twelfth Five Year Plan - 2

Sunil S. Bhandare

....the responsibilities of economic and social development need to shift more from the Centre to States and local authorities. This alone would ensure a far more effective way of inclusive economic development, reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the people at large.

Even as we look at the Twelfth Plan's financing strategy for public sector plan outlay, there are acute concerns already, about India's rapidly falling economic growth rate. The latest national accounts data released by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) shows that real GDP growth rate is estimated to have shrunk to 5% in 2012-13 – the lowest rate over the last decade; the previous low growth rate being 4.2% in 2002-03. The reason for stressing this point is that the falling growth rate (a) impairs the revenue buoyancy of the governments and has serious implications on the dynamics of budgetary resources; (b) reduces the savings rate of the economy; and (c) undermines the investment attractiveness of the country.

Thus, if there is a continuing failure in reversing the process of 'drifting growth', then various underlying assumptions of the Twelfth Plan's financing strategy would become increasingly suspect. We believe that *strength, stability and sustainability of financing strategy is a sine qua non of successful developmental planning*. Somehow this appears to be one the weakest links of the Twelfth Plan Document (TPD). It is also necessary to mention upfront that while formulating the financing framework for public sector plan outlay, there must also be conscious efforts, both by the planners and policy makers, not to 'crowd out' private sector investment. And in the quest for somehow achieving the financing targets of public sector plan outlay – and that too in an ambiance of falling growth rate – there is a real danger of such 'crowding out' of private sector investment happening during the

Twelfth Plan period.

Before we move further to reflect on the financing strategy, it is imperative to bring out one more facet of the Twelfth Plan's formulation. While the TPD spells out three alternative growth scenarios, as brought out in our previous article, the actual financing framework of public sector Plan outlay has only been crafted for the best case annual real GDP growth scenario of 8.2% (now revised downwards to 8%) during the Plan period. In other words the TPD is silent about the likely financing pattern for two other scenarios, namely, 6 to 6.5% growth rate (insufficient action) and 5 to 5.5% growth rate (policy logjam). The presumption seems to be that if for some reason the actual availability of financial resources turns out to be lower than the targets, the real GDP growth rate would automatically converge towards lower and lower levels, depending upon the extent of shortfalls in financial resources; or otherwise, there has to be counterbalancing forces of good governance and innovation to drive up the efficiency and productivity of contracting financial resources. This prospect falls in a doubtful domain.

Resources for Public Sector Outlays

Setting the economic growth targets is one part of the task – and perhaps the softer one – in the planning strategy. But the other more important and tough part is to mobilize adequate financial resources and deploy them in an efficient and judicious manner. The TPD envisages total resource availability of about Rs.80,501 bn (one billion

Projections of the Twelfth Plan Total Resources			Aggregate Plan Resources as % of GDP	
(Rs.Crores at Current Prices)		(%share)	Eleventh Plan Realisation	Twelfth Plan Projection
Center	4333,739	53.8	5.96	6.35
States	3572,323	44.4	5.01*	5.45*
Union Territories	144,062	1.8		
Grand Total	8050,124	100.0	10.97	11.80

Source: Compiled from TPD pages 76 to 78. *Combined figure of States and Union Territories Note: The financial resources envisaged above are exclusively for financing public sector plan outlays.

= Rs.100 crores) at current prices for the Centre and States together. This is 2.71 times the actual realization of the public sector plan outlays in the Eleventh Plan. Incidentally, there was a sizeable shortfall of about 18.7% in plan financing of the Eleventh Plan; the actual realization being Rs.29,617 bn *versus* the projection of Rs.36,447 bn [these figures are at 2006-07 prices]. In relation to projected GDP estimates, public sector resources during the Twelfth Plan will be 11.8% as against 10.96% in the Eleventh Plan.

Effectively, therefore, the TPD envisages incremental share of GDP going into financing of the public sector plan outlay. So long as such higher share accrues from incremental domestic savings (or prospective availability aggregate investment resources), there may not be any reason for concern from the perspective of the private sector. But the issue still remains *whether the Twelfth Plan strategy is sending a contrary signal*. In the post-reforms period, it is axiomatic that the State has to gradually retreat from developmental (and not strategic / social sector) activities, thereby releasing more and more space for the private sector to flourish and grow. More importantly, the concern is also about the capacity of the public sector to garner such incremental financial resources. Witness what the TPD observes: “however, the outcome will depend critically on achievement of buoyancy in tax revenue, effective control over subsidies and an improvement in the resource mobilizing capacity of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) both at the Central and State levels.” All these are in the realm of ‘big ifs!’

One of the significant features of public sector plan outlays in the post-reforms period is the reduction, albeit gradual, in the share of the Centre’s plan outlay and corresponding improvement in the State and UTs plan

outlay. Thus, in the Eighth Plan (1992-97), the share of the Centre’s Plan Outlay was around 57%, while that of the States (including UTs) was around 43%. This ratio is projected to become 54:46. With the promised greater focus on social sector and infrastructure development, especially on urban infrastructure, the share of States in public sector plan outlays needs to increase further. Indeed, within our three-tier federal structure (local authorities being the third tier), the *responsibilities of economic and social development need to shift more from the Centre to States and local authorities*. This alone would ensure a far more effective way of inclusive economic development, reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the people at large.

Sources of Funding

What are going to be the principal sources of financing the public sector plan outlays? As will be evident from the following table, both the Centre and States are going to depend heavily on borrowings from the market as well other capital receipts and this will be followed by resources generated by the PSEs (including their own borrowings) and the balance from current revenues (i.e. largely from tax and non-tax revenue receipts). Apparently, the internal generation of funds from budgetary sources *per se* would turn out to be a limiting factor in financing the Twelfth Plan’s public sector outlay.

Further, PSEs’ borrowings may be governed by considerations of their respective financial health as well as economics of their expansion, modernization and new investment programs. But, the market borrowings of the Centre and States will essentially have to follow the discipline of proposed new changes in fiscal responsibility legislation. The crucial point to be emphasized is that unless the economy regains its real growth momentum, constraints

Centre’s Twelfth Plan			States & UTs Twelfth Plan		
Sources of Funding	(Rs.Crores)	(% share)	Sources of Funding	(Rs.Crores)	(% share)
1. Balance of current revenues	1387,371	38.9	1. Balance of current revenues	959,979	25.8
2. Borrowings*	2181,255	61.1	2. Borrowings*	1518,301	40.9
3. Gross Budgetary Support for Central Plan**	2710,840	62.6	3. Resources of PSE**	380,319	10.2
4. Resources of PSE***	1622,899	37.4	4. Central assistance	857,786	23.1
Total resources for Central Plan (net) ***	4333,739	100.0	Total of States & UTs Plan	3716,385	100.0
* Includes market borrowings <i>plus</i> miscellaneous capital receipts. **After accounting for transfer to States & UTs from the Centre (i.e. item 4 in States & UTs column). *** Includes their own borrowed resources. Note: Ratios for Central Plan are reworked in relation to total resources (net); hence differ from the figures in TPD. Source: TPD pages 76 and 77					

would also emerge from the governments' capacity to raise market borrowings. There are clearly downside risks in the framework of financing, which can only be mitigated by restoration of good fiscal governance on one hand and stimulating growth of private investment through investment-friendly policy reforms on the other. The forthcoming budget offers yet another (may be the ultimate!) chance for the Central Government to provide sanctity to its planning strategy.

There are several other facets in the scheme of financing, namely, the implications of (a) introduction of GST on tax revenues, (b) recently appointed 14th Finance Commission's Award, the recommendations of which would become effective for the last two years of the Plan, and (c) various other policy initiatives in the area of social welfare programs. In particular, the Centre would have to bear a substantial additional burden of increased devolution of tax revenues and other budgetary support to the States on account of these factors. Illustratively, in the Budget 2013-14, there is likely to be a provision of something like Rs. 35,000 crores to bring the States on board for introduction of GST and agreeing to effectively abolish the Central Sales Tax. This article does not purport to go into the details of all such factors. The limited point is that the Planning Commission will have to evaluate the structure of public sector plan financing and suggest appropriate course corrections on year-on-year basis.

Other Facets

Before, concluding, a word about two important facets in our understanding of the strategy of Plan financing, namely, (a) the savings-investment matrix; and (b) a shift towards public private partnership (PPP) formulation. The Chapter on Macro Framework offers a detailed year-on-year structure of sources of domestic savings and aggregate finance for investment (pages 43 to 50 of TPD) of the Twelfth in comparison with the Eleventh Plan. What transpires is that the ratio of domestic savings to GDP, which had reached the high point of 36.8% in 2007-08, has dropped since then to an estimated 30.5% in 2011-12. Although the TPD projects some progressive improvement in the savings ratio in the Twelfth Plan period, there are serious doubts about realization of its projections, especially in the early years of the Plan.

On current reckoning, the expectations of an average domestic savings ratio rising from 33.1% in the Eleventh Plan to 36.3% by 2016-17 and an average of 34.2% for the Twelfth Plan period, as a whole, is highly suspect. Consequently, after accounting for net savings from abroad (net capital inflows), it is doubtful whether finance for investment to GDP ratio would rise, as envisaged in

the TPD, from an average of 35.8% in the Eleventh Plan to 37.1% in the Twelfth Plan. It seems that the Planning Commission, having firmly predetermined the economic growth target of 8.2%, has found it imperative to construct the savings-investment matrix that would be seen to be realistic, rather than being so in reality!

What also emerges from our proposition of likely shortfalls in domestic savings rate is even more disturbing. First, if somehow the public sector's plan financing is to be managed as shown in the tables above, then there would be an overall shortage of financial resources in the economy, especially when both the Centre and the States along with PSEs enter the market for their borrowings requirements. Second, as a consequence, the private sector will have a constricted space in raising resources from banking, non-banking or capital markets for their investment activity. Third, in such an environment, the logic of supply-demand for funds would continue to keep the interest rate scenario stiff. The only relieving factor would come from more liberal access to foreign sources of financing, for which policy and infrastructure environment needs to be investor-friendly.

This brings us to the governments' increasing resort to PPP models, especially in the promotion of infrastructure investment. Over the last decade or more this concept has evolved rapidly and there are series of model concession agreements in operation in the sphere of road development (national and state highways, including their operations and maintenance), railways (including urban metro rail, operation of container trains, redevelopment of railway stations, etc), airports (non-metro and green-field), etc. There are a whole set of policy framework guidelines and manuals in place. The success in this area is found to be encouraging and the recent World Bank report claims that "India has been the top recipient of PPI activity since 2006 and has implemented 43 new projects which attracted total investment of US\$20.7 bn in 2011". The TPD also lays special emphasis on PPPs in social sectors including education, health care services, skill development, etc.

The purpose of focusing on this point is to suggest that in an environment of decelerating savings and investment in the economy, there is a lot that needs to be done in this area of PPP. This fact seems to have been recognized by the TPD, which states that "the physical targets set in the Plan cannot be met out of public resources alone. It is, therefore, imperative that resources have to be attracted from the private sector to ensure that targets, in physical and financial terms, are met by the

(Cont'd. on page 29)

Critique

Retail Revolution, FDI and the Meaning of Reforms

P. Koshy

The Nation's Economic management is not just about balancing budgets and better fiscal management alone; it is also about creating a climate conducive to business for MSMEs and poor people's informal ventures to operate. A responsible state has to create a level playing field for small enterprises and ensure their survival.

Prime minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh, in his address to the nation on 21 September 2012, said, “money does not grow on trees”. That was an attempt to justify his version of reforms. Speech and arguments by him, although not so convincing, could sum up the entire debate on economic reforms that he is currently pursuing in areas such as FDI in multi brand retail and reduction of subsidies. He could make people believe for some time, at least, the need for continuing with ‘reforms’ that he and a group of economists and business groups think to be reforms.

For a few like him, withdrawing subsidy and permitting FDI are reforms. But for many millions of small, micro enterprises, informal sector players, vendors and others in the unorganized sector, reforms means something deeper. For them, reforms are something that has implications on their daily lives, as they fight for sustaining their businesses and livelihood. Reforms won't mean much if it doesn't really penetrate the system and the change the fundamental rules of the operational mechanism that regulates businesses, especially at the bottom of the pyramid. There are around 10 crore MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) units, including players in the informal sector, according to Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT). The official estimate is that in retail trade sector, MSMEs alone contributes 24.91% to employment. And 41% establishments fall under retail sector. (5th Economic Survey, 2005)

There may be compulsions on the Indian government, which has to now live in a global economy as part of WTO and other Free Trade Agreements, but it has a duty and right to protect the interests of its domestic industry, specially MSME service enterprises, the retail players, and manufacturing units catering to local markets. Of course, there is increasing pressure from European Union and other such economic blocs, as their large industrial houses lobby for policy changes overseas in countries like India, so as to advance their business goals.

Type of Reforms Required

Mr. V. N. Prasad, an economist working with a focus

on MSMEs, made an interesting observation about reforms of the post 1991 era. He says, Manmohanomics has failed the Indian people. “Manmohan Singh or anyone else, Indian reforms of 1991 would have taken place as it was implemented then. But, the Indians at large believed that he, with ordinary background and as an academic, would have used his experience to implement a better policy within the existing requirements and within the framework of the covenants that India might have signed or need to follow..... A re-look at Indian society after two decades of its practice would undoubtedly suggest that Manmohanomics has failed Indian people and society. Of course, there are victorious corporations”.

The Nation's Economic management is not just about balancing budgets and better fiscal management alone, it goes beyond; it is also about creating a climate conducive to business for MSMEs and poor people's informal ventures to operate. A responsible state has to create a level playing field for small enterprises and ensure their survival. Economy and society does not consist of very innovative, educated, entrepreneurial and rich people alone. It has different sections such as, disabled, old, landless, people who cannot afford to go a hospital, buy medicines and send their children to school. A majority of the people and probable entrepreneurs would not pass careful scrutiny of a loan sanctioning officer of an Indian public sector bank if they apply for a loan for their new business venture.

There is a serious need to reassess the kind of reforms required and its meaning in the context of a developing country. What do reforms mean to businesses owned and managed by poor people in India, the so-called enterprises that alleviate poverty of millions? How are FDI and other recent initiatives helping their business ventures? What support is the government providing them? I think building a climate for small enterprises to thrive is the real reform. State intervention, strengthening the effectiveness of existing regulations, and if needed, new regulations to protect the interest of a large section of the Indian society, is very important and reform is that! Also, it includes protecting small enterprise sector from big players by

strengthening anti-monopoly laws, regulatory and policy framework governing retail sector so as to shield MSMEs from unfair competition. Stricter implementation of existing laws pertaining to labour rights and minimum wages are also important.

Impact of Proposed Reforms

If the hidden objective of reforms is to bring some money into the country, sure, this policy would attract foreign investments and there will be some revival in the economy. However, its long term impact on employment and implications on MSMEs would be of some concern. Impact assessment studies show that big retails have a negative impact on employment, local economy, small businesses and standard of living. Wal-Mart kills three local jobs for every two they create. They reduced retail employment by an average of 2.7 percent in every county they entered. Research from Chicago shows retail employment did not increase in areas where Wal-Mart operated and employment also fell significantly in those adjacent regions.

Mom and pop shops won't get affected is an argument that we often hear. It may or may not. However, experiences are different. When Indian-owned shopping malls came up in Noida Sector 18, Mr. SK Jain who was running a retail garment business had to close down his venture. He says, with shopping malls, traders in Sector 18, lost 95 percent of their businesses and majority of them had to close down. Now what remains are brand-showrooms or company owned shops. Are foreign retail chains going to sell foreign products or domestic products? A serious concern is that India-manufactured foreign goods and private labeled or specific retail chain branded products will appear on shelves, not necessarily procured from outside manufacturers but produced in-house, for instance, food, bakery & confectionary sector. This would result in extermination of food industries in the long term. These are real possibilities and matter of concern for manufacturing MSMEs. This is the international experience too. In a country like India, a number of manufacturers

exist in a neighborhood space, catering only for residences there. They manufacture only in small quantity for the people around them. It may be in a slum, in a small hamlet or within a city. They distribute their products through small informal vendors, small and micro retail trade shops. There are experiments and innovations taking place in these manufacturing units at their level, though they may not live up to the image of the term 'experiments & innovation'. These ventures are *livelihood enterprises*.

When local retail traders disappear, its major impact is on MSMEs who manufacture for markets around them. The traditional supply chain that helps and caters to MSME units, assisting their product distribution at the local level, would gradually disappear, causing the death of local manufacturing MSMEs in the medium to long term. Tiny and micro manufacturing units all across Indian towns, cities, metropolis and suburban regions would die. According to Mr. V. N. Prasad, small retailers are distributors of locally manufactured products that we will never find in big retail chain shelves. It would be difficult for our manufacturing industry to even sell their products. Mr. Amar Yadav, an entrepreneur, says, 30% procurement reserved for MSMEs, does not mean much, or nothing at all. Only 1.5 million MSMEs are registered and how many of them can meet the needs of WALMART and other giants? he asks.

MSME retailers need to be officially recognized as an industry and the government should provide assistance and help them to compete and enable them to access benefits, schemes, bank-finance at better rates and terms, special financial support, training programmes, and marketing support. This would further strengthen retail MSMEs and help them emerge stronger to face the challenge that the big retail chains would throw upon them and to enable them to compete in the scenario of the upcoming retail revolution!

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Making Public Audit Inclusive

Do not public auditors have obligations that go beyond those achieved by conventional methods? If the outcome of good governance is improvement in the quality of life of its citizenry, should the same not be the outcome of effective public audit?

Our answer to all these was a resounding affirmative. It is thence that we have commenced pushing the envelope and going beyond hitherto practiced conventional and conservative methodology. This pushing of the envelope did evolve a very sharp resistance from the executive. This was no doubt expected. Issues regarding our exceeding our mandate were raised. Statements about such 'activism' tantamount to interference in policy formulation and misleading public opinion, emerged. However, since Indian democracy is maturing and the urban Indian middle class is becoming more involved in citizen's affairs, we continue to tread the new path in the belief that the final stakeholder is the public at large.

Excerpted from the speech by India's Comptroller and Auditor General Mr. Vinod Rai at Harvard. For the full text visit karmayog-hyd@yahoogroups.com.

“Nature is Full of Surprises”

Ashish Chandola

“Miracles will never cease” is an often-repeated refrain. I do not know how true this holds of life in general, but when it comes to Natural History there is much truth in it! Hardly do we begin to think that we know everything worth knowing about a species or a creature, and out springs the most unexpected surprise!

Of course this is true of mega species like the tiger. I remember well that just when we were being taught the conventional wisdom that ‘two tigers cannot share the same hill’, research and observation showed that tigers interact with each other far more regularly than had been previously thought! I have seen a big male tiger gamboling about with 3 cubs while the mother sat quite placidly, watching from some distance! In an earlier article, I had related the story of 5 tigers sharing a cool rock shelter to avoid the hottest part of the day - here again it was a big male tiger, a tigress and 3 cubs - No.545 of *Freedom First*, November, 2012.



Illustration courtesy: Carl D'Silva

story then – a fragment of an over imaginative mind!

But other unexpected surprises await an observer in the bush: My wife, Shanthi and I were watching a group of *langur* monkeys feeding on tender leaves of *Butea* plants growing at ground level at Bandhavgarh sometime in 2002 or 2004. Youngsters were playing around while the adults fed placidly when a pair of jackal walked through the group, and one of them just picked up a newborn baby *langur* and trotted off. The mother did raise an alarm, but perhaps because she was young, maybe a first time mother and we assume, therefore low in the troops' hierarchy, her cries were not strident

enough and were not taken up by the group at all who went about their business of feeding as if nothing had happened.

To us, it was not only the first hand observation of a tragic event but also a great realisation how so many facets operate quietly, silently and as due process of Nature.

Joanna Van Gruisen, who worked with me at Dachigam in Kashmir in the early 1980s, reminded me the other day of exactly how harsh winters are in Kashmir. Except for a clump or two of mistletoe on an occasional tree, the Poplar trees are devoid of any vegetation at all and totally leafless. The Himalayan *langur* are forced to strip bark of the branches and twigs of these trees to help satiate there hunger and somehow, survive.

The very first thing that Quasim Wani, the Forest Guard attached to us told us when we reached Dachigam was that “even God does not know how the Kashmiri and the denizens of the forest survive the winter”. How accurate he was!

And recently the most amazing story emerged out of Ranthambore, related by Balendu Singh and Yogesh K. Sahu: they actually recorded a male tiger they had christened ‘Dollar’, bringing up his two 4 month old cubs when their mother died a tragic natural death.

I quote: “Here was their father, the dominant male of the area, out on his regular territorial walk with his own small orphaned cubs.” The authors go on to say even more poignant things and I cannot but quote again: “(Dollar) is often seen hunting and allowing his daughters to eat from his kill, not merely protecting them from other tigers, which is usually the father’s only job. Often I have seen the cub nuzzle a sleeping Dollar who would lift his paw and ‘pat’ the cub down near him, in the manner of tigress mothers. On one occasion I saw Dollar come out from the bush, cubs in tow patrolling his territory, spray-marking trees, rolling in the scent left by him or (scolding) the wrong-doings of his daughters.”

Who would have imagined all this just a few years back? It would certainly have been called a cock and bull

Then, when on one occasion, we went to check on an old Hangul carcass we were most surprised when a group of Himalayan *langur* burst out of the bushes and scrambled up the nearest trees.

On closer examination of the left over bones, the teeth marks of the monkeys were clearly visible – they had been stripping the last remnants of whatever flesh that remained to feed on and survive. And surprise, surprise – I for one, had all along thought that except for an occasional egg or a bird chick, *langur* were purely vegetarian!

Did you know that the wild boar is a voracious meat eater and a very efficient killer? We were totally taken aback one morning at around 7 am when we witnessed a sounder of 3 sows accompanied by a maze of piglets pick up a *cheetal* fawn from a lantana bush by the roadside at Bandipur and devour it so completely and within seconds, that there was not even a morsel for the hovering crows to pick.

But by far the most lethal ‘attack’ I have seen mounted by a full grown wild boar had been on a *langur* monkey feeding on the ground – the boar approached it stealthily and before we knew what had transpired, it had inflicted a deep gash to its side with one of its tusches. The profusely bleeding monkey leapt up a tree while the boar rooted the ground near by.

After the loss of blood had drained the life out of the monkey and it fell to the ground, it hardly took any time for the two or three wild boar that had gathered, to dispatch the *langur* carcass and by the time we returned to the scene an hour and a half later, there was nothing left except this time the jungle crows did manage to find a few pickings.

ASHISH CHANDOLA is a well known wildlife photographer and a director/cameraman with several highly regarded wildlife documentaries to his credit. He lives in Bangalore and can be contacted at chandola.ashish@gmail.com.

The Continuing Tibetan Tragedy

As in previous years, the Tibetans are not celebrating their New Year's Day this year too which falls this month (February 10).

2. Tibetans in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan as well as the Tibetan diaspora abroad, including in India, are observing their New Year's Day as a day of mourning and prayers in memory of 99 Tibetans who have so far committed self-immolation (80 of them fatal) in the Tibetan areas of China to demand their freedom and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Lhasa.
3. Their hopes that the advent of a new Chinese leadership headed by Mr. Xi Jinping could mark a relaxation of the suppression in the Tibetan areas and a willingness to address the grievances of the Tibetans have been belied so far.
4. Since Xi took over as the Party General Secretary from Mr. Hu Jintao in November last year, the Party has shown no inclination to re-consider its policies of suppression and forcible integration of the Tibetans which has driven many young Tibetan monks and others to take the desperate step of self-immolation to draw the attention of the international community to their plight.
4. Instead of recognizing the continuing self-immolations as an expression of desperation and anguish, the Chinese have been projecting them as part of a conspiracy against Beijing mounted by His Holiness and the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and other external organizations such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Asia.
5. Instead of sympathising with the relatives and friends of those who committed self-immolation, they have been rounding them up and prosecuting them on a charge of instigating the self-immolations. Eight of them have already been sentenced after

sham trials to various terms of imprisonment, including one of suspended death sentence.

6. In the face of this wave of suppression to put down the self-immolations, the Tibetans in India observed five days of solidarity with the Tibetan struggle for freedom. They observed a day of prayers on February 1 at New Delhi that was attended by about 1000 people including many Indian opposition leaders.
7. Lobsang Sangay, Prime Minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile, has said the convictions were unfortunate because “repression is the cause” of the self-immolations.
8. Sangay said it was unfortunate that the Chinese government had resorted to “sham” trials that had “no basis or legal process.”
9. He said he had asked Tibetans around the world not to celebrate the Lunar New Year this month out of respect for those who have died from the self-immolations.
10. “As a form of condolences and solidarity to all those Tibetans inside Tibet ... I have asked Tibetans not to celebrate, not to organize any festivals, but to wear traditional dress and go to monasteries and pray for all those who have died and continue to suffer in Tibet,” he said.
11. It was gratifying to note the greater public interest in the Tibetan cause in New Delhi this year, but it has to spread to other parts of India, which are hardly aware of the continuing tragedy in Tibet.

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Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise man examines all sides before coming to a conclusion. This is an attempt to present various sides of an issue so that a considered opinion can be formed.

Soft State

1. Is India a soft State? The question arises too often for our comfort. The Government's inability to handle the unbridled Naxalite violence, terrorism, separatist tendencies, cultural despotism of mushrooming groups, political corruption and crimes like rape are signs of inadequacies of the State. These become more glaring when its dealings with external adversaries leave the country red-faced. On all such occasions India has refused to act decisively. The same listlessness pervades the Government's response to every major challenge. Is this a mark of saintly patience or fatal inertia? People wait for the Government to show the way. However, India's response to Pakistan's violations of cease fire on the LOC in January 2013 was particularly ambivalent, even though two of our soldiers were killed and their bodies mutilated. Our Foreign Minister remarked that Pakistan army's behaviour was "unacceptable". The Air Chief threatened to seek other options; the Army Chief warned of more aggressive response next time around. The PM belatedly declared that it cannot be business as usual with Pakistan while the barbaric act remained unpunished. As anticipated, the Pak response was denial of culpability and rejection of India's protest. Put together, all it meant was a lot of hot air and soon things were back to normal. Can a State afford to ignore all challenges to its authority?

1. Inaction is never a solution to problems, whatever the argument in favour of patience and deliberation. War is indeed not a response to Pakistan's shenanigans; the response must be a pre-determined plan of action to be implemented immediately after a provocation. Whenever the Pak Army comes under pressure from the militants within, it ups the ante by pointing at the danger from India. The other, more valid reason could be that Pakistan does not want the Kashmir issue to go into deep freeze and the recurring skirmishes keep it alive internationally. To expect Pakistan to act more reasonably is to ignore reality. While external challenges need to be dealt with delicately, internal problems require a firmer response. Naxalism must be handled with single-mindedness instead of waffling over development vs displacement debate; *fatwas* and *khap* rulings have to be abolished, corruption rooted out and crime punished expeditiously. The Government forgets that there is something intangible called public morale. The constant hammering the public sentiment takes, has an effect on the people's faith in their country. Loss of credibility is a finger print of a soft State. As historians have said, a State which allows its values to be used as a weapon by its adversaries is a soft State. Does India fit the bill?

Religion and Terrorism

2. The statement of Sushil Kumar Shinde, Union Home Minister, accusing the BJP and RSS of running terrorist training camps caused a furore. He called it "saffron terrorism". The Union Home Secretary added that ten persons allegedly involved in some bomb blasts in the last few years were connected with the RSS at some stage. This convoluted logic was interesting. It is true that a few members of Hindu organisations like the *Abhinav Bharat* and the *Sanatan Sanstha* are suspects in blast cases and although they are not convicted yet, their antecedents raise a question. The intriguing part is that after decades of *jehadi* terrorism the Government had refrained from naming it Islamic terrorism but now it is using the word 'saffron terrorism' without any qualms. The haste to link suspected Hindu terrorists with the RSS on the grounds of their old connection is patently wrong. This way any wrong doer can be linked with any institution from his

2. In the present case, there can be opposition to the BJP/ RSS as political adversaries or even because of the dislike for the narrow, sectarian ideology of the RSS. Hinduism is differently defined by the RSS; everybody may not agree with its claims of inclusiveness. There is a strong belief that despite claims of inclusiveness, the RSS does not trust non-Hindus. However, to label an organisation as terrorist, something more substantial is required as proof. If the Home Minister has such evidence, it is his duty to ban such an organisation. He cannot merely fling allegations and do nothing about them. If he does not do so, the inference is clear that his charge is merely a political move. Worse still, it is wrong to put the tag of terrorism, saffron or green, on any religion, unless that sect is found preaching terrorism. Obviously, the UPA is trying to drive a wedge between the BJP and its allies; what better way of doing so than by dubbing the BJP/

school onwards. An organisation can be branded so only if it advocates, propagates and adopts terrorism as its method of operation. Alternatively, if a large number of its followers are found indulging in terrorism, the organisation could be blamed for it. In the case of the RSS, its ideology may give rise to fanaticism among its more unbalanced volunteers but to blame the organisation for the actions of a few lunatics is not fair.

The Headley Saga

3. The sentencing of Davis Headley by a US court (Jan. 25) to 35 years of jail term angered India, not because the sentence was too little but because it was imposed by a US court. The argument was that since Headley was guilty of the 26/11 attack on Mumbai, it was the right of the Indian Government to punish him; He should have been extradited to India to face trial here. There were whispers that the Americans did not want to hand over Headley because he was a double agent and the Americans possibly knew about the Mumbai attack in advance through Headley but failed to warn India. Then again, there were allegations that Headley was allowed to escape death sentence because he was a tool of the CIA. Why did they expose Headley only when he was to undertake another assignment in Denmark? These questions can be answered only by the CIA but we cannot expect them to expose their working just to mollify us. It is true that Headley has shown the cunning to escape punishment in the past too. In the 1990s, when caught for heroin smuggling, he offered to work for the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). He started going to Pakistan ostensibly to help find the drug trail and joined the L-e-T to plot against India. When he came under scrutiny, he claimed to work for the US Government. When this ploy did not help for long he changed his name (from Gilani to Headley) and functioned as a white man. It is a mystery when he started betraying the DEA and turned a full time terrorist. The DEA or CIA would not like to reveal how they were duped by Headley.

RSS as terrorist organisations. However, we do not expect the Home Minister of the country to use his official position to denigrate his political opponents. Although the Home Minister is back-tracking on his statement, by 2014, all norms of civility may be sacrificed for electoral gains and the society would get polarised through such tactics.

3. India's objections to Headley's trial in US are based on emotional and dubious arguments born out of the distrust of American methods of operation. India should concede that if the US had not exposed Headley, we would not have known about his connection with the Al Qaeda. If the Americans needed to hide their failure to warn us in advance, in spite of prior knowledge of the Mumbai attack, they would never have brought Headley to public trial. The fact is that a few US citizens also died in the attack and that would have been unacceptable to the US. The CIA is indeed wary of sharing with us all its dealings with Headley as it would not like the world to know how Headley used the CIA cover. In any case, Headley got the punishment which Indian courts would have taken years to award. Plea bargaining is a US provision which expedites trials and ensures quick punishment. It is not as if Headley has escaped punishment by exploiting the plea bargain system. He has been effectively put away for the rest of his life and his pleadings that he is now a reformed man have been rejected by the court. The real problem is that the masterminds of 26/11 are still roaming free in Pakistan. There can be no closure of the case till they are punished. Headley was a cog in the wheel, not the wheel. His extradition, even at this late stage, would allow our interrogators to tie a lot of loose ends and name his Pak Army/ISI/LeT associates and find out how exactly he evaded detection in India. The extradition is unlikely to happen though.

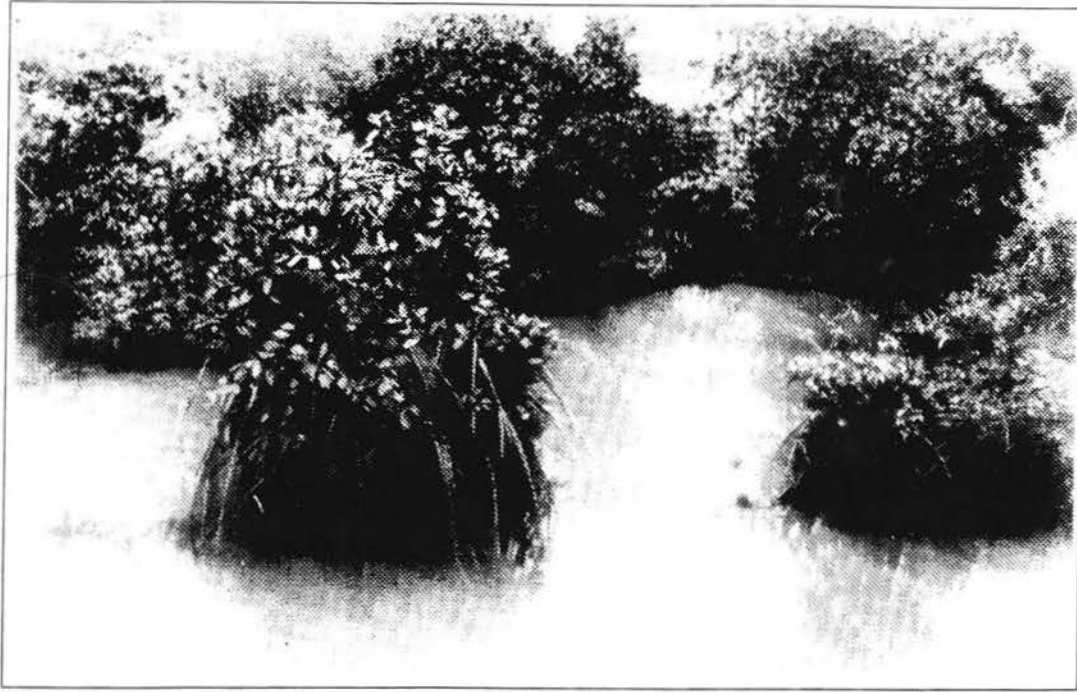
Afzal Guru

4. After all the debates and controversies, Afzal Guru was hanged (February 9) rather surreptitiously. As is our wont, arguments are now raging whether hanging was the right thing to do after delaying it for years, whether all this secrecy was necessary and how it would be a setback to the peace process in J&K. An old skeleton was also exhumed to argue whether Afzal Guru got a fair trial. Statements from Omar Abdulla and other leaders muddled the water further. Ancillary issues like the place of burial, the family being informed or not informed in time, the delay in execution of others waiting in the queue, etc. added to

4. The fact that Afzal Guru was involved in an attack on the sovereignty of India, that he was found guilty after several layers of judicial scrutiny and the Supreme Court's imprimatur was lost sight of or deliberately ignored by the critics. The only valid point was why the execution took so long. The critics have to answer whether they accept the Supreme Court as the final judicial arbiter, instead of finding fault with the trial process. A major consideration was the effect of the execution on the peace

(Cont'd. on page 31)

CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



A unique feature of the Industrial Garden Township, Pirojshanagar, is a large expanse of swamp, one of the very few such areas existing in the city under original mangrove forests.

At a time when mangroves are being destroyed at an alarming rate in the process of excessive and damaging reclamation..., Godrej has taken steps, at considerable care and expense.

to preserve and protect this Nature's gift in the awareness that mangrove destruction leads generally to loss of food, breeding grounds and shelter for numerous forms of life.

It is almost unbelievable that, like the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Borivli, such a mangrove still exists in the excessively congested and polluted megapolis that Mumbai is

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WELFARE : ENVIRONMENT / POPULATION NEXUS...

Foreign Relations in the 21st Century

Coping with Pakistan: An Eternal Challenge

B. Ramesh Babu

All in all, Pakistan today is a complex mess with an uncertain future. However, in the ultimate analysis it is the Army that has the final say on all matters including how to deal with India. We should never ignore this reality.

One can choose his friends, but not his relatives or neighbours. As far as the relatives are concerned, there is some elbow room to play with, relatively speaking! After all there are relatives and relatives. Some are relatively close and the rest are relatively distant! When it comes to countries as neighbours we have no choice at all. They are on the other side of the border, whether we like it or not. The only choice we have is in the way we deal with them. Even here the extent of our success is only partly dependent on our capabilities and will to prevail. After all the other side has its own goals and wherewithal. We should learn to cope with the myriad challenges as best as we can. The same is true for the other country.

As I reflect on this existential dilemma, a worldly wise verse of Yogi Vemana, the great poet/philosopher of the common man of yester years, flashes across the mind. It goes like this: *“Thorn in the foot, dust in the eye, pebble in the shoe, and nagging at home are no trifling matters!”* The first three can be removed. But, the fourth one is on a sticky wicket and lasted a life time in those good old days. Nowadays divorce is a way out, notwithstanding the inevitable side effects. But, with respect to the countries next door (like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal etc) even that messy option is not available. Geography is destiny. It is better to learn to do so as best as possible. Our shared history and common heritage make the complex equation more complicated.

The recent ghastly and horrendous actions from across the LOC in Jammu and Kashmir (mutilation and beheading of the bodies of the killed soldiers) enraged the whole nation beyond measure. The deep sense of horror and outrage were palpable. Naturally there were shrill demands for revenge and retribution. ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ was the outcry. One Indian leader went overboard and called for “ten heads for one.” The Government was forced to take a very strong public stand. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the leading champion of peace with Pakistan, was forced to declare “no more business as usual” till so and so is done.

Sadly such bold assertions from our side have a familiar ring. We have gone on that road before, many times. Each time Pakistan indulges in a ghastly excess or terrorist attack somewhere or the other, India declares “no more talks” with the other side till this or that is done. Then, inevitably the dialogue is resumed sooner or later. In this cyclical tragedy, carnage in Mumbai was the most recent such evil act perpetrated from across the border. ‘Talks, no talks, talks again and no talks again’ is not a policy. It is an ad hoc response to the hurt moment. Moreover, Indian posture of ‘talking to Pakistan’ as though it is a favour conferred on that country is not a viable approach either. Pakistan will continue to do what all it can to harm India whether we talk to them or not and will also continue to deny any wrong doing on its part.

It is also pertinent to acknowledge that the recent revelations (Pakistan’s submissions to the UN) and admission of our culpability on the LOC in Kashmir in the past reveal that our armed forces were no angels either. Soldiers guarding the borders at the risk of their lives under the most inhospitable conditions cannot be ambassadors of goodwill! Both sides have much to be ashamed of in this regard. I am not equating the two countries on each and every contentious issue. I do believe that our record on the whole is better than theirs. Be that as it may, at this juncture a number of positive steps in the pipeline have been halted or reversed (visas on arrival for some categories of visitors, trade liberalization, participation of Pakistani diplomats in the Jaipur Literary Festival, etc.) But, nothing is simple as far as our bilateral relations are concerned. Even as I write this, the Pakistani women cricket team is in India and is scheduled to play in the World Cup. Since local hotels would not take them in, the players are accommodated elsewhere. While the players themselves have no complaints, the quality of their accommodation is a source of minor friction!

Facts to Remember

Pakistan as a State and especially its Army and ISI will not give up their intestinal hostility towards India. We should never forget for a moment that this hostility

is permanent and is unlikely to end any time soon. Having lost three wars (1948, 1965, 1971), wanting to avenge them will remain an eternal ingredient of its policy towards the Indian state. No Pakistani Army commander worth his salt will ever forget the abject surrender of 90, 000 of their soldiers to Indian Army in 1971 - the biggest surrender of a standing army without a fight in the history of war! Subsequent break up of their country into two and the consequent downgrading of their country into an irreversibly unequal power are eminently unforgettable. As a weaker country unable and incapable of waging war against India, Pakistan will continue with its chosen "policy of thousand cuts to bleed India." The Army and the ISI are quite happy with the extent of their success in this regard. Using the jihadis and hired terrorists in the fray has added to the efficacy of their strategy of denial and war by proxy. We should have no illusions in this regard.

At the same time we should note that the anti-India facet of the Pakistani society has grown more nuanced over time. People in general and some constituents of the society, economy, and polity have veered round to viewing peace with India to be the only viable way out for their country beset with multiple internal challenges.

The civilian government is also interested in peace with India, which will go a long way in curtailing the enduring domination of the armed forces in the scheme of things at home. The judiciary is at loggerheads with the Zardari Government. There are reports suggesting that the Army is working in tandem with the judiciary in the ongoing confrontation between the Chief Justice and the President.

Religious fundamentalism, internal terrorism, and sectarian violence have become widespread and the Government is unable to control them. The north-western tribal region bordering Afghanistan is a festering wound and the equation with the US is full of contradictions. How this vital link will play out after the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan in 2014 is any body's guess.

All in all, Pakistan today is a complex mess with an uncertain future. However, in the ultimate analysis it is the Army that has the final say on all matters including how to deal with India. We should never ignore this reality.

What Should We Do Now and in the Near Future?

In dealing with Pakistan it is vital to clearly distinguish between what is in our hands and what is beyond our control. We should have no illusions on this score. The following tactics and approaches suggest themselves:

- 1) On the LOC in Kashmir, we should deal with the armed incursions and ceasefire violations more aggressively and effectively. Towards this end our commanders on the ground and the top brass should be given complete operational freedom. If we are unable to halt the intrusion of terrorists from across the border, the failure rests on our shoulders. Crying foul or blaming Pakistan will not help.
- 2) The Army's input and the military dimension of the challenges from Pakistan (and China for that matter) should be taken more seriously than ever. In fact non-incorporation of the input from the armed forces in the foreign policy process at the macro level has been a key inadequacy on our side.
- 3) In dealing with the intrusion of terrorists and *jihadis* our forces should have the option of "hot pursuit," as per their judgment. However, they should ensure that the ground level vigil and military response do not go out of hand and escalate into a war.
- 4) We should continue the dialogue with Pakistan at all times and with all the segments of the country and society. Sustained interaction with the Pakistani Army is the most vital constituent of this dialogue process. This has not been given its due importance so far.
- 5) Government to Government engagement should remain uninterrupted and sustained, whether there is a serious crisis on hand or not.
- 6) Track Two and back channel interactions should be widened and deepened.
- 7) Of late a number of spokespersons on the Pakistani side are saying that their country is a bigger victim of internal and international terrorism and sectarian violence than India. Obviously this is their problem. However, if the other side asks (most unlikely) us for help in tackling the menace, India should accept the challenge. This will enable us to work on the deadly challenge of terrorism from both ends!

The moral of the story: "What cannot be cured must be endured!"

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Strange is the judicial system which rejects an Army Chief's school certificate but accepts a rapist cum murderer's school certificate!

**Col. S. K. Saksena, from the net
contributed by Brig. Suresh Sharma.**



Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjickaka

Narendra Modi: Next PM?

There are obstacles to Modi's path to the top job. "Gujarat is not India" may have become a hackneyed slogan of the Congress, but there is a fair amount of truth in it

Narendra Modi believes it is his manifest destiny to become Prime Minister of India. Unlike Rahul Gandhi who seems to have been thrust into contending for the top spot, Narendra Modi has no compunction about claiming it almost as his birthright. There is a popular perception that Modi is the tallest leader in the BJP and he makes no effort to demur. He can be partly forgiven for his arrogance based on his stellar performance in Gujarat, but he should also remember that pride comes before a fall.

Modi believes that the development model he has successfully employed in Gujarat will work in the rest of the country. And therein lies one of the ironies that politics often throws up. Modi has in essence opened up Gujarat's economy by inviting foreigners to invest in his state. And make no mistake: he may try to sugar coat the pill by referring to them as Non-Resident Indians (NRI), but they are foreigners. The only connection they have to India is their ethnicity. And yet, when the Congress party talks about foreign direct investment, his party, the BJP reacts with outrage. Politics is no longer about ideology: it is about expediency.

There are obstacles to Modi's path to the top job. "Gujarat is not India" may have become a hackneyed slogan of the Congress, but there is a fair amount of truth in it. With the possible exception of the Gandhis and Nitish Kumar in Bihar, the supremos of all other major parties pay only lip service to development. For them, it is all about self-aggrandizement and self-enrichment. They will support development only to the extent that it does not affect their personal fortunes. Another reason they would be wary of foreign investment is that foreign corporations would be likely to bring in dangerous ideas like transparency in business practices; and that is anathema to them. They are aided in this endeavour by the traditionally feudal mindset of a sizeable proportion of Indian society. Anyone who has witnessed the sickening sycophancy displayed towards Jayalalitha, the Thackerays

and the Gandhis would be left in no doubt that their writ runs absolute. I have heard public statements from their followers that they would willingly die for the Great Leader.

Another reason why Modi's development model would be hard to duplicate in the rest of India is the nature of the Gujaratis themselves. Gujaratis have traditionally been a mercantile community. They are business oriented; and making money is a prime objective. Godhra notwithstanding, the urban and middle classes are not into politics; and neither do they have too much too much interest in communal issues. Hence, they are very receptive to Modi's ideas about economic growth, which translates into better infrastructure and all round improvement in their standard of living. In many other states however, and particularly in the hinterland, economic matters cannot compete against a feudal mindset. Hence, Modi's brand of politics is likely to take a back seat to matters of caste and feudal loyalties.

Modi also faces difficulties within his own party. It is true that many in the BJP are hailing him as the all conquering hero who will lead the party to its inevitable victory in 2014. A few other leaders however, are not quite so thrilled at the prospect. Their former president already suspects that Modi had a hand in depriving him of a second term. Moreover, saner heads realize that Modi's pan-India appeal is not strong enough to guarantee a BJP victory; especially if Nitish Kumar makes good on his threat to exit the coalition. Besides, quite a few of them have political ambitions of their own. If Modi is removed from the equation, the party is likely to witness a no-holds barred contest for the top spot. If the BJP has reduced itself from a position of near invincibility a year ago to the faint possibility of the Congress achieving a hat trick in 2014, it has only itself to blame.

So will we see Modi's coronation in 2014. It is still plausible, but the election is more than a year away; and a lot of water can flow under the bridge by then.

Our political culture immobilises the claims of individual freedom in the face of community identity or group coercion. The Congress Party has promulgated the idea that India is a federation of communities and the task of politics is to keep a balance between them. This can have illiberal consequences. It traps individuals in the tyranny of compulsory identities.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Indian Express*, 26 January 2013

Rahul Baba Comes of Age

The heir apparent has had an inordinately long apprenticeship and there is some doubt whether he is ready even now, but his mother cannot afford to wait any longer.

The manner in which the Congress party and a section of the media have been projecting Rahul Gandhi as the new Messiah who will deliver the Grand Old Party to victory in 2014, is faintly amusing and bordering on the ridiculous. I actually feel a little sorry for the 40-something “young” white hope, because no one can live up to that type of hype. Ironically, Rahul baba is a reluctant politician. In fact, in the lexicon on what passes for politics in India, he does not even qualify. He espouses alien concepts like idealism, honesty in governance and working for the people. The old guard doesn’t know whether to commiserate with him, or laugh their heads off at his naiveté.

Part of Rahul’s enigma is inherited from his mother. Very few of her confidantes – and certainly none of her sycophants – can fathom what goes on in the mind of Madam. She professes to abhor political power and all its responsibilities; and yet she clings on to it doggedly. My own take is that her heart is not really in it. Free of encumbrances, she would happily go back to Italy and spend the autumn of her years in comfortable retirement. She would certainly be happier with her own kind. Our calculating, gauche politicians pay her reverence as a member of the Family, but they don’t understand her and she certainly is not comfortable with them.

Why then does she continue to occupy the gaddi that she clearly does not enjoy? Her reluctance to hog the media limelight – in marked contrast to her political brethren – and her infrequent stilted speeches must make her aware that she is not really cut out for the job. I believe her sense of obligation to ensure the smooth continuation of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, compels her to sit on the throne until her son is ready to take over. The heir apparent has had an inordinately long apprenticeship and there is some doubt whether he is ready even now, but she cannot afford to wait any longer. Manmohan Singh is clearly past his sell by date; and she cannot afford to let a more competent and charismatic Congressman take the top job. Some wonder why she didn’t groom the more charismatic Priyanka for the top spot. I believe it may have something

to do with her growing up in a conservative middle class Italian society, which is largely patriarchal. The son always takes precedence.

So now, whether he wants it or not, the baton has been passed on to Rahul; and he has to prove himself during the next 12 to 15 months. If he can somehow snatch victory from the jaws of a bungling Congress party, he will be hailed as a conquering hero. It is not as far fetched as it may appear. A self destructive Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has put that within his grasp

The Congress party should be pretty pleased at the high drama witnessed just before the election of BJP party president. It clearly demonstrated that the BJP was a party rife with internal rivalries and in considerable disarray. A year ago, the Congress did not have a chance in hell of getting re-elected in 2014. Now they see a glimmer of hope. Naturally they would have preferred Nitin Gadkari to have a second term, because that would have knocked the BJP’s antic-ruption plank for a loop; but they will settle for Rajnath Singh. The man has no personal charisma. He is the embodiment of the old style politics that modern India is thoroughly sick of. Surprisingly, in the recent turmoil, the BJP’s great white hope, Narendra Modi was nowhere in the picture. Maybe the BJP plans to unleash him at a more auspicious time. Whatever it is, the BJP has at least given the fledgling Rahul Gandhi a fighting chance in 2014. The next few months should provide a lot of political excitement.

So what can we expect from the future Rahul? A lot will depend on the result of the next general election. The Congress forgave the debacle in Uttar Pradesh partly because of an ingrained obeisance to the Family and because they still held the reins at the Centre. Another defeat in 2014 will stretch that loyalty very thin. The Congress does not do well in the Opposition. If, on the other hand, Rahul pulls off a miracle, his stock will soar sky high and the future of the Gandhi dynasty will be secure for the foreseeable future.

For God’s Sake! Enough!

Our benighted country is in the grip of an epidemic: an epidemic of intolerance and insanity masquerading in the guise of religious sentiment.

Bigots, zealots and plain rabble rousers have taken over the public discourse; and they are being allowed free

rein by our impotent, manipulating and vote-appeasing political class. Even worse, the law enforcers who are

supposed to protect us, the people, from these fanatics are becoming willing accessories to the madness spreading across the land. These madmen are seeking to overturn centuries old Indian tradition, culture and tolerance. For God's sake! ENOUGH!

The past two weeks alone have witnessed a staccato explosion of silliness, insensitivity and intimidation that has caused level headed, sensible Indians to despair at the pathetic state their country has denigrated to. Kamal Haasan's epic movie was banned in his home state because some unwashed nitwits took it upon themselves to determine that portions of it was unIslamic. Nothing surprising there, since such moronic fringe groups have gained grossly disproportionate importance due to the indifference and cowardice of our political masters. The police are not blameless either. They readily justify the politicians' inaction by apprehending an exaggerated law and order problem. Law and order? For heaven's sake! We are talking about a bunch of slogan shouting hooligans armed with nothing more lethal than sticks and stones. How long will we allow our law enforcers to abdicate their constitutional responsibility?

Not to be outdone by some pan-Islamic nut jobs, covens of Hindu "moralists" beat their chests with pride for upholding the dignity of their religion by disrupting a national exhibition of paintings by India's most celebrated artists. Their beef? Some of the paintings depicted gods and goddesses without any clothes on. What an indefensible affront to an ancient faith, they claimed. Seriously I suggest that those cockeyed crusaders promptly transport themselves, with hammer and chisel, to the caves at Ajanta and Ellora, where the same deities have not only been depicted in the nude but in "disgusting" sexual contortions. This intolerable insult to Hinduism must be obliterated forthwith.

These two demonstrations of religious *asmita* were merely a prelude to the main attraction in Kashmir. Three

teenage Kashmiri girls performed a couple of songs in a concert and all hell broke loose. The Grand Mufti, apparently the arbiter-in-chief of societal and moral norms, went on national television to express his indignation and promptly issued a fatwa against this blasphemy and declared that rock music was against Islam;. G ranted that he delivered his edict in a kindly tone, implying that he was only "saving" his daughters from himself. Such magnanimity! Do these people ever listen to themselves? The tenets of Islam were laid out 1500 years ago, when there was no concept of rock music. How could they ban something that did not exist? And these are the people who hold sway over large swathes of our population. India an emerging superpower? Don't make me laugh.

The Chief Minister expressed his intolerance of intolerance by posting an outraged tweet. When the public wouldn't buy this sham, he ordered police action against those who had posted hate messages against the girls on Facebook - another soft target. These cyber cowards are only capable of venting their spleen in the relative obscurity of the Internet. That is where their bravado ends. The real threat to the innocent girls is from ignorant louts who get swayed by asinine utterances of their "holy" men. Rest assured, no action will be taken against them.

What the hell is happening to our country and to us? Have we abdicated all sense of shame and responsible citizenship that we remain indifferent and silent spectators while a weak kneed government invariably chooses the path of least resistance towards self-important bigots who seek to impose their insidious morality and medieval concepts on the rest of us? Have we become so obsessed with me-first, that we don't care if the land we call home sinks deeper into the morass? What price prosperity if we are prepared to sell our souls to achieve it? Wake up before it is too late.

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The 12th Five Year Plan - 2 (Cont'd. from page 17)

end of the Twelfth Plan period". Incidentally, the Twelfth Plan envisages huge investment of Rs. 56,317 bn (over US\$ one trillion) and expects significant activity under the PPP mode both in physical and social infrastructure areas.

Summing up, there are enormous challenges confronting the financing of the public sector Plan outlays. There are pressures on budgetary resources due to loss of tax buoyancy on the one hand and rigidities of non-plan expenditure growth on the other. The efforts towards rationalization and reduction of subsidies are moving at a slow pace. Administrative and governance reforms are

in suspended animation, in the absence of political will. The recent flurry of policy reforms has yet to cover tough areas such as land acquisition policy, environmental policy, pricing of natural resources, etc. Demand constraints are affecting the manufacturing sector, while supply constraints are hurting infrastructure development. There are huge issues about ease of doing business. And many more ... *Hopefully, the Finance Minister would show the way forward with his proclaimed "responsible budget".....!*

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Mega Contribution by a Microscopic Minority

Dharmendra R. Nagda

Strolling down the lanes of one of the finest jewels of heritage architecture of Mumbai, the revered Parsi colony precinct and the Mancherji Joshi Udhyan (Panch Bagichas) of Matunga in Mumbai, my memory made me delve into the gigantic contribution made by Parsis to our national development.

To escape persecution in their country of birth, nearly three centuries ago, a small number of Parsis from Persia and Iran came by sea and landed on the shores of Sanjan on the western coast of India. With passage of time, Parsis of yore, mingled and mixed with the local population like sugar in milk and adapted themselves to the local conditions while adopting India as their country and Gujarati as their mother tongue.

From a population of around a lakh, nearly a century ago, today the Parsi population is only 65,000, which is just 0.005% of us Indians! It is amazing to note that from Airlines to Yachting and independence to self dependence, the Parsi community has made a notable contribution to our national development, coupled with various singular achievements to their credit in diverse fields.

Any essay on Parsis cannot but begin with their involvement in our freedom struggle and the industrial development of our country. It is a pleasant task to enumerate the selfless service and the massive contribution to the nation building activities of various eminent personalities such as Jamshedji Tata, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozshah Mehta, Sir Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy, Veer Khorshed Nariman, Cowasji Jehangir, JRD Tata, C. N. Wadia, Sir Homi Mody and Piloo Mody along with Rusi Mody, Pirojsha Godrej along with Ardeshir Godrej, Minoo Masani and R. P. Masani, J. J. Irani, Ratan Tata and Naval Tata, R. C. Cooper *et al.* One cannot forget Madame Bhikhaji Cama.

Tata Airlines and the first Indian Pilot J.R.D. Tata signalled India's entry in the field of aviation. Banking saw the founding of The Central Bank of India by Sorabji Pochkhanvala. Today Keki Mistry heads the HDFC Bank! Leading Industrial Houses like the Tatas, the Wadias, Godrej, A.C.C., Shapoorji Pallonji, Billimoria & Sons, Poonawallas *et al* have set benchmarks of quality, trust and integrity for other industrial houses to follow! The generation of a huge number of employment opportunities by these organisations has been helping our country move towards self reliance and industrial growth.

It is rightly said that wealth without care of health has no great meaning. It is worth mentioning here that

philanthropic Parsis have gifted to the 'Aam Aadmi', top class hospitals like the TATA Memorial Hospital, J.J. Group of Hospitals, Wadia Hospitals for Children and Women, Godrej Memorial Hospital, Cama & Albless Hospital, Parsi General Hospital, Parsi lying-in hospital and St. John's Ambulance. Parsis have cared for animals as well: Sakarbai Dinshaw Petit Veterinary Hospital is a symbol of such love.

At this juncture one remembers Cardiac Surgeon K. N. Dastoor, Cardiologist Rustom Jal Vakil, Physicians such as Aspi F. Golwalla, Farokh Udwadia, Consulting Physician Minocher B. Mody, General Surgeon R. N. Cooper, Gynaecologists Rusi Soonawala and Nergis Motashaw, Cancer Specialists D. J. Jussawala, Meher Homji, J. C. Paymaster, and Boman Dhabhar. This writer must mention here his indebtedness to Cardiologist Dinyar Daruwalla for the loving care and treatment received for the last 26 years!

A country's wealth and the people's health have to be looked after and a feeling of security is the need of all humans. At this juncture one remembers Field Marshal 'Sam Bahadur' Manekshaw, Air Marshal Aspi Engineer and Admiral Karl Nanavati. Where justice is concerned, one thinks of eminent legal luminaries like the Chief Justice of India Sarosh Kapadia, Justice Madan, Solicitor General Soli Sorabjee, Nani Palkhivala, Fali Nariman and Karl Khandalawala, H. M. Seervai *et al.* India's atomic age defences and the peaceful use of Atom for Energy should be dedicated to the efforts of Homi Bhabha and Rusi Sethna. One fondly recalls the friendly and jovial city fathers like Boman Behram and Rustam Tirandaz for their services to the city and the rich man Readymoney who was aptly named so, since he could arrange for huge amounts of money at any time!

Where education is concerned, institutions such as Sir J. J. School of Arts and Architecture, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, K. R. Cama Institute for Oriental Studies and Tata Institute of Social Sciences have rightly found their place of honour in the academic world. Dorab Tata scholarships have helped numerous bright students realize their academic dreams.

A rich, healthy and educated nation also needs

some relaxation and entertainment. How can we forget Orchestra Conductor Zubin Mehta, Film Director Sohrab Mody, Drama Director Adi Marzban, Dancer Shiamak Davar and Actors Boman Irani, Dinyar Contractor *et al.* Life without newspapers is like tea sans sugar! It is time to remember India's oldest newspaper *Mumbai Samachar* from the House of Cama and the grand old editor Jehan Daruwalla, also Dossabhoy Framji Karaka of *Current*, Rusi Karanjia of *Blitz*. How can one forget Busybee Behran Contractor's column in *Evening News* and later *Afternoon*. And if one is looking for good fortune and hope we can turn to Bejan Daruwalla's 'Bhavishyavani'. And then was India's first woman photo-journalist Homai Vyarawala who died on 15 January 2012.

When we need halls for entertainment and exhibitions, we think of N. C. P. A. Auditorium, Homi Bhabha Auditorium, Jehangir Art Gallery, C. J. Hall, Framji Cowasji Hall, Sophia Bhabha Auditorium and for marriage receptions and sports we have Dadar Parsi Gymkhana, Sohrab Palamkote Hall at Parsi Colony gardens in Dadar and the Parsi Gymkhana at Marine Drive.

The numerous Fire Temples provide solace and peace whereas the attached halls help during various social occasions. Tata Housing colonies in Jamshedpur – Tatanagar, for the working class people, along with the approximately 35 Housing Colonies or "Baug" for Parsi community in Mumbai speak volumes about the magnanimity of the Parsi leaders towards their fellow religionists. Byramji Jeejeebhoy Home for destitutes is proof of caring for their poor and the under privileged.

An added aspect is the attached play grounds in various "Baug" as proof of their concern for sports activities and the need for exercise. In the sports arena we have cyclists like Rusi Havewala and Adil Sumariwala; Cricketers like Farokh Engineer, Nari Contractor, Polly

Umrigar, Rusi Surti and Rusi Mody, Judoka's Vispi Kapadia. Ace Jockey Karl Umrigar and Pesi Shroff, who is now a Champion Horse Trainer and renowned Horse Trainer Rashid Byramji are the stuff of legends. Keki Tarapore and his crew Mongia have helped many Indian yachters to win races in rough waters! Talking of the sea, how can we forget the various species of fish which can be seen in Taraporvala Aquarium? Thinking about water one remembers Ace Olympic Swimmer Dolly Nazir and any thought about feminine beauty will be incomplete without the mention of Miss India Persis Khambatta and Miss India Mehr Jessie.

Culinary delights warmly descend from the Tata Institute of Food Sciences & Technology at Hughes Road, Mumbai. With Jaguars and Nano dotting today's Indian roads, this writer still recalls his schoolmate Parsi friend's 'Chakachak' Cycles and Motor Bikes and that any Parsi owner's second hand car would sell like hot cakes!

Last but not the least, the most shining example of dynamic self respect is the classic Taj Mahal Hotel, one of the world's best and India's pride, which adorns the western coast of Mumbai. Only a brave hearted Indian businessman could have dared to venture in the business of star hospitality that was for ages considered to be the domain of the whites.

One can always happily recall the golden past and enjoy the shining present. However, thinking about the future, an Alarm Bell rings aloud raising concerns about the declining population of such a genetically cultured and disciplined community. Certainly it is time for the 'Elders' to guide the entire community in a suitable manner so that they prosper and with them India prospers.

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Point Counter Point (Cont'd. from page 21)

the debate. Those opposed to capital punishment *per se*, were a different category of critics of Government action. This group believes in the panacea of reformatory punishment and brooks no argument. Some argued that it was a politically motivated action to counter BJP's accusation that the Government was indulging in minority appeasement by not hanging Afzal Guru. That line of attack has been blunted. The Government faced criticism if it acted and worse if it did not.

process in J&K. The question was whether a politico-administrative problem should come in the way of judicial verdict; if the law of the land is applicable to J&K? If the people's wishes were to be made a factor in judicial matters, no local leader can be punished as it would disturb local peace. Peace in J&K is important but does the authority of the State mean nothing? It would be an invitation to chaos if the State buckles under the fear of opposition from entrenched groups. The unfortunate choice now is to bite the bullet and ride out the consequences of the hanging in J&K.

Readers are invited to email their points of view on serious issues of the day to ashokkarnik2001@yahoo.co.in. Readers who do not have the facility of a computer can also post (mail) their points of view on serious issues of the day to "Point Counter Point", c/o Freedom First, 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.

Event

Can We Afford Another Aruna Shanbaug?

On January 12 this year, Mahaprasthana Medi-ethics Foundation held its first public meeting to discuss the topic “Can we afford another Aruna Shanbaug?” This is a Report.

The event was significant for three reasons. First, it came on the heels of the unfortunate rape incident in Delhi that rocked the conscience of the entire country. Aruna Shanbaug had also been raped, and the rapist now continues to roam free, while Aruna Shanbaug has been ‘living’ a vegetative life at KEM Hospital Mumbai for the past 37 years.

Second, it threw into focus, once again, the issues that confront doctors, relatives and even the patient: does a patient have the right to decide whether a meaningless life is worth being sustained through artificial life-support systems?

Third, because through the discussion of the second issue, Mahaprasthana was reaffirming the continuation of the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity (SRDD), an institution that was started by the late Minoo Masani, some three decades ago.

After the felicitation of S. V. Raju, who had kept SRDD alive till the present managing committee took charge, discussions on the subject of the right to die with dignity began with Dr. Nagraj Huilgol, president, Mahaprasthana, talking about how the right to die with dignity was never alien to religion or to ethics.

Thereafter, R. N. Bhaskar, Hon. Secretary, spoke about how the right to live, also implied the right to decide how to live, and hence the right to decide how to die. He pointed out how the society had become a co-petitioner in a plea before the Supreme Court of India to make legal the Living Will (advance directive) and voluntary euthanasia. Bhaskar explained that the right to refuse treatment or an operation was part of individual liberty, which no relative or medical practitioner could take away.

What the Society was thus asking the court

to do is to allow the same right to be continued through a living will, explained Bhaskar. Such a will would direct relatives and medical practitioners not to keep the person on artificial life-support systems if – by any chance – the person was unable to communicate this decision later, either because of being comatose or any other ailment. He further stressed that a terminally ill person without hope of recovery, may be allowed to have a peaceful exit, if s/he so desires. Had such a living will been made legal, it was quite possible that Aruna Shanbaug would also have prepared such a will. That in turn would have prevented her from being kept alive – even in a state of indignity. In fact, the Supreme Court hinted at such a possibility by stating that unfortunately she had not even prepared a living will.

Active discussion which raised the question of ethics followed these talks. The speakers pointed out that, unlike the West, most countries in the Orient did not look at death as something to be shunned. Often death was looked at as another destination that the soul had to reach. Religions like Jainism extolled and even revered ‘*santhara*’ – voluntary death through the denial of food and water to oneself, and gradually allowing the passing away of the soul, once a person’s earthly responsibilities were considered to be done and over with. Hinduism too looked up to ‘*samadhi*’ – which was another word for giving up one’s breath. Similar beliefs could be found in most other Eastern cultures as well.

Some in the audience expressed fears that such a ‘living will’ could be misused, to which Dr. Surendra Dhelia, joint secretary, *Mahaprasthana*, explained that almost anything in the world could be misused. What mattered then was to frame rules to prevent its misuse, and not to prohibit such a logical right automatically emanating from the right to live. Eventually, almost everyone in the audience felt that

the concept should be further popularised – through more public interactions, so that fears about what it entailed could be dispelled.

The organisers of Mahaprasthana agreed with this suggestion, and resolved to have more public

meetings on this subject in the future.

Readers interest can contact Mr. R. N. Bhaskar, Hon. Secretary, Medi-Ethics Foundation at 3, Mahinder Chambers, W. T. Patil Marg, Chembur, Mumbai 400 071. Email: bhaskar.rn@gmail.com

Three Pillars of Liberal Democracy

Liam Fox

It is strange now to recall the jubilation with which the 'Arab Spring' was welcomed. Amid all the excitement of dictators toppling, many people here in the West, as well as some over there on the ground, forgot that the test of a revolution is not the overthrow of a tyrant, but what comes next.

Though they will never admit it, the Arab revolutions surprised western governments as much as the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe. History is always producing the unexpected, which is why some of us never took it for granted that all this would have a happy ending. Now, almost two years after the Tahrir Square uprising, the fates of the revolutions and the region are at a deadly junction.

The West's swift initial support for the Egyptian rebels was understandable. First, because of the fresh memory of our failure to back the Green reform movement in Iran. But second, because it is just so easy to imagine from a position of comfort that when a dictator falls, a democracy like our own will take its place. It seems so logical that people elsewhere would want the same liberal system which has made our own lives so materially and socially richer. Through our empire and its aftermath, Britain has been able to export ideas of democratic government, law and rights to the furthest reaches of the globe. It is easy to fall into the trap of simply assuming this is the direction in which history is going.

We should also remember how long it took us in the West to get it right. In Britain, some 150 years passed between the writings of Adam Smith and universal suffrage. Indeed, Britain abolished slavery a century or so before we gave women the vote. Given the choice, we were never willing to

expand our electoral franchise when we believed it would undermine our social or economic stability. Just opening a history book should give us some idea of how long this takes. It is not possible to upload democracy, in an instant, to countries that have no tradition of it.

It is essential that we understand that democracy is the last building block and not the first. Any liberal democracy needs three pillars of support. The first is rule of law, applied equally to the governing and the governed. The second is economic liberty, expressed through a free market. And finally comes the concept of rights which apply irrespective of gender, race or religion. Without this necessary architecture, democracy is simply a means of legitimising authoritarian rule. From Weimar Germany to present-day Gaza, the ballot box has often been used by those simply out to seize total power.

Egypt, for all its wealth and culture, has no democratic tradition. It has a judiciary that has only a partial independence, and little concept of universal rights — as you'd expect from a system already infiltrated by fundamentalist Islam. The cries of 'who lost Russia?' a decade ago missed an important point: Russia was never ours to win. It is not possible for any country to reshape the political culture of another. All that can be done is to offer support wherever good can be done.

Excerpted from *The Spectator* 15/22 December 2012.

Courtesy: *The Spectator*

Event

Unrest Amongst the Armed Forces

Ravindra Waman Pathak

Since 1947, there has been a constant downslide in the pay, pension and status of military personnel. The Indian Ex- Servicemen Movement [IESM] was formed in 2008 to take up the issues of One Rank One Pension [OROP], constitution of the National Commission for veterans, independent pay commission for Defence Services and parallel induction of retiring Service personnel into para-military forces. A seminar to discuss these and related issues was organised by Freedom First on 12 January 2013. This article is excerpted from the opening address by Commander Ravindra Pathak IN (Retd.)

It is for the Service Chiefs to tackle the problems of serving personnel. I will confine my comments to the issues faced by the veterans. In 1947, the pension of a colonel was equal to that of a secretary to the Government of India due to a ceiling on pensions of civilians. Since 1947, there has been a constant downslide in the pay, pension and status of military personnel. The Indian Ex-Servicemen Movement [IESM] was formed in 2008 to take up the issues of One Rank One Pension [OROP], constitution of the National Commission for veterans, independent pay commission for Defence Services and parallel induction of retiring Service personnel into para-military forces. It was realized that there was a need to also look into issues of incorrect payment of pension by banks, pension of JCOs and pension of widows.

Until the 3rd Central Pay Commission [CPC], the military enjoyed a pension of 75% of the last pay drawn while for the civilian employees, it was 35%. This advantage compensated for the harsh service conditions and early retirement, essential to keep the armed forces young. The 3rd CPC made it 50% for all.

The 4th CPC introduced 'Rank Pay' increasing with rank from Rs 400 to 1200 to be *added* to the existing basic pay. The bureaucrats deducted an amount equal to the rank pay from the defence officers basic pay and then added it as Rank Pay. Not only did this deprive defence officers of the increase granted by the CPC and approved by Parliament, but more disturbingly, lowered their **Basic** salary and therefore their status! Since entitlements are dependent on the basic pay, this lowering in

effect lowered their status / entitlements. It also adversely affected future enhancements during successive Pay Commissions. A court case against this manipulation was first won by Major Dhanapalan and then by the Retired Defence Officers Association [RDOA] after 26 years. The Government tried every legal trick available to delay justice and finally lost the case in September 2012 after 26 years but won a small battle by getting the Supreme Court to accept the change of effective date for payment of interest from 01.01.1986 to 01.01.2006. The Ministry of Defence [MOD] has given an affidavit to the SC that they needed extra 12 weeks for implementing the judgment as it involves three successive CPCs and calculation of arrears for pre-1986 retired personnel for leave encashment, and gratuity. The plea further goes on to state that "MOD is committed to the implementation of the order".

On 27 December the MOD issued orders that do not follow the spirit of the judgment nor its own affidavit in the Supreme Court. The government, once again, demonstrated its manipulative ways which has angered the veterans, and serving people too.

After the Sixth Pay Commission Award, the Service Chiefs have pointed out 39 anomalies in the award and its implementation. Of the 3,000 cases fought by veterans in the first year of the formation of AFT, as many as 2,600 have gone in favour of the veterans and yet the Government has not implemented even one judgment of the AFT. Here I would like to state that the Government has again created an institution for the veterans which is a toothless tiger as, unlike the High court, which the AFT replaces, the AFT has no powers to enforce

its decision.

Concept of One Rank One Pension

OROP means that pension for any rank should be independent of the date of retirement. It was first recommended by the Congress Government-appointed Committee under Brig K P Singhdeo who was Minister of Defence Production in 1986. The successive governments and extra-constitutional individuals make promises to OROP just before or during elections but do not implement them. The present Defence Committee headed by Koshiyari has stated that “it is distressed to note, that the defence personnel of our country have returned their service medals to the President of India because of the Government’s apathetic attitude towards them. The Committee felt that such alienation should not recur and their legitimate and fair demand of OROP be accepted”. It is amazing that to study the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on OROP, a committee of bureaucrats was appointed.

Medical Facility

The Ex-Servicemen *Contributory Health Scheme* (ECHS) was instituted by the Government in accordance with the extremely old covenant between the State and its soldiers wherein the State undertakes to attend to their medical needs. *Incidentally in an affidavit to the Supreme Court, the MOD has termed ECHS to be a welfare measure. How conveniently the government has ignored the covenant!* In 1996 the government notified that free medical treatment to retired defence personnel will be discontinued and they were asked to make a one-time payment under ECHS. In any case the Supreme Court has not accepted the stand of the Government since it allowed all pre-1997 veterans to join free. The Government has conveniently decided not to refund the amount paid by the veterans of pre-1997 vintage who joined by paying, calling this extortion as voluntary.

Before this scheme was implemented, the veterans and their families were provided medical services in military hospitals. The military hospitals being overloaded with the increase in the number of veterans, this scheme was devised to continue providing the same quality of service. The scheme,

after 10 years, is in shambles and is currently facing many critical problems especially due to non-commissioning of 50% new polyclinics, lack of cashless treatment, overdue payment of bills to hospitals on the panel, lack of funding by the Government and the low number of cases being treated.

Non Implementation of Subramaniam Committee Report:

Recommendations of Subramaniam Committee appointed after the Kargil War have not been implemented. Two important recommendations are appointment of Chief of Defence Staff [CDS] and restructuring of MOD.

Re-employment of Defence Personnel

Defence personnel retire early to keep the armed forces profile young. There is scope to employ them in para-military forces or PSUs. This group of skilled and highly motivated group is being wasted.

Non- implementation of Judicial Orders

The Government has been indulging in high handed behaviour by ignoring judicial orders. They persistently challenge all orders and when orders are issued, they have anomalies which require fresh litigation. A limited life span, failing health and shortage of funds preclude a veteran’s sustained court battle.

Other Issues

No action has been taken by the Government on constituting an armed forces commission, voting rights at their place of residence and non-implementation of judicial orders. There should be a separate Pay Commission for the armed forces. Pension Payment Order (PPO) required to be issued following any changes in the Pension structure has not been issued. The Banks (Pension Disbursing Authority) have been paying the pension on their own calculations. A large number of mostly rural veterans and widows are losing out.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Chanakya,

“My Lord, the day when the Mauryan soldier has to demand his dues or, worse, plead for

them, will be a sad day and will point to multiple and multi-level failures in the governance machinery in Magadha. The day will neither have arrived suddenly, overnight nor in vain. It will also bode ill for Magadha for then, on that day, you, My Lord, will have lost all moral sanction to be King! It will also mark the beginning of the end of the Mauryan Empire”.

CDR RAVINDRA W PATHAK (Retd). Indian Navy. Member Governing Body and Pension Cel IESM

Open House Discussion

To a query from Mr Sahney, former Police Commissioner Mumbai, Commander Pathak clarified that fixation of pension has been left to the banks who work on the basis of a Government letter. The bank staff is not familiar with this work and make mistakes. Further, veterans living in rural areas are not aware of the changes in the pension. It should be the responsibility of the paying authority to ensure correct payment.

Colonel Ravindra Joshi raised the issue of liability of the Government for fair conditions of

employment. There was no legal liability other than specified in various Army Instructions.

Vice Admiral Rao, PVSM, AVSM, former Chief of Materials, (who Chaired the Seminar) suggested that it would be more advantageous not to have a separate Pay Commission for the Defence Services. Instead, let us be equated with IPS and with some add-ons to be authorized for special conditions of military service.

Commander Pathak took note of Supreme Court advocate, Mr. N. K. Dhondy’s opinion that non-implementation of the judgments of the AFT should attract contempt proceedings.

Brig. Thyagarajan suggested that retired personnel should be invited to participate in the discussions on pensions as is done by the Railways and other departments of civilian employees

We acknowledge with thanks Brig. Suresh Sharma’s assistance in excerpting this text from the Inaugural address by Cdr. Pathak and for the ‘Open House Discussion’ highlighting some issues that came up for discussion.

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Bernard Levin

The Journalist *Par Excellence*

B. M. N. Murthy

“He was one of the few journalists in the world who understood the magic that lies in Words. He could play on them. Levin’s journalism was literature combined with his addiction to play on words.”

When some one asked Bernard Levin what was the secret of his success as a journalist and what accounted for his wide range of reading, he retorted “the pleasures of reading are innocent, inexhaustible, incomparable, incalculable and infinite”. That one short sentence, uttered extempore, is enough to describe Bernard Levin as a man of letters. No doubt, the famous jurist Mr. N. A. Palkhivala once described Levin as the “Journalists’ Journalist”. Name any popular newspaper or journal or news agency in England in the twentieth century - be it *The Times*, *The Daily Express*, the B.B.C., *Daily Mail*, *Sunday Times*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian* - Levin was associated with every one of them in writing in some form or the other. The beauty of his language ensured that he had an audience far beyond the border of Britain. Levin was a legend in his time.

Levin was born in London in 1928 as the only son in a Jewish family that had migrated to London from Lithuania about two hundred years back. His father was a tailor by profession. After his preliminary education, Levin joined the London School of Economics and studied there for four years between 1948 and 1952. He became a skilled debater and writing regularly for the student newspaper on a variety of subjects became his passion. Having graduated from LSE in 1952, he joined the Liberal weekly periodical *Truth*. Even while he was with the *Truth* he was invited to write a column in the *Manchester Guardian*. In 1956, he left *Truth*, joined the *Spectator* where he wrote regularly on a variety of subjects. Alongside his work for the *Spectator*, Levin was the drama critic of the *Daily Express*. In 1962, he joined the *Daily Express* and 8 years later, in 1970, he joined *The Times* [London] where he worked for almost 28 years till 1998.

Levin’s brief at *The Times* was to write two or three columns a week on any subject of his choice. His range



(1928-2004)

of topics was prodigious. His articles - sometimes racy diatribes and sometimes classical essays - were satirical, humorous, scathing and anti-establishment. His targets were dictators, people against democracy, Tory politicians, several professionals etc. In general, he took up topics which needed social justice and social correction for the onward march of the society. At the *Daily Mail*, Levin had been restricted to 600 words per article. However, when he joined *The Times*, he had the liberty to spread himself.

At one time, he appeared in the Guinness Book of World Records for one single long sentence consisting of 1,667 words, ever to appear in a newspaper.

Levin was a great lover of Shakespeare. It is said the he knew all the 36 plays of the Bard so well that he could quote from any of them to suit the occasion. Probably there was no writing of Levin which did not carry a quotation from Shakespeare. Besides his knowledge of Shakespeare, his love of English literature was reflected in many of his works. Amongst his best known pieces is a long paragraph which he wrote about the influence of Shakespeare on everyday discourse. It begins:

“If you cannot understand by argument and declare ‘it is Greek and Latin to me’, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be ‘more sinned against than sinning’, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall ‘your Salad days’, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you ‘act more in anger than in sorrow’, if ‘your wish is father to the thought’, if your ‘property has vanished into thin air’, you are quoting Shakespeare again” (this piece, on continuation contains a further 55 phrases from Shakespeare in regular conversation).

In spite of his having been a journalist involved with serious issues, Levin had a ready sense of wit. Sometime in 1993 he went to Cochin on a visit

to the Malayala Manorama Newspaper Group. He was taken to the Periyar Game Sanctuary accompanied by a local journalist. He was keen on seeing an elephant in the sanctuary but to his bad luck on that day, he could not spot even a single elephant, despite three rounds around the lake, much to the disappointment of his host. However, he consoled his Keralite journalist "Never mind. Next time when I come to Kerala, I shall bring an elephant from the London zoo"

Levin was a great friend of India since by nature he was one of the most redoubtable champions of human rights and human freedom. It was his firm belief that man's unconquerable mind will always crave and hunger for freedom - despite all the deficiencies and inefficiencies of the democratic system - in preference to the monolithic state. He always maintained that it is the spirit of liberty that will always be the Eternal Flame. Naturally he was drawn to India and became close to some liberal thinkers like Jayaprakash Narayan, Rajaji, Minoo Masani. During the Emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi between 1975 and 1977, he wrote powerful pieces in *The Times* which awakened the consciousness of the world against the tyranny inflicted on the Indian people.

He was one of the few journalists in the world who understood the magic that lies in words. He could play on them. Levin's journalism was literature combined with his addiction to play on words. He could either be very brief in expressing an idea or if he chose, he could be fairly long in the construction of sentences to express the same idea.

The following piece which he wrote on India during the Parliamentary Elections of 1977 is illustrative of his power and command on words.

"With the imposition of Emergency in India in 1975, the popular anti-congress movement led by Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and the anti-Emergency wave in 1977 which swept over the country resulted in the routing of the Congress Party and a landslide victory for the Janata Party, during the Parliamentary Elections held in March 1977.

It was the most significant in the history of India.

India voted in a manner which put ancient and sophisticated democracies into shame. The electorate's verdict has once again proved that to the soul of India, sacrifice appeals more than success. The returned candidates were mostly those who had suffered and sacrificed for the good of the country. Naturally '*the illiterate intelligence of the masses*' brought about a result which '*the educated incapacity of the intelligence*' could not see".

Even at the height of his power as an uncrowned king of journalism for over 25 years, Levin always distinguished himself by two powerful virtues – his simplicity and his humility. When he joined *The Times* in London in 1971, among the perquisites of *The Times* were a company car and a large and well furnished office at the Paper's building in Printing House Square, London. Levin accepted neither. He could not drive. He hated to be isolated. He commanded a desk to be put in an anteroom to the editor's office, a location that kept him in close touch with the daily affairs of the paper. Incidentally, it gave him ready access to the editor.

A painfully shy individual, he was modest about his own talents. "I am a journalist because I have no talent for any other job" he said, "I am not exaggerating.. I couldn't teach, I couldn't paint, I couldn't compose, I couldn't be a businessman. The only possible exception was the bar. Otherwise I am totally useless".

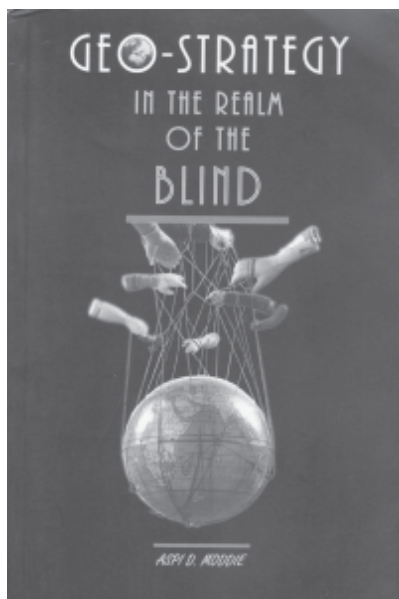
This living force of his pen, active and vibrant for nearly three decades, vanished into thin air (to quote Shakespeare on 7th August 2004 at the age of 75. Levin had been ill with Alzheimer's for many years. A memorial service was held at the Church of St.Martin in London at which Sir David Frost delivered the eulogy, describing Levin as a "faithful crusader for tolerance and against injustice who had declared 'the pen is mightier than the sword – and much easier to write with'".

Mr. B. M. N. Murthy is a retired Chief Engineer, Life Insurance Corporation of India. After his retirement Mr. Murthy has devoted his time to inform "the younger generation of the spiritual wisdom of India, reminding them of the great traditional lineage to which we all belong". Email: bmnmurty@gmail.com

A Correction

We thank Brig. Gautam Narain for drawing our attention to an error in the article 'A Forgotten Tale of Heroism' by Brig. Suresh C. Sharma (retd.) (*Freedom First* No.546, December 2012). The sentence "Gen.Daulet Singh called Lt.Col. Gurbachan Singh of *Electrical Mechanical Engineers* and told him to to arrange the airlift of tanks." should read "Gen.Daulet Singh called Lt.Col. Gurbachan Singh, *Commandant 20 Lancers* and told him to to arrange the airlift of tanks." The error is sincerely regretted. - Editor.

BOOK REVIEW



GEO-STRATEGY IN THE REALM OF THE BLIND by A. D. Moddie ♦ Published by the Author ♦ 2012 ♦ Pages 147 ♦ Rs.400 (inclusive of packing and postage). A very limited number of copies are available with ICCF, 3rd floor Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001. Cheques to be drawn in favour of ICCF. Money Orders also accepted. While remitting by cheque or money order please mention that the payment is for this book by Mr. Moddie.

Reviewed by Brig. Suresh C. Sharma (Retd.), Advisor to the telecom industry, freelance writer, member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: brigscs@gmail.com

Strategy is a response to threats which may be internal, from other States or environment or from any other source. The author is

surprised at the lack of a strategic mind in the Indian leadership from ancient to modern days. A nation needs to have a stable political system and good relations with neighbouring and buffer States for trade to flourish. India suffered from a sense of isolation with the Himalayas in the north and the sea in the south. He blames the caste system and endless fights amongst the various States for the success of invaders. The ancient societies of Greece and Rome had condemned a large section of population to slavery which was much worse than the caste system. The Moors were also able to establish their kingdom in Europe due to the internal fights amongst neighbouring States. With help from Jaichand, Mohammad Ghorī defeated Prithviraj Chauhan. The Mughals and the British could establish empires with the support of Indian States which were constantly at war with each other. Our fault is that the caste system continues to persist while the Western societies have abolished the slave system. We have not evolved and adjusted to new challenges.

He rightly blames Nehru for the lack of realism in adopting the policy of non-alignment, lack of military preparedness and referring the Kashmir issue to the UN. Nor did he take any action against corrupt politicians - a bane for the country today. His socialist policies led to a meagre 3% growth in GDP and mounting debts. Vajpayee fared no better when he ordered deployment of the Army under Operation Parakram. When the Army Chief asked him the objective of the move, he said "Will tell you later." The ruling classes are busy creating self-flattering international impressions, completely unrelated to India's

needs. This was evident in the deployment of the Indian Army in Sri Lanka. In the Kargil War, the Government was happy to get a patronizing nod from the USA by not crossing the LOC and ignoring the military imperatives of India. In a seminar, I was surprised to hear from a Government financed Think Tank advocating Nehru's non-alignment policy even today.

We have to develop a strategy and a pragmatic foreign policy to suit globalization and find a rightful place in the Asia-Pacific region, Central Asia and the Indian Ocean with a strong intelligence service capable of monitoring both external and internal intelligence without interfering in domestic politics. Plea for reconciliation with Pakistan ignores ground reality. The author has pointed out the singularly turbulent history of Pakistan and its obsession with strategic depth. This concept has brought ruin to Afghanistan and terror strikes in Pakistan. Peaceful relations with Pakistan are unlikely in the immediate future, however, desirable they may be for peace and progress in South Asia. On the other hand, it may be possible to achieve a practical solution to the border issue with China who had expressed, through a third channel, the willingness to bargain Aksai Chin against Arunachal. A settlement of border dispute with China will weaken Pakistan's belligerence. He has pointed out the weakness of the organization of the Ministry of Defence and the poor performance of the Defence Research and Development Organization [DRDO], whose budget is half of Pakistan's defence budget. DRDO's achievements have been far from satisfactory. To top it, no equipment can be imported or collaboration with a foreign company forged without their approval. A research body has degenerated into a regulatory authority. Brian Choughley, author of the History of the Pakistan Army, has commented that Pakistan has nothing to fear as long as the Indian Armed Forces are dependent on the DRDO for their arms and equipment.

China is certainly hostile and is increasing its military presence in the Indian Ocean besides supporting

Pakistan. He has recommended the omni-directional peaceful strategy of Japan which he thinks may act as a balancing force. This peaceful strategy may not survive the Chinese claims in the Pacific for mineral wealth. Already there are hints of a military solution. Taliban emerging as a ruling party in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces may be a serious challenge to India's security. No solution has been suggested.

China has a huge infra-structure whose viability is in doubt and for whom climatic changes may have catastrophic consequences. The pollution of rivers due to industrial waste, against which there have been a few demonstrations, may spell a disaster. India has a weak government but democracy and the people are gaining strength.

The chapter on nuclear weapons emphasizes that these weapons are obsolete. That may be so but the policy of nuclear deterrence is valid. Surprisingly, US Defence Secretary McNamara had expressed similar views and commented that he spent sleepless nights thinking about nuclear strikes till he realized that these weapons would never be used. Russian leaders agreed with this view which led to some détente. This does not apply to Pakistan or non-state groups who may act irrationally.

The wars today are based on ethnicity and religion. Afghanistan-Pakistan region is the most dangerous place created by Wahabism. Both the superpowers and China have supported these elements. There is thus no effective international instrument for peace. The book records surprising details of Israel- Palestine inter-dependence based on corruption in public affairs. Arafat had an account in Tel Aviv and had invested in a casino called Oasis. The military and the intelligence agencies try to look for certainty at short intervals. It is difficult due to global communications, terrorist groups, climatic changes and use of non-state groups by states. The CIA and Indian Intelligence agencies have quite a few failures in their work.

Failing Nation States and weak international institutions are incapable of solving the problems of security due to depleting mineral resources, internal turmoil and climatic changes. He recommends Toffler's suggestions. These steps, which look utopian, are renewable energy resources, diversified technological base of information and lastly a less exploitative civilization. The next hundred years will witness a clash of civilizations, gender equality, and shift of power from the Atlantic to the Pacific and attempts to establish a Caliphate. The book discusses the strategists of the future which would forge pragmatic social healing.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

It can be strongly and plausibly argued that the gender crimes stalking the country – highlighted by the vicious rape on December 16 in Delhi of the braveheart 23-year-old physiotherapy intern and her subsequent death in Singapore on December 29 – have a direct connection with the persistent neglect of early childhood education in post-independence India.

Although informed opinion within the communities of neurosciences and brain researchers is near unanimous that children's brains are almost fully developed by age eight, early childhood education (ECE) has remained an area of darkness for Indian educators and academics in the country's 611 intellectually backward universities. Ditto the omniscient pundits of the Delhi-based Planning Commission who have been entrusted with the task of centrally planning the orderly growth and development of the Indian economy.

In particular, the sins of the Planning Commission inspired by the Soviet model in the first rush of blood after the nation attained independence from British rule in 1947 (and of the political class across the spectrum persisting with Central planning), are manifold. Not only did it fail to sufficiently provide for the world's first national birth control (family planning) programme as a result of which independent India's population tripled from 350

million in 1950 to 1.2 billion currently, it has compounded this failure by not allocating sufficient resources for elementary education and literacy.

While the global average for allocation of resources for education is 5 percent of GDP and developed industrial nations routinely invest 6-7 percent, in post-independence India the national outlay (Centre plus states) has never crossed 4 percent per annum. Even of these meagre annual allocations for education which is a defining feature of India's pusillanimous national development effort, an average 30 percent is spent on excessively subsidised higher education. Consequently 65 years later, almost 30 percent – over 300 million Indians – are comprehensively illiterate and another 50 percent quasi-literate. Ironically, sustained under-investment in elementary education has not only torpedoed the national family planning programme (because literacy and economic development are the best contraceptives) but has also lumbered the nation with the world's largest cohorts of under-employed and unemployable youth and adults who are incrementally taking to crime.

DILIP THAKORE, Editor, *Education World*. Excerpted from is report on the 3rd ECE Global held in Bangalore Conference on January 11 organised by *Education World*. Courtesy: *Education World*.

Educating Adults

The Right to Education Act (9)

This is ninth in a series, examining the various aspects of the Right to Education Act (RTE) Act

No Corporal Punishment

Suresh C. Sharma

Children should be punished only after obtaining approval from the parents. Some parents may even agree to corporate punishment. Should it be accepted?

Punishment is regarded normal in schools and families, often even considered necessary for children to grow into responsible individuals. It is so pervasive that a child does not realize that his rights are being impinged upon. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a common saying. It is now well recognized that punishment in any form harms the overall development of a child. Corporal punishment leads a child to behave aggressively towards peers and siblings. As adults they are likely to mete out similar treatment to their children. The cycle keeps repeating itself. Corporal punishment leads to adverse psychological consequences.

Provisions of the RTE Act

The RTE Act prohibits all forms of physical and mental violence. This is in keeping with the practice the world over. For the purpose of the Act, corporal punishment is considered as any action that causes pain, hurt, injury or discomfort to a child. It includes hitting, pinching, pulling hair and making children stand in a corner or face the wall. Mental harassment is defined as scolding, sarcasm, using derogatory remarks or ridiculing a child. Disciplinary action under service rules can be taken against teachers who violate these rules. There is no clarity on what disciplinary action can be taken. A committee has recommended that provisions of the Indian Penal Code [IPC] be invoked to punish teachers who inflict injury or harassment.

Some of the practices of punishment today are

shocking. A boy lost his eyes. This is not discipline but torture. La Martinier school woke up only after a student committed suicide. A teacher cut the hair of a girl as punishment. A survey of 150 teachers revealed that all of them resorted to corporal punishment, hitting by rulers or throwing chalk. There are reports of children being forced to drink urine. Besides humiliation this practice is harmful to health. One student was beaten up so harshly in Beed that he succumbed to his injuries. A boy was punished by three teachers for chewing tobacco. Why did it take three teachers to beat one student? A teacher in Hyderabad forced a 15 year old student to do 300 sit ups for quarreling with a class fellow. He developed high fever and died of brain hemorrhage nine days later in a hospital. 400 students in Government school in Delhi complained against severe punishment and no teaching. A principal of a college in Mumbai said that there was no harm in minor punishments such as not allowing games period or make them do two rounds of the school.

Prevalence of Corporal Punishment

The National and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights [NCPCR and STPCR] are required to monitor the implementation of RTE Act. They carried out survey of 6632 children in 7 states. Derisive words were used against children in the 3 to 5 years age group. More than 65% were beaten by canes and 60% slapped. Punishment included prohibiting children from using toilets. Punishment by hitting students occurred less in private schools. Bihar



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State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has recommended that children should be punished only after obtaining approval from the parents. Some parents may even agree to corporal punishment. Should it be accepted?

In short, corporal punishment is widely prevalent. The Act recommends disciplinary action against guilty teachers but does not specify what action is to be taken. The suggestion of cancelling recognition raises the issue of opening new schools. Filing cases in courts under various sections of the IPC is not pragmatic due to the large number of likely cases and delays. Besides, the villages and small towns have no courts. Frequent attendance at court is a punishment to parents as well. It was noticed that only 3% children reported to their parents and 80% parents did not complain for fear of victimization. School principals believe that unless parents complain about such problems, there's nothing they can do to help. There have been some cases in the past where parents have made up such complaints just to get back at a teacher, so there is a need for proper inquiry before taking any action. The obvious remedy is to sensitize the teachers and provide

guidance to them. At present the teachers lack the ability to handle difficult and unruly children. Students not completing home work or showing lack of assimilation may need special attention.

As far as enforcement of discipline is concerned, the NCPCR recommends referring lapses of discipline or non-completion of home work to parents. Recently, a 17 year old boy whose conduct had been conveyed to his parents stabbed the lady teacher several times till she fell dead. The parents should be advised to check report cards regularly and take interest in keeping in touch with the school authorities. Employing counselors is just not possible in the villages. We should not evolve a regime where teachers lose interest in the progress of students. Improvement requires a massive investment in improving the quality of teachers and a martial system of assessment. At this stage we can only gradually move towards a "no-punishment" system.

Brig. Suresh C. Sharma (Retd.) Advisor to the telecom industry, a freelance writer and a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*. Email: brigscs@gmail.com

My Grandma

Except for a few all have known what grandparents are made of. Growing up under my grandma's watchful eyes were the days of snacks, and stories a constant companion. Who else but grandma could dare to say- STOP! Even to the worldly pressure- Exams!! And pointed out that sleep, fun and games were equally important.



But it ended the day my grandma had a paralytic stroke. I was taken aback, her ill health meant no more fun days. It would be all medicine, food timings, doctors and visitors. But as the days went by we all took our time out to be with her, trying never to leave her alone at any moment of time!

It came as a shock when she was diagnosed as an Alzheimer patient. Till then I had not known the seriousness of the sickness. Only today I am aware of what the people suffering from this disease have to endure. My heart goes out to all those who are suffering from it, for it can be quite an ordeal for the patient and the care taker as well. Though recovering partly has reduced the tension of an emergency.

Alzheimer patient yet was my grandma. Loss of memory due to Alzheimer - did not mean I too could choose to forget that today she is old and needed my mother and me to look after her. It was my turn to give time to grandma now!

As I sit with her holding her hand so soft and wrinkled, I can't help but remember the days when she would cook some quick snack for me when I was hungry, or given an assignment of weaving a sweater and would help me to do my craft work- submission in time.

Yes! These were the same hands. And today I feel good that I'm giving my grandma the love and help her to walk and go about. My heart always warms up when I think about the special relation between us.

Each one of us of this new generation who have their grandparents can have this treasured relationship which is so special. All that we need to do is to say that "WE CARE" And go ahead and be with them now!

Mithila Naik-Satam, First Year Arts, SIES College, Mumbai. shylaja2212@gmail.com

Rejuvenation Camp for Temple Elephants in Tamil Nadu: Pleasure or Torture?

N. S. Venkataraman

*One would not know whether we are helping animals by giving them a few days freedom.
It is perhaps similar to the prisoner being released on parole.*

The Tamil Nadu Government, at the cost of the tax payers, is spending several lakhs of rupees every year in conducting 48 days rejuvenation camp for temple elephants in the State. It is not possible to know the views of speechless elephants which have been forced to take part in the rejuvenation camp, as to whether they need such camps or they feel that they are compelled to attend the camps against their will. People are watching with curiosity the giant animals being forced to enter the camp and then being brought back to the temples to “do their duty” and many people wonder whether the efforts are worthwhile.

Trapped elephants

The lives of temple elephants are filled with stress, boredom, isolation, physical pain and psychological suffering. The elephant calves are trapped in clandestine operations by unscrupulous poachers and sold, with forged certification, to elephant owners and thus become captive animals. These animals are then trained using cruel techniques to become temple elephants.

Animals always like to remain free with liberty to move together and stroll wherever they want. When they are brought for temple duties, obviously such free living opportunities are denied to them. Such elephants in captivity often survive in harsh conditions. The elephants are plagued by foot sores, dehydration and are prone to injury and illness. These working elephants have no permanent resting place and are often made to work continuously for 12 to 14 hours each day.

Good intention and flawed method

We see photographs in the media of the elephants being forced to enter into the open trucks for transporting them to the camp site. Sometimes, the elephants are so adamant that the government staff has no alternative other than leaving them and denying them ‘the rejoice of camp living’.

Perhaps, the Tamil Nadu government thinks that

the temple elephants would get freedom at least for a few days by taking them to the camps. Instead of helping them, probably such camps only make them realize that freedom is be short lived and they would certainly feel sad when they are be brought back to the temple. One would not know whether we are helping animals by giving them a few days freedom. It is perhaps similar to the prisoner being released on parole.

Death of elephant Bhavani

It is extremely sad to read about the death of 57 year old elephant, Bhavani, of Rameshwaram temple, at the camp site near Mettupalayam, Coimbatore. The death has brought to the fore the stress that these gentle animals are often subjected to. Barely hours before the rejuvenation camp began, 57-year old Bhavani died at the camp site in Mettupalayam after more than 13 hours of travel. She was transported after local veterinarians had examined her and certified that she was fit to travel. On arrival at the camp site, the elephant was weighed and veterinarians examined her and prescribed a food chart.

Around 5.30 p.m., the elephant got into the river where she was drinking water in a kneeling position. She remained in the position for more than two hours. Mahouts initially thought that the elephant was enjoying her dip in the water. When she failed to get up, veterinarians and officials thought that something was wrong. It was ascertained that the aged and exhausted elephant was unable to get up. Subsequently, she fell on her side in an awkward position complicating efforts to rescue her. Bhavani, who had consumed lot of water, was lifted out of the river with the help of a crane. Later, she was brought to the Forest Department’s timber depot and marathon efforts by veterinarians to revive her went in vain. The elephant died in the small hours and was taken to Rameswaram for burial near the temple.

N. S. VENKATARAMAN, Trustee, Nandini Voice of the Deprived, Chennai, Email: nsventakchennai@gmail.com

India Vs. China Vs. Egypt

Thomas L. Friedman

February 5, 2013 - New Delhi – It's hard to escape a visit to India without someone asking you to compare it to China. This visit was no exception, but I think it's more revealing to widen the aperture and compare India, China and Egypt. *India has a weak central government but a really strong civil society, bubbling with elections and associations at every level. China has a muscular central government but a weak civil society, yet one that is clearly straining to express itself more. Egypt, alas, has a weak government and a very weak civil society, one that was suppressed for 50 years, denied real elections and, therefore, is easy prey to have its revolution diverted by the one group that could organize, the Muslim Brotherhood, in the one free space, the mosque. But there is one thing all three have in common: gigantic youth bulges under the age of 30, increasingly connected by technology but very unevenly educated.*

My view: Of these three, the one that will thrive the most in the 21st century will be the one that is most successful at converting its youth bulge into a “demographic dividend” that keeps paying off every decade, as opposed to a “demographic bomb” that keeps going off every decade. That will be the society that provides more of its youth with the education, jobs and voice they seek to realize their full potential. This race is about “who can enable and inspire more of its youth to help build broad societal prosperity,” argues Dov Seidman, the author of “How” and C.E.O. of LRN, which has an operating center in India. “And that's all about leaders, parents and teachers creating environments where young people can be on a quest, not just for a job, but for a career — for a better life that doesn't just surpass but far surpasses their parents.” Countries that fail to do that will have a youth bulge that is not only unemployed, but unemployable, he argued. “They will be disconnected in a connected world, despairing as they watch others build and realize their potential and curiosity.”

If your country has either a strong government or a strong civil society, it has the ability to rise to this challenge. If it has neither, it will have real problems, which is why Egypt is struggling. China leads in providing its youth bulge with education, infrastructure and jobs, but lags in unleashing freedom and curiosity. India is the most intriguing case — if it can get its governance and corruption

under control. The quest for upward mobility here, especially among women and girls, is palpable. I took part in the graduation ceremony for The Energy and Resources Institute last week. Of 12 awards for the top students, 11 went to women.

“India today has 560 million young people under the age of 25 and 225 million between the ages of 10 and 19,” explained Shashi Tharoor, India's minister of state for human resource development. “So for the next 40 years we should have a youthful working-age population” at a time when China and the broad industrialized world is aging. According to Tharoor, the average age in China today is around 38, whereas in India it's around 28. In 20 years, that gap will be much larger. So this could be a huge demographic dividend — “provided that we can educate our youth — offering vocational training to some and university to others to equip them to take advantage of what the 21st-century global economy offers,” said Tharoor. “If we get it right, India becomes the workhorse of the world. If we get it wrong, there is nothing worse than unemployable, frustrated” youth.

Indeed, some of India's disaffected youth are turning to Maoism in rural areas. “We have Maoists among our tribal populations, who have not benefited from the opportunities of modern India,” Tharoor said. There have been violent Maoist incidents in 165 of India's 625 districts in recent years, as Maoists tap into all those left out of the “Indian dream.” So there is now a huge push here to lure poor kids into school. India runs the world's biggest midday lunch program, serving 250 million free school lunches each day. It's also doubled its number of Indian Institutes of Technology, from eight to 16, and is planning 14 new universities for innovation and research.

Excerpted from the *New York Times* of 6 February 2013. Contributed by Col. T. S. Tanwar (retd.)

We set up our own power plants, we set up our own mines, we set up our own roads, ports, airports. I don't think there's anything left for the government except to interfere.”

Ravi Uppal, Chief Executive, JPSSL, (Jindal Steel & Power Ltd), *The Indian Express*, February 18, 2013.

Where is India Heading ?

Freedom First has been endeavouring since long to perform the unpleasant but necessary task of drawing attention to the totalitarian trends developing in the country. They have been developing rapidly during the last year or so and have manifested themselves noticeably both in the handling of our foreign affairs as well as in the thinking over our economic problems.

Freedom First and a few other journals have from time to time invited public attention to the specific manifestations of the trend and urged a reconsideration of the policies underlying them. Theirs has, however, been to a large extent a lone voice which did not get the attention it deserved. It was ignored by many as the voice of Cassandra.

It appears, however, that the doubts and fears which were expressed by *Freedom First* and a few other journals are also being felt in more influential quarters. *The Times of India* ...in an editorial on February 14 entitled "Where is India Heading" commenting on the proceedings of the Amritsar session of the Congress writes: "Apart from the linguistic issue a common thread of thought appeared to run consistently through the utterances and proceedings at Amritsar giving the appearance of a monolithic party preparing to impose a monolithic society on the State."

After referring to Mr. Dhebar's advice to

Congressmen to try to understand the methods adopted by the communists for creating the tempo for stepping up production, the editorial says: "In their anxiety to follow what is supposedly good in communist methods while eschewing the bad, a time may come when such differentiation grows increasingly difficult and leads to a merging of one society with the other and warns: "That is how Europe's Iron Curtain countries, the allegedly democratic republics, have come into being, and that is where India might find itself before its people and politicians know quite where they are going.

The editorial then comments on the effects of the Congress and Government policies on the private sector. One need not agree with that comment in order to share the apprehension in the observation that follows: The observation is: "The point is whether in the cloak of an avowedly socialistic pattern of society the country is not being driven along totalitarian paths to totalitarian targets. Mr. Nehru has only to mutter a *mantra* for the Congress cohorts to echo it. That certainly is not the way of democracy..."

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