

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



Anarchist?
Or just a plain, old-fashioned,
opportunist?

Freedom First believes in an open society based on minimum government and maximum freedom tempered by a sense of individual responsibility, in which the people's genius has a fair opportunity to develop and grow; we reject any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

The Paradox of Jawaharlal Nehru

G. F. Hudson

The events in Egypt and Hungary (1956) have brought into focus as an issue in Indian politics the “double standard” which Nehru has long maintained in his judgments on world affairs as between the Western powers and the states of the Sino-Soviet bloc. After the Indian delegation to the United Nations had abstained from voting on the resolution passed by the Assembly (November 4) calling for a cessation of Soviet military intervention in Hungary, and the executive of the Congress party under Nehru’s direction had adopted a resolution strongly condemning the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt but referring to the Soviet action with only the mildest expression of regret, Jayaprakash Narayan, the former Socialist leader who has now retired from active politics but remains a highly respected and influential personality in Indian affairs, directed against the Prime Minister what was perhaps the most damaging attack made on him since India became independent.

Narayan was particularly scathing about the statement reported to have been made to a correspondent by Krishna Menon, that the events in Hungary were a “domestic affair” of that country. It is as yet too early to gauge how much effect such criticism may have, but there is evidence of serious dissatisfaction in Indian political circles with the strange foreign policy partnership of Nehru and Krishna Menon which has kept “neutral” and “uncommitted” India leaning so persistently to the Communist side through a series of international conflicts.

How does this state of affairs arise in a country which is governed by a powerful non-Communist party which is in no way dependent on local Communist support in domestic politics, and has no obvious reason to align itself with the Soviet bloc in world affairs? ...

In India there is no continuity between the diplomacy of the Indian kingdoms which existed before the supremacy of the British Raj and the foreign policy of the new nation which began in 1947. Everything has had to be improvised and worked out from the beginning; in this respect India could benefit far less from the British heritage than in the sphere of internal civil administration, for the Indian civil service was an organization adapted to Indian conditions, whereas the “External Affairs Department” of the Government of India could hardly be more than a branch of the Foreign Office in London. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Indian foreign policy in the first nine years of its existence should be characterized by a certain doctrinaire quality, an

addiction to abstract principles not yet modified by experience and knowledge of the outer world...

In one of his talks with the French journalist Tibor Mende which have recently been published under the title of *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, Nehru said in recollection of his own conversion by Gandhi:

“... I was simply bowled over by Gandhi, straight off... It was a new revolutionary force in action. All this, of course, had an overpowering effect on us. We saw this great movement, were part of it, were swept by it and we pushed it ahead. At that time there were no doubts in our minds about its complete efficacy; the doubts arose later and we resolved or left them unresolved from time to time.”

A basic inability to comprehend the nature of Communist power is evident in Nehru’s benevolently tolerant attitude toward Communist regimes in contrast to the severity of his criticisms of Western nations. Thus in one of his conversations with Mende he is recorded as saying: “I do not like the techniques adopted by the Communist party. That again means I would not like to have it in my country. But who am I to say what in a particular set of circumstances - another country does? I am not competent, and anyhow I cannot interfere. So I put up with it... my objecting to what they do necessarily would lead to their objecting to what I do. Now I do not want their interference and I do not wish to interfere with them, or with any other country for that matter.”

This line of non-interference, even by criticism, in the affairs of the Communist world does not apply, however, to the colonial or semi-colonial regimes of Western powers. In this sphere India claims rights of interference over the whole area from New Guinea to Morocco.

Nehru does not, of course, exaggerate in emphasizing the strength of Asian feeling on the subject. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his own anti-colonial conviction. But here again, why the double standard as between the Western nations and the Soviet Union?...

What you have just read is an excerpt from the article published in *Freedom First* in its issue No.58 of March 1957. For the full article and more visit our archives at www.freedomfirst.in

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From Our Readers

Prof. Sheryar Ookerjee

This refers to the Obituary of Prof. Sheryar Ookerjee published in *Freedom First*, January 2014 issue.

Dr. Ookerjee was teaching the First Year students of Chemical Engineering at the University Department of Chemical Technology (UDCT), Matunga during 1960-61 and I belonged this batch. Initially I believed him to be a Bengali in which surnames like Mukherjee, Bannerjee, Chatterjee etc. are common. My friends later corrected me saying he was a Parsi. He came in February 1961, as a judge in the annual debate competition of Friends' Literary Forum at the University Hostel, adjoining UDCT and I was a participant.

His facial hair style was also unique in those days. Perhaps the former prime minister I.K.Gujral followed this style and being continued by Bollywood superstar Mr Amitabh Bachchan and many others!

Last May, I wrote a letter to him paying my respectful regards and enclosing a copy of my two part article, "Bombay Reminiscences" published earlier in *FF*. He replied in June apologising for the delay, appreciating my articles and felt rewarded for teaching at the UDCT.

I feel very proud to have been a student of his and convey my heart felt sympathies to his family members.

S. C. Panda, Bhubaneswar.
balinki@yahoo.com

*

New York Times Rattled

Mr. M. R. Venkatesh, has put his finger on the *New York Times* article when he says that the author fixes his target first and then scours for facts.

May God prevent our country from adopting such a kind of journalism. "Surely Indians traditionally use their heads and sensational journalism cannot affect it.

K. Vaithinathasamy, Kumbakonam

*

On the FF560 Editorial

As expected, an excellent editorial. But I am a big Arvind Kejriwal fan. I think the Indira Congress (good that you are bringing it back in public memory) has no option but to extend support to the AAP.

Proof reading can be tightened in *FF*. Some well written articles, including your editorial, lose their sheen. Imagine your driving a Rolls Royce on a super highway at 120 mph and suddenly encountering a pothole!

N. R. Balakrishnan, nrbala@hotmail.com

*

Appreciate the line of thought that you have, but I feel the criticism of AAP has been rather harsh. I believe we can give them a bit of time to actually perform before judging them. After all, the party is bringing in much needed competition for the entrenched players.

If nothing, the AAP might succeed in upsetting the present equilibrium just enough so that the existing practices of fielding murderers and rapists for parliament, passing bills without addressing major issues in bill drafts, and contesting entire elections on non-issues like caste have to rethink and readjust.

Prakash Pandey, Mumbai

*

Was hoping that a person of your experience would support AAP as they are a party who have been in office for 30 days! Whatever their faults they are an honest party which is more than what one can say of the Congress and the BJP.

Ashish Sanyal, Mumbai

*

I fully agree with your views on AAP. These people had an opportunity to do something meaningful they will only end up becoming a one-year wonder .

Rohit Singh, Mumbai

*

That is strong criticism of AAP, which many believed and still hope is a game changer. Their anti-corruption crusade is most welcome and it has gathered momentum at an opportune moment. People are sick and tired of the daily scandals and pervasive corruption of the inept UPA government.

However, crusades cannot govern a nation. Kejriwal and company seem to be in such a great hurry that they are bound to falter. Arrogance will only hasten their exposure.

The latest declaration that AAP will put up candidates against all the corrupt leaders of all parties all over the country is again a clever move that fits into their image as "warriors against corruption."

All in all AAP is making waves and upsetting the entrenched dysfunctional political system.

B. Ramesh Babu, Hyderabad

*

Kejriwal is an immature adolescent and a megalomaniac. As the Bard said "men dressed in a little authority..." Self-righteous, and hypocritical and an empty bombast full of simplistic, ill-conceived solutions.

Sankar Ramamurthy, Delhi

*

(Continued on page 6)

Editorial

What is this Aam Aadmi Party and What Does it Stand For

The Aam Aadmi Party is the political avatar of 'India Against Corruption' (IAC). Before this re-birth took place the IAC was welcomed by all those who loved India and fretted over their helplessness to do anything about corruption and who often gave in with a "pay the bugger" shrug and get on with whatever it was she or he wanted to get done. This ranged from getting a birth certificate to a death certificate with many occasions in-between when the common man had to approach government departments (including municipal, zilla and District parishads) from time to time. Incidentally I would refer to the *aam aadmi* as the 'common man' rather than 'aam aadmi' because this Hindi translation of the common man has been appropriated by a political party. I wonder how "*aam aadmi*" is called in the various Indian languages.

The IAC began in a small way as an NGO called Parivartan led by Arvind Kejriwal and his work was generally in and around Delhi and its adjuncts Gurgaon (Haryana) and Noida (Uttar Pradesh) where complaints about electricity and water were common. He was soon to become a household name in these parts and his work was truly praiseworthy. For his work he also received the Magsaysay Award.

And his success rightly persuaded him to cast his net wider through cyber space. This attracted many young geeks and yuppies in India and their counterpart NRIs overseas to support him. This in turn attracted the media, particularly the electronic media (ever seeking to increase their TRPs; the more the TRPs the more the advertisements. and more the revenues the greater the chance of foreign sponsorships).

Kejriwal (shall we call him 'The Leader?') got a wider field to operate from. This was what attracted the geeks' attention. The fact is there were many movements of this kind elsewhere in India. One such movement that comes to mind which literally excited the besieged Mumbaikar was the anti corruption movement launched by Mumbai's Assistant Municipal Commissioner Khairnar (now retired). It perished because many politicians seeing the vote getting potential of Khairnar's movement sought to identify themselves at public meetings as supporters of Khairnar. This made him ambitious and he started exaggerating. One which caught him out was his declaration that he had a truckful of documents papers to nail Sharad Pawar's or his colleagues' corrupt practices. He couldn't, and as one scribe put it he could not produce "even a hand cartful".

Khairnar should have shooed away the politicians that swarmed all around him. He didn't.

The IAC caught the attention the attention of the geeks and the yuppies because the The Leader was an IITian and also a government officer in the Income Tax Department (or was it in some other Revenue Department?) – a post which he resigned to lead the people and demand redress in various aspects of their day to day life.

The IAC 'received a boost when a man from Maharashtra, Anna Hazare joined (or was he 'persuaded?') to join the IAC. Anna Hazare a true Gandhian was a permanent thorn in the neck of the Maharashtra Government. He led protest movements in various parts of Maharashtra and would go on fast if his demands were not met. Most of the time he got what he wanted, and on those occasions when the government was adamant and Anna Hazare's 'fast' reached dangerous levels Sharad Pawar would intervene or be asked to intervene and he would get Hazare to withdraw after getting him to agree to a settlement on an issue for which he was fasting.

Anna Hazare's joined the movement and thanks to the cyberspace and the geeks and the yuppies, it gave him all an all India presence. Hazare on the national stage was hugely successful.

The success of the IAC movement aroused The Leader to the possibilities of converting the movement into a political party (perhaps the Socialist Crorepati and the Marxist Professor cum Psephologist persuaded The Leader to part company with Hazare if he was not willing to be part of the proposed Party.) The Leader parted company with his guru (at least he called him that). With Rs.One Crore as seed money from the Socialist Crorepati and the expertise of the psephologist to know what would be the degree of success if the new Party contested the Delhi Assembly elections that was in the offing, the Aam Aadmi Party was born.

The circumstances of the birth of this party and the experience of The Leader from his Parivartan days, explains his obsession with Water and Electricity! As for his FIRs against Mukesh Ambani, Murli Deora et al since he has moved up the ladder and is now referred to as Ex-CM, his targets too are no longer the lowly district or department official but big names from big Corporations and for good measure big Ministers ex. or otherwise!

SVR

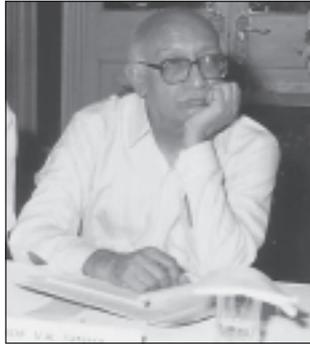
Professor Vijay Kumar Sinha

(September 26, 1933 - January 22, 2014)

It is with a deep sense of sorrow we record the passing away of Professor Vijay Kumar Sinha. Professor Sinha taught at the Ruparel College, the SIES College, and the Ramnarain Ruia College from where he retired as vice-principal. He was a Governing Council Member of the Indian Education Society (IES), Chairman of the IES New English K. G. School, IES New English Primary School, IES New English Secondary School and the Chairman of the Society's Junior College established in the year 2009 - all located in the Bandra Suburb of Mumbai. The IES New English School Campus has 6500 plus students and who had the privilege of his guidance, writes Bharati Hajari, Principal of the Junior College.

While academic pursuits and the cause of education enjoyed a high priority in his life, Professor Sinha was a close associate of and deeply influenced by the outstanding humanist and rationalist, the late Prof. A. B. Shah and participated with him with a missionary zeal in the spread of secular values. He was closely associated in the founding of the Indian Association for Cultural Freedom and its journal *New Quest* and later with the Indian Secular Society and its journal *The Secularist*.

Speaking at a meeting to condole his demise, Professor R. Srinivasan recalled that Professor Sinha and he studied together for both the graduate and post-graduate studies in the same university taking identical courses. Talking about his contribution to the humanist movement, Professor Srinivasan said "along with Prof. Shah, Prof.



Sinha worked towards popularising secularism as public policy. In this the great thinker M. N. Roy was to be their inspiration. Liberalism was the dominant philosophy that was projected by Prof. Shah and Vijay Kumar Sinha was his valuable ally in this endeavour. There was an apprehension that fundamentalism was emerging in the country and it was to counteract this that the magazine *The Secularist* was founded. A number of workshops in colleges in Western India were held to conduct seminars to educate the academic community in general and students in particular."

Professor Sinha's writings were simple and highly focussed. Had he chosen to be writer one could have expected many more books, papers analysing democratic values. Among his publications were *Secularism in India* and *Modern Indian Political Thought*. His articles have been published in the *Journal of Bombay University* and the *Journal of General Education*, *Radical Humanist*, *Quest* and *New Quest* and *Freedom First*. At the time of his passing he was Executive Editor of the *Local Government Quarterly* of the All India Institute of Local Self Government.

He was also actively associated with the Indian Liberal Group in promoting Liberal values. This activity took him to various parts of India and his presentations on Secularism and Liberal Values drew much attention.

We at *Freedom First* shall miss him. We convey our deepest sympathies to the members of his family and share with them our sense of loss on their sad bereavement.

SVR

From Our Readers (Cont'd. from page 4)

Our Soldiers' Disability Pension

On 2nd February, 2014, the Ministry of Defence had issued instructions to appeal against all judgements by court regarding award of disability pensions. An ex-serviceman would have to fight for his pension upto the Supreme Court. On a representation by Mr. Rajeev Chandrashekhar MP, the Defence Minister has cancelled this letter. In his reply the Defence Minister has justified the letter as an attempt for "simplifying the process of decision making regarding filing of appeals." Strange way of simplifying procedure.

Brig. Suresh C. Sharma, Navi Mumbai

*

Missing buffaloes

I've heard plausible stories of a person returning from an extended tour and finding that his his wife has either eloped or been abducted. I couldn't quite believe the recent news that in the case of a certain minister, someone preferred to walk away with the man's buffaloes instead.

Phiroze B. Javeri, Mumbai
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*

Aam Aadmi Party – Confusion Compounded

Firoze Hirjikaka

AAP legislators displayed their naiveté and inexperience by rushing headlong into their manifesto like a bull in a china shop.

What is the principal emotion engendered when one contemplates the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)? For me, it is bewilderment tinged with exasperation. What is this motley crew up to? Why are its members running around with their heads stuck firmly up their rear ends? Do they have an agenda? Are they fiendishly clever or preternaturally stupid? Is their aim to be heroes or martyrs? Are they exhibiting obdurate stubbornness or is there a devious method to their madness? What is wrong with these guys?

The AAP's well publicized unique selling point was they were just-one-of-us folks. There would be no 'leaders' in their Party. Their office bearers were just regular people, no more important or exalted than the man in the street. If elected to power, the citizens of India would witness a form of government unparalleled in their nation's history. They would be astounded, grateful and euphoric all at once. Indeed, it was the AAP's novelty value that proved to be the main attraction. True, the Party was an unknown and untested entity, but the general feeling was that anything was better than the birds-of-a-feather political opportunists we have been saddled with for half a century. For the first time, the common man felt that he had a genuine alternative to vote for and not just the customary choice between the least evil of a coterie of charlatans.

Speaking of the usual suspects, there is a common misconception that the principal grouse against them is that they are universally corrupt. This explanation is too simplistic and somewhat hypocritical. Corruption may not be built into the genetic code of Indians, but it comes pretty close. For sure, our politicians are the undisputed champions in the corruption sweepstakes, but they are trailed by millions of also-rans. Public servants get most of the publicity, but the reality is that hordes of businessmen, traders, directors of corporations, builders and those in almost any profession you can think of, regularly indulge in the competitive sport of avoiding taxes and other legitimate dues to the government. It is only a question of degree. Besides, let us not forget that most people feel compelled to pay bribes because they are trying to cut corners or indulge in activities that are not strictly legal. I believe many people would be prepared to overlook

a tolerable amount of corruption in exchange for decent infrastructure, controlled inflation and secure employment, to name a few.

Living in Utopia

But back to the AAP. The fledgling Party cleverly adopted the humble broom as its election symbol, presumably signifying its intention to sweep away the existing corrupt political entity and replace it with a somewhat utopian ideal of a fully participatory democracy where the common man would be involved in every aspect of governance. The concept was luminous in its idealism, but rather short on practicality. Right at the outset, the AAP legislators displayed their naiveté and inexperience by rushing headlong into their manifesto like a bull in a china shop. They were so eager to prove they meant business that they began to issue sweeping government decrees almost on a daily basis. Day one saw the abolition of water tax for everyone except profligate users and those without water meters. This was promptly followed by slashing the electricity tariff in half. If it occurred to the Party leadership that these schemes were wildly impractical and that they had obviously not thought through the financial implications, it was not evident in their actions.

It seemed that Kejriwal and company were so caught up in the initial euphoria following their ascension to power that they had taken temporary leave of their common sense. The AAP acted like a puppy eager to please by wagging its tail and expecting a reward. Their elation indeed seemed justified in the early days, as millions of ordinary citizens rushed to join the fledgling outfit. The general public appeared to be enthused and slightly hypnotized by the revolution. Even corporate honchos and entrepreneurs - like Meera Sanyal and Captain Gopinath, to name just two, were seduced into lending their support.

Hubris?

Kejriwal made an inspirational speech after his swearing in, extolling the virtues of the aam aadmi and giving him full credit for his Party's victory. It seemed as if Indian politics had entered a new dawn where honesty, humility and accountability dominated the political

discourse. It did not take long however, for reality to sink in. At the first taste of power, Kejriwal's head – as well as those of his ministers – swelled like a balloon. Although the BJP predictably attacked him on television, at public functions – most notably the President's Republic Day reception – Kejriwal was mobbed like a movie star. It wasn't long before he started believing his own hype. He also started courting the media, under the assumption that he was their darling and they would support him through thick and thin.

Before the election, Kejriwal had grandly promised that political misdeeds of any form, even from members of his own Party, would not be tolerated. Then his law minister, Somnath Bharti, assuming the avatar of a Wild West sheriff, stormed into a New Delhi locality, television cameras obligingly in tow, and demanded that the police arrest a group of African women whom he alleged were guilty of prostitution and dealing in drugs. When the police reasonably pointed out that they had no warrant, Bharti flew into an imperial rage that completely contradicted his Party's cultivated humble image. Here was a golden opportunity for the "democratic" Kejriwal to put his money where his mouth is; and discipline his errant minister. Instead, he not only defended Bharti, but actively supported him by going on a dharna on the streets of Delhi to demand the resignation of the policemen who had dared to disobey the imperial command. Millions of television viewers watched the sorry spectacle in horror and a deep sense of disappointment. Here was another arrogant *neta* masquerading as a man of the people. The Indian spring had proved to be a chimera. Worse was to follow. Kejriwal's government arbitrarily reversed the Centre's decision to allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Retail. The newly inducted Party elite looked on in horror. This was beginning to resemble the chaotic and repressive French revolution, rather than a genuine reform movement.

Hoping Against Hope

The AAP may have shot itself in the foot, but it is still in the war. The surprising thing is that despite the blatant missteps, many people are still enthusiastic about the AAP. Perhaps they are so disgusted and disillusioned with the present political dispensation that they do not want to give up hope. They are hoping that the AAP's missteps are just teething problems and that they will get their act together. I applaud their optimism, but I am not too sanguine.

As for the AAP's principal players, I am getting an increasing impression that Kejriwal is a titular head. He seems sincere enough, but I do not believe he has the intellect or political guile to be genuinely in charge. I

suspect the powers behind the throne are the whiny Prashant Bhushan and the bit-too-suave Yogendra Yadav. The latter in fact is a novelty on the television news because unlike almost all his counterparts, he never loses his cool and delivers his discourses in a professorial tone. I surmise that there is a very shrewd political brain behind that calm exterior; and if he achieves his unstated goal of becoming Chief Minister of Haryana, he will abruptly cease playing second fiddle to Kejriwal and may even desert the AAP altogether. Unlike fellow traveller Bhushan who makes no effort to disguise his leftist leanings, Yadav is playing his cards close to his chest and will declare his true colours only after he achieves his political goal.

So there you have the AAP in a nutshell. Its charitable supporters are saying that the new Party is still finding its feet and is giving it a long rope. Their patience is not infinite however, and unless Kejriwal and company sober up and act responsibly, they may prove to be a flash in the pan who will be but a distant memory a couple of years from now. Whatever happens, the next few months are going to be very interesting.

Postscript:

A week after writing the above, Arvind Kejriwal and his band of misfits brought their well-played drama to its inevitable conclusion. In coming weeks, it will be interesting to observe if this disparate group of idealistic opportunists will achieve their unstated goal, or implode in a self-destructive orgy.

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Street Radicalism

The Aam Aadmi Party is encouraging street radicalism without possessing the courage to become Naxalites. Its tendencies (one cannot call it a manifesto, since no one has put it together into an intelligent logical framework yet) are towards socialisation of the system and nationalisation to increase the power of the political class over both bureaucracy and private sector. It has become so holier-than-thou that when its minister is exposed by a judge then it is the judiciary that must be wrong. The party cannot be mistaken.

Lenin and Mao would agree

Power is a responsibility. Think about this: if all it took to solve Delhi's woes and become popular was the distribution of cheaper electricity and water, why would Sheila Dikshit not have done so?

M. J. Akbar, *The Sunday Guardian*, 19 January 2014

Changing Political Landscape in India

Bapu Satyanarayana

After the emergence of AAP and particularly Kejriwal, who occupies a larger than life image, there is a paradigm shift in the outlook of people who have become more vocal exhibiting their intolerance towards criminality and corruption.

The Churning

Ever since Anna Hazare sat on a fast in April 2011 to fight against corruption through the instrument of Jan Lokpal Bill, the political developments in India suddenly picked up momentum. It seems to have released the long suppressed pent up feelings to speak against the oppressive dynastic rule. In its wake there is apparent chaos in the political developments and emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) with its Chief Minister (CM) Arvind Kejriwal, symbolizing this anarchy.

One may be tempted to christen him a political maverick due to his unorthodox methods. The home minister Sushilkumar Shinde called him 'mad' CM but his image of incorruptibility and his courage has captured the imagination of people and has sustained their belief in him despite some contradictions. For example, there appears to be a desperate attempt to lure AAP MLAs with money power. AAP MLA Mohanlal in a press conference said, "I was offered Rs.20 crore to be a part of the BJP government. I don't have the recordings of these calls but I hope you believe what I say."

It is tempting to compare what is happening in Delhi to an incident in Ramayana when Hanuman was trying to rescue Sita. I would hazard a comparison of Kejriwal to brave Hanuman and Sita to the dire state of politics currently prevalent in India ensconced in criminality and corruption and the political manoeuvrings of the opposition as Ravana's followers busied themselves to destroy Hanuman by setting fire to his tail. On the contrary Hanuman welcomes the attempt and creates chaos and havoc by his antics jumping from one place (issue) to another creating virtual political bedlam. This political churning that is sweeping across the country is probably the manifestation of restlessness and suppressed impatience eager to usher in a change, tired of hypocrisy and trust deficit between the people and the government.

The net result, as all present indications show, is that the beneficiary of this change is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) because Narendra Modi continues to draw mammoth crowds. Besides, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's uncharacteristically extremely vicious utterance

on Modi during his press conference on 3rd Jan 2014 was baffling, reminiscent of Sonia Gandhi's *maut ka saudagar* remark during the Gujarat assembly elections. Probably his advisors made a serious error of judgment for it is going to boomerang on the electoral fortunes of the Congress Party. Referring to Modi, the PM said that if he becomes the Prime Minister it would be a disaster. He elaborates "If by strong Prime Minister you mean that you preside over the mass massacre of innocent citizens in the streets of Ahmedabad – if that is the measure of strength I do not believe that's the type of strength the country needs least of all from a Prime Minister." It is almost laughable when Manmohan Singh says that Rahul Gandhi has outstanding credentials and ironically Rahul's TV interview on 27th January with *Times Now* anchor Arnab Goswami, was such a pathetic display that it prompted even Congress leaders to dub the TV Chat as a 'Dud' (*Deccan Herald*, 28th January, 2014).

Thus when both the Prime Minister and Rahul Gandhi have virtually become his allies instead of political opponents, Modi's hands are strengthened. Lately, the veteran NCP leader Sharad Pawar defended his meeting with Modi. Now the only threat Modi faces is from AAP which has become a thorn in his flesh and hence all attempts are being made to destabilize AAP government in Delhi. It is to be seen whether AAP will play the spoil sport to stop the BJP juggernaut. Meanwhile there is a regrouping of other parties to form a third front nursing ambition to thwart the design of both BJP and the Congress in the coming General Elections due in April-May 2014.

Some specific instances that throw light on some serious impact on issues

1. Whatever defence both the Congress and BJP may put forth, it is obvious that the passing of Lokpal Bill in the Parliament was due to the impact of AAP.
2. In the present political system the CM of Delhi and his cabinet have virtually no power. The crucial decisions of Delhi Government are controlled by the Centre and the Lieutenant Governor. That is why Kejriwal went on a dharna on the issue of suspending three police officers who defied the order of the Home Minister Somnath Bharati. It is only when two of them

- were sent on leave, did Kejriwal give up the *dharna*. He may not have achieved his objective fully but at least as Yogendra Yadav of AAP says it is a small window of opening. Of course the opposition including the UPA government criticized CM's action as unprecedented and called it anarchy. When an agitation becomes violent it can be called anarchy whereas in the present case Kejriwal not only disposed off files and held cabinet meetings, there was no destruction of property. How can it be called an act of anarchy? On the contrary the destruction of 20 toll booths by the MNS followers in Maharashtra was an act of anarchy.
3. Now Kejriwal has come up with his 'corrupt list'. For the first time he named both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Lately AAP has released tapes in connection with the 2G spectrum scam implicating Karunanidhi, the DMK patriarch.
 4. It may be recalled that the Governor of Maharashtra had rejected the findings of CBI in Adarsh Building scam which implicated six chief ministers of Maharashtra including Ashok Chavan and the Home Minister of UPA, Sushilkumar Shinde. However the UPA government supported the Governor's action and while baling out the chief ministers, named 12 bureaucrats instead; but when pressure mounted and the Supreme Court took up the issue, there was rethinking and Ashok Chavan's name has been included. This is because of the environment of intolerance against corruption created by the AAP.
 5. It appears the AAP's influence has not spared even the President of India whose Republic Day speech has been characterised as political. Kuldip Nayar under the heading 'It's politics Mr. President' opined that what Mukherjee said is generally correct but implied that because of the constitutional post he occupies, the President should have refrained from uttering views that would have been more appropriate if he were in the government.
 6. We have seen the above syndrome in the case of R. K. Singh who after retirement as home secretary to the Home Minister Shinde accused him of some grave charges. It can only be inferred as the AAP effect.
 7. A curious transformation took place in Rahul Gandhi when the pressure from the Party workers to name him the prime ministerial candidate mounted. The Congress President Sonia Gandhi in no uncertain terms dismissed it saying that is not the way the Party works to the great disappointment of sycophantic followers. It must be noticed that all along Rahul was distancing himself from facing such a possibility and was very uneasy. Had the Congress been in a position of strength he would have probably welcomed it but the reality that the Party is struggling to survive and putting him forward as their PM candidate would have been a personal and political disaster. After Sonia Gandhi's clarification Rahul was full of confidence and vigour when he addressed the AICC Session
 8. After the emergence of AAP and particularly Kejriwal, who occupies a larger than life image, there is a paradigm shift in the outlook of people who have become more vocal exhibiting their intolerance towards criminality and corruption.

The net effect of all that has happened in the past few months is that in the forthcoming general elections all the political parties would be forced to field persons with a clean image. Even if they do not succeed fully the AAP effect would have done a significant service in a span of 15 months which noteworthy electoral reforms could not achieve. That is why despite many drawbacks people are now generally well disposed and sympathetic towards AAP and belying the fond hope of the opposition, AAP is here to stay. As of now the Party has almost met its target of recruiting one crore members which is no mean achievement for a fledging new party.

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The Dynasty's Scorched-Earth Policy

By now the writing on the wall would be clear to the dynasty and its close supporters. All the trends indicate a severe decline for the Congress. Clearly many of the sops and largesse for the ensuing weeks are not going to affect the electoral chances of the dynasty or the party significantly. Yet the shenanigans and impulsive decisions of the dynasty and its scion are likely to continue. What could be the reason for it? ... Unless the national interest has ceased to matter to the dynasty – and all economic indicators leave no doubt about the economic folly of some of these decisions, the strategy becomes eminently clear. The dynasty is following a scorched-earth policy. The planning just might be to leave the economy for a successor government in such a precarious condition that any meaningful attempts to bring in desired policy changes would flounder on the rock of a semi-bankrupt exchequer. The new government, whatever its hue, would not be in a position to deliver on their election manifesto. Thereby the hope is nurtured that another general election would soon follow.

**Vinod Saighal, Convenor MRGG, and author of Revitalising Indian Democracy.
Excerpted from *The Statesman*, 14th February 2014.**

Point Counter Point

Ashok Karnik

Every issue has at least two sides. A wise person 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.

The Anarch?

1. The AAP Government of Delhi which was formed with external aid was determined to commit suicide. From the beginning it threw challenges to its opponents to dare bring it down. Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi's CM, first held a dharna, disturbing Delhi's life for two days, demanding suspension of police officers who did not obey his Minister's illegal orders. Kejriwal fully understood that his demand was untenable. He then started an anti-corruption enquiry against Sheila Dixit, leader of the party on whose support he became CM. He followed it with an FIR against a Central Minister and Mukesh Ambani over the pricing of natural gas, again daring the Central Government to act against him. The dramatic case was uncalled for as the issue of gas pricing was already pending in the Supreme Court. It was clear that the AAP was aiming for high drama rather than a check on corporate corruption. It was great publicity. He ended up by defying the Lt. Governor of Delhi in introducing the Jan Lokpal Bill in the Assembly fully knowing that there were constitutional hurdles in the course he was adopting. The refusal of the BJP/Congress to allow this indiscretion provided AAP the opportunity to abort itself. AAP's singular aim was to get itself dismissed. It was a kamikaze existence seeking martyrdom every day. AAP's brief rule of 49 days was intended to prove to the electorate that it was the only honest party in the country and others were corrupt. It may have achieved martyrdom as it chose but possibly damaged its own reputation to some extent. The AAP aims to cleanse the political system through new political tactics. The danger is in its belief that what one considers right can be forced down others' throat through street power. Kejriwal did not mind being called an anarchist. There lies the danger of righteous but misplaced zeal. (Anarch would have been a better word as it means a free thinker rather than a reckless spoiler). Kejriwal's 'My Way or no Way' stance precludes dialogue that is the essential part of democracy.

1. Kejriwal achieved little in 49 days but he made a half-hearted beginning by providing 700 litres of free water supply and fiddled with power bills. In actual terms it meant nothing but was again good publicity. He drove home the message that he was hindered by dishonest politicians: police in Delhi were being controlled by the Central Government; his Jan Lokpal Bill would have sent all corrupt politicians to jail but again he was being thwarted by the Centre. His parting kick was that Mukesh Ambani controlling both Congress and BJP, manipulated AAP's fall. It was cheap publicity but those conditioned to see conspiracies by the Corporates everywhere, would love this intriguing narrative. It is good ammunition for the next Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. If the AAP really wanted to resolve the wrongs, Kejriwal had the fora to raise the demand for control of the police; the rule that any bill to be placed before the Delhi Assembly should be got approved by the MHA could have been challenged in Court; corruption cases could have been pursued and many promises made to the people of Delhi could have been implemented. However, if the aim was only to lay grounds for elections through martyrdom, Kejriwal succeeded. In the process, the hope he had kindled that honest politics was feasible, is extinguished. Street agitation has become the mantra. In AAP's parlance, the party does not have to abide by any rules and everything is right if it is done in the name of the people. It has dangerous connotations. A gram sabha/mohalla committee may not remain the romantic symbol of grass-roots democracy but could turn into a mob of self-seekers. It is naive to believe that once the Jan Lokpal Bill is passed, all wrong-doers will be in jail and India would be on its way to glory.

Operation Bluestar and The British

2. The publication of 30-year old UK documents relating to Operation Bluestar created a storm in our media. Questions were raised how India could ask a foreign Government for assistance for attacking the Golden Temple. The documents purportedly revealed that Smt. Indira requested Margaret Thatcher, UK PM, to send experts of Special Air Services (SAS), Britain's specialized commando force, to help India plan the attack on the Golden Temple.

2. The explanation could be fairly simple if one stops seeing conspiracies everywhere. After the 1962 China debacle, India developed security related cooperation with some countries. Khalistan supporters were active in UK, Germany, Canada and a few other countries. India's R&AW was liaising with these countries to track the separatist elements. Cooperation with each other in areas of mutual interest was and is common. B. Raman's book, "Kaoboy

Lt. General Brar who was the Chief of the army contingent which carried out the operation flatly denied any external help in either planning or conduct of the operation. He is obviously right as presence of any foreign commandos would have been noticed at that time since the operation was carried out in full public view. It is also not appreciated by the media that it was a military operation and not a secret, stealth operation in which the SAS specializes. The British Government has revealed that its help was minimal and only in an advisory capacity. Still our opposition parties are demanding an apology from our Government for seeking foreign help and from the United Kingdom for meddling in India's internal affairs. Their allegation regarding insult to India's sovereignty is ill founded.

NCP's Tango

3. The National Congress Party (NCP), in alliance with the Congress for years, is now showing signs of unease. The alliance was convenient for both as it enabled them to govern a state like Maharashtra for over a decade. At the Centre, the NCP was never a threat to the Congress but even its single digit numbers were a help in a crisis. The marriage is showing signs of discord suddenly. Is it because the NCP thinks that it would be foolish to sink with the Congress? NCP's Sharad Pawar is known to be street smart in calculating the profits and losses in politics and has perhaps decided that it is time to dance to a different tune. NCP's sudden realization that court judgments clearing Narendra Modi of blame for the 2002 communal riots need to be respected, creates doubts about his intentions. Is it an attempt to cozy up to the BJP despite talks of abiding understanding with the Congress? Portends are grave for the UPA as the NCP starts recalibrating power equations.

of RAW" clearly mentions that two officers of Britain's MI 5 visited the Golden Temple as tourists and gave their assessment of the situation to the Government of India. This does not mean that they planned the attack or participated in it. International cooperation against terrorism is a common practice. What is the harm in consulting experts while considering a delicate operation? India had no need for foreign collaboration in launching Operation Bluestar. It is not as if British forces landed in India to launch the attack. The operation was strategically well defined; the skill lay in not causing too much damage to life and property. That it did not work out that way is another story.

3. NCP which is really a Maharashtra-centric party with small numbers in Parliament can shrewdly tilt the balance in a hung house. Pawar has kept personal contacts with all parties and is acceptable to all as a senior statesman. Is he planning to play his last card before his health fails and age takes over? Does he plan to emerge as a mediator and crisis manager post 2014 elections? NCP's battle of wits with the Congress in Maharashtra is a regular feature of the state's politics. It seems to be getting sharper by the day as elections near. NCP does not want to be blamed for the Centre's unpopularity but has its own sins to hide in the state. It is like a wife preparing for divorce but unwilling to leave the safety of the matrimonial home. Even if the alliance survives the voting stage, it would be seriously tested after the elections. New combinations of dubious durability seem to be in the offing.

Babus' Post-Retirement Jobs

4. Home Secretary R. K. Singh's post retirement entry into politics, particularly in the BJP, raised many eyebrows. Bureaucrats have been frequently rewarded by the ruling party with posts of Governor or Ambassador for their efficiency or loyalty but it did not attract criticism. A high official like the Home Secretary joining the opposition party (BJP) caused consternation. Then the Police Commissioner of Mumbai resigned from his post and joined the opposition party (BJP again). There were TV debates if this was ethical and legal. A lot of sound and fury was raised without coming out with any solution. Judges are routinely favoured by the ruling party by appointing them on various Commissions, effectively extending their service tenure. Nobody raises a voice as judicial acumen is needed on Commissions. Is it time to consider the entire gamut of post retirement activities?

4. Post-retirement appointments made by the ruling party entail financial benefits as fresh jobs are made available. However, those joining the opposition parties cannot be accused of doing so for pecuniary benefits. They could be accused of gambling on possible future benefits. The worry is about the officials' and judges' actions getting affected by considerations of future assignments. Senior government servants have a cooling off period of two years before they can take up a private job after retirement. Should the same restriction apply for joining political parties and appointments on Commissions? Would such a restriction be constitutionally valid? Would it not deprive the Government of the services of capable and distinguished persons for assignments to non-official posts? And all this hoopla because a couple of officers joined an opposition party!

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.

Reflections on India's Continued Economic Drift

Sunil S. Bhandare

*Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone;
But when she came there
The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.*

What is the chaotic “new normal” of the current Indian political scenario? This question reminds me of a very fascinating presentation on “Surviving in the VUCA Environment”, which I had the benefit of listening to just a few weeks ago. The acronym stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This was meant for those engaged in strategic business and corporate management. Let us flip this acronym to focus on our prevailing political situation, which is increasingly becoming Vulgar, Ugly, Confrontationist and Antagonistic. We, the people of India, are in a state of deep distress and anguish by what we are seeing during the last session of the 15th Lok Sabha. And the challenge for us is how to survive in this VUCA political environment!

This little backdrop is perhaps necessary to understand the ongoing economic drift, which is attributable to the collapse of political governance over the past several years. But as is their wont, neither the Prime Minister nor the Finance Minister would ever be tired of reassuring us that thanks to their efforts of the last 18 months, the economy has stabilized and the next government that will take over after the 2014 general elections to the Lok Sabha due in April-May would be able to build on this platform. But is it really going to be so?

Sources of Comfort

One can see significant sources of comfort on two counts: first, the impressive agricultural recovery (estimated growth of about 4.6% in 2013-14); and second, the restoration of relative external sector stability. Indeed, this strong agricultural recovery has helped in averting further economic drift and salvaged to some extent the overall growth performance during the current financial year. But this is entirely fortuitous and has nothing much to do with any of the government's policy. It has everything to do with a good monsoon and an impressive turnaround in the external sector clearly visible in (a) a projected sharp reduction in current account deficit to GDP ratio to about

2.5% in 2013-14 as compared to 4.8% in 2012-13; (b) shoring up of forex reserves by over US\$17 bn. (from the low of US\$275 bn on September 6, 2013 to over US\$292 bn now); and (c) recovery in the exchange rate – the rupee appreciating by about 6.5% *vis-à-vis* the US\$ since end-August 2013 after its sudden sharp depreciation by about 20% during the previous short span of four months. But, for this, we have to compliment the RBI more for its prompt and competent management of monetary and exchange rate policy rather than the Finance Ministry. Indeed, the latter's fiscal consolidation effort as well as the overall inflation control initiatives of the UPA II government in general, leave much to be desired.

In contrast witness the negative factors and sources of economic instability. And they overwhelmingly manifest in (a) relentless high inflation; (b) continued drift in the real GDP growth rate; (c) prolonged industrial stagnation; (d) rapidly falling investments; (e) failure to generate adequate employment opportunities in the formal sector (e) uncertainties of overall economic policy environment; and (f) overall loss of consumer and investor confidence.

Stagnant Growth Performance

However the most worrisome – and in a sense the ultimate indicator of the performance of the UPA government – is to be found in the trends of the national accounts data. It is official now: India's real GDP growth rate would be less than 5% (4.9% to be precise) in the current financial year though some of the key spokespersons of the Government, especially the Finance Minister, would like us to believe that the revised figures, as and when the same are available in the latter half of 2014-15, would show real GDP growth rate higher than 5% in 2013-14. A proverbial Tweedledum and Tweedledee syndrome! The fact of the matter is that the economy has been *stuck in the groove of low and stagnant growth* for a fairly long time with no immediate prospect of a bounce back as the table (*see next page*) indicates:

Sectoral Annual Growth Rates (%)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
1. Agriculture	8.6	5.0	1.4	4.6
2. Industry	7.5	7.8	1.0	0.7
<i>Of which</i>				
Manufacturing	8.9	7.4	1.1	- 0.2
3. Services	9.7	6.6	7.0	6.9
Real GDP	8.9	6.7	4.5	4.9

In this context, the *key worrisome features* of macro economic growth indicators are:

- The adverse impact of policy paralysis of the last about three years now manifesting in *virtual industrial stagnation* and negative growth rate, albeit marginal, in the manufacturing sector after over two decades. The previous negative manufacturing growth (-2.4%) year was 1991-92 – the year of economic crisis as well as of reforms. The industrial sector then was reflecting the adverse impact of fiscal compression, stringent monetary policy and sharp devaluation of the Indian rupee. Most of these conditions happen to be almost similar during the greater part of 2013-14, except that there is no economic crisis *per se*!
- Global factors – haltingly slow global economic and trade recovery – contributing to manufacturing contraction, though in a small measure. If the domestic policy environment, which is inextricably linked with the outcome of forthcoming general election in May 2014, does not improve, *the chances of economic recovery very poor*.
- There is a continuing set-back to gross domestic capital formation [GDCF] in the economy. The CSO data reveals investment rate or GDCF/ GDP ratio (measured at current prices) has declined sharply from 34.3% in 2012-13 to 32.3% in 2013-14. The best investment rate was at 38.1% in 2007-08. This **loss of 6.2% points in investment rate** [GDCF/ GDP ratio] means about 1.5 percentage point erosion of future growth potential of the economy.

In effect, India has lost not only its future potential growth rate [due to the falling investment rate], but is also performing well below its current true potential. Even with the current investment rate, it should achieve real GDP growth of 7.5% plus, if capital resources were to be optimally and efficiently utilized. *But we have allowed large public sector wastage, build up of unutilized capacities [both in public and private sectors] and accumulation of non-performing*

assets. Thus, our incremental capital output ratio has been severely impaired in recent years. In no small measure the UPA II government is responsible for this predicament.

- Perhaps the most worrisome feature of macro-economic parameters is *the shrinking of financial savings to GDP ratio*. And the main contribution for this fall is the collapse of the household sector's financial savings – attributable to (a) diversion of its savings to physical assets like real estate and gold; (b) erosion in its capacity to save due to persistent high inflation; and (c) inadequate employment growth, especially in the formal sector.

Looking Beyond 2013-14

In summing up, the UPA II government is certainly not leaving the legacy of a healthy and stabilizing political economy for the next government. If were it to be so, it could as well have aspired to return to power to form the UPA III government! On the contrary, apart from drifting growth performance, the next government would be confronted with huge tasks of steering growth with stability. And the toughest of them all would be the challenge of restoring the quality of fiscal management. The incumbent Finance Minister can, no doubt, be expected to proclaim that he has managed to contain fiscal deficit to GDP ratio at 4.8% [or a shade lower] in 2013-14. But quantitative fulfillment of fiscal target would conceal the huge qualitative impairment of budgetary management. The true spirit of fiscal consolidation has gone for a toss – witness his desperate attempts to sponge on surpluses of profit-making healthy PSUs, including the RBI.

Indeed, social sector expenditure extravaganza has been the hallmark of the UPA II regime; valuable budgetary resources have been channeled into misdirected subsidies and other non-plan, non-developmental expenditures. Witness its recent populist initiatives, which cover a wide spectrum of activities from enhancing the household quota of subsidized LPG cylinders to reducing prices of CNG and piped cooking gas supply; continuation of interest rate subvention to farmers, prompt release of DA payments and liberalizing PF benefits to its own employees, constitution of the 7th Pay Commission, et al.

The next government will have to face massive problems arising from the erosion of both fiscal discipline on one hand and loss of financial savings capacity of the economy on the other. In other words the new Finance Minister will, in all likelihood, *find the coffers almost empty*.

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Power (Elective and Otherwise) and Populism

Ranga Kota

AAP's lack of faith in all established institutions is at the heart of its actions.

The spectacular performance of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the recently concluded Delhi Assembly elections has jolted the established parties, the Congress and the BJP, out of their comfort zone. AAP, after much dithering, has formed the government with outside support of the discredited Congress Party.

The AAP was quick off the block and announced a couple of measures that must have gladdened some sections of Delhi's aam aadmi. The quick announcements of providing 700 liters free water per day per family for metered connections and a substantial reduction in power tariff in the lower slabs have made AAP's pre-poll promises into a reality. It is not clear who will bear the cost of the power tariff reduction.

Though, as per the provisions, the much maligned power distribution companies in Delhi are insulated from tariff reduction by the government in power, it may not happen that way. The distribution companies will have to bill the consumers at the reduced tariff and expect the difference to be compensated by the government. If the Delhi government fails to reimburse the amount (a possibility), the power companies will have to seek a remedy available under the provisions. In the next few months, we may witness an interesting battle between the AAP in Delhi and the privatized DISCOMs. One DISCOM was indicating a possible black out in Delhi if they are pushed to the wall. AAP mandated audit of these DISCOMs by CAG might queer the pitch further with the attendant mudslinging in all directions.

Collateral Damage

The experts in the power sector have voiced grave concern at the decision of AAP to reduce the tariffs which were fixed by the DERC, a statutory body set-up under the Electricity Act of 2003. If AAP felt that DERC erred in fixing the tariff, it should have engaged DERC in a constructive way to get to know the basis of tariff fixation. AAP's lack of faith in all established institutions is at the heart of its actions.

In the normal course, the power battle (AAP vs. DISCOMs) may not have mattered much in the larger

context, but with AAP planning to make its battle pan India in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections, the echo of Delhi is heard loud and wide across India.

The first to feel the heat is Maharashtra's political class which believes that the AAP could use the gambit of power tariff to challenge the incumbent's (Congress Party) prospects as well as the Shiv Sena and BJP in the Lok Sabha elections. A call for a reduction in electricity tariff was made and the incumbent government reduced the electricity tariff in all parts of Maharashtra except in the city of Mumbai where power distribution is with private companies.

Another Congress ruled state, Haryana, geographically the closest future battle ground for the AAP, has announced a hasty tariff reduction. How many more state governments will follow suit is to be seen.

The 2003 Electricity Act was a forward looking one. It sought to get the power sector out of *Maa-Baap* culture. It freed from government licensing power generation and rural distribution. It sought the unbundling of generation, transmission and distribution among state power utilities, leaving the state governments holding the can for power subsidies. Tariff at the distribution level was to be set by the State Electricity Regulators. It allowed open access to certain categories of users. If only the states had let go of their control over power utilities at the distribution stage and allowed a free play of the provisions of the New Act, India would have found its power sector in a much better physical and financial health than it is today.

Farmers and the urban middle class are the two holy cows for the political class: the former are perceived as a vote bank and the second for its access to media power. The state utilities have combined losses of over Rs.200,000 crores due their inability to price the power at economically viable rates. The populist power tariffs at the distribution end leave power utilities short of funds for buying adequate power from producers making investment in the distribution infrastructure an obvious casualty.

The Cascading Effect

The collapse or bankruptcy of distribution

companies, mostly government owned, will pose a very difficult economic challenge to the upstream power generations companies in the thermal power sector. India has close to 1,60,000 MW of thermal power generating capacity using either coal or gas. India does not have enough domestic coal or gas to operate these plants at peak capacity. Huge imports are necessary which pushes up the generation cost of these plants. The cash-starved state distribution companies are reluctant to pay a higher price to purchase power as they cannot pass it on to their consumers due to the state governments 'penchant for populism'.

Our Paradox

As the last mile is controlled by the state-owned power distribution companies, the generating plants cannot easily access other users, mostly in the industrial and corporate sector, who can pay a better price for reliable supply. This leads to a strange situation. The plants operate at a low capacity or even prefer to keep them shut. Almost all gas-based power plants in Andhra Pradesh do not operate. The Dabhol power plant in Maharashtra is limping for want of gas. Close to 5000 MW power capacity in Gujarat is idle due to shortage of gas. Tatas' who were the first one to commission the UMP of 4000 MWs in Mundra (Gujarat) are bleeding as the state governments which buy power from this plant are reluctant to allow a tariff revision to compensate for a steep increase in the cost for imported coal.

Usually lack of generating capacity is cited as the reason for power shortages. But we have now a paradox. We cannot fully use the capacity we have built in the last few years as the plants cannot produce or sell power at the rates that make economic sense.

There are no prospects of a significant step-up in production of domestic gas or coal. Gas production nosedived due to problems Reliance had with their wells in Godavari Basin. Gujarat State Petroleum has yet to commence its production in Godavari basin. With Central Government giving priority in gas allocation to fertilizer plants, gas-based power plants take the hit and remain idle.

Coal India is sitting on vast reserves of coal but cannot extract the required coal fast enough to support coal-based thermal plants. Estimates put India's import requirement around 200 million tons of coal every year to bridge the fuel deficit. Coal India produces less than 500 million tons per annum and it cannot ramp up the production due to Maoist, environmental or labour issues.

Private sector participation in coal mining is under intense scrutiny and no significant contribution can be expected from them in the near future. The inordinate delays in regulatory clearances for coal mining put future private investment in coal mining in a quandry.

A New Government has No Magic Wand

The new government taking charge later this year will find the power sector a difficult challenge. As power distribution is a state subject, the centre cannot force its way. Most ruling dispensations in states have neither the vision nor the resolve to reform their power sector. With competitive populism making a foray, cheap power is used as a potent weapon in political battles.

If the new government at the centre means business, it has to show a quick economic turnaround which will depend on a quick recovery in manufacturing/ industrial output. Reliable and affordable power is essential to make industry fire all cylinders. With the Central Government being powerless in ensuring this to the industry, a quick and significant turnaround in industry in the near term looks very much doubtful.

Liberalizing power distribution in states and appointing competent and upright power regulators are necessary to align the interests of the downstream and the upstream players in the power sector. Government's failure to do so quickly enough will keep a fair amount of generating capacity idle in a country which suffers from severe power cuts in summer months. The country will have to pay a huge cost for idle capacity because it would reflect as non-performing assets with financial institutions. The financial institutions will take a significant hit if they cannot restructure and recover their loans. It will make the financial sector cautious and the private sector chary about future investments in the power sector slowing economic growth. The power situation will worsen. We are likely to see more power cuts across several states.

The AAM AADMI has his promise of cheap power fulfilled but will have no assurance of its availability. He does not see that the latter is a consequence of the former. As long as he does not see the connection we cannot hope for a turnaround in the power sector.

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Cornucopia

Firoze Hirjikaka

Is Indian Media Becoming Shallow?

A major drawback of the media encouraging and giving publicity to antagonistic non-issues is that it lets our bankrupt politicians off the hook

If one were to go by the media, especially television news, here is a partial list of the topmost issues in India in recent weeks. The 1984 Sikh riots, the 2002 Gujarat riots, Narendra Modi and Sonia Gandhi hurling insults at each other and the clean chit given to Ashok Chavan in the Adarsh scam. What is the one thing all these headlines have in common? They have absolutely no relevance to the daily lives of ordinary citizens.

On 27th January, the *Times Now* television news channel broadcast a “historic” interview with Rahul Gandhi. I freely admit that I am among the minority who does not believe that Arnab Goswami is god’s gift to television news (although he does), but nonetheless, parts of the interview made me cringe even more than usual. At the very start, Goswami made it evident that he intended to sensationalise the proceedings by provoking a pissing contest between Rahul and the man-of-the-moment Narendra Modi. Even as Rahul started expanding on his vision for the future of the Congress Party and India, Goswami promptly brought in the 2002 Gujarat riots and Modi’s role in it. In his usual blustering manner, he kept on interrupting Rahul’s discourse till he was compelled to answer. Although Rahul was clearly reluctant to answer, Goswami kept pestering him to explain how Modi could be held accountable since the Supreme Court had exonerated him. Predictability, in a tactic that has by now become distressingly stale, he compared the Gujarat riots with the 1984 pogrom against the Sikhs. Rahul was left with no choice except to defend the Congress, which Goswami derided with ill-concealed glee. He had his headline.

The above episode illustrates how shallow the Indian media has become its relentless quest for controversial headlines, even if it is at the expense of hard news. Even worse, it has influenced the mindset of political parties and their spokespersons. Ever hungry for publicity, they have realised that it is controversies and incessant attacks on political opponents - rather than achievements - that gets them on the television; and they play shamelessly to the public gallery. The public unfortunately plays right into their hands and loses focus on the real issues that affect their daily lives. Take the relentless rehashing of the 1984 and 2002 riots by our television news anchors. It is bad enough that the Congress and BJP

invariably try to justify one disgraceful episode in our nation’s history by comparing it to the other. Our news superheroes actively encourage this sorry spectacle because it leads to heated exchanges which makes for great political theatre and consequently, higher viewership ratings. The reality is that these human tragedies are part of history and should remain there. Constantly reviving them not only vitiates communal harmony, they have absolutely no relevance today.

A major drawback of the media encouraging and giving publicity to antagonistic non-issues is that it lets our bankrupt politicians off the hook. Many of them are ignorant on matters of governance and woefully indifferent to providing service to the people who elected them. They are only too happy to grab the lifeline offered, attacking and denigrating each other, thereby avoiding answers related to the genuine issues the common man is concerned about. They are rarely questioned on their governance record; questions they would be unable to answer because governance is afforded the least priority in their scheme of things. Even when direct questions are asked, they are adroitly sidestepped by the politicians indulging in a shouting match with each other, creating such bedlam that the viewers cannot follow anything at all - which is the intention in the first place. Our media superstars, who fancy themselves as incisive interlocutors, can do nothing but let the drama play out.

Even when the interviewee is calm and collected, the anchor often fails to get to the heart of the matter. The Rahul Gandhi interview is a classic example. The *shehezada* kept on expounding his lofty goals such as women’s empowerment, allowing parliamentary candidates to be chosen by the people instead of a closed coterie of political leaders, and passing of bills to curb corruption. They sounded grand, but conveyed little real information. Goswami would have done a yeoman service to his viewers by forcing Gandhi to elaborate on his ideas, but hardly broached the subject. He probably is smug in the belief that he has scored a journalistic coup by rattling Rahul about the 1984 riots and getting him to admit partial responsibility; by pinning him down on the Adarsh scam and the free pass given to Ashok Chavan and so on. Even if some Congressmen are convicted for the 1984 riots; and

Ashok Chavan is brought to book, is it going to make the slightest improvement in the lives of ordinary citizens? These news debates are systematically degenerating into a theatre of the absurd.

I am not denying that the media plays a valuable role in unearthing scams and the peccadilloes of the self styled high and mighty. It is because of these exposures that our politicians and other VVIPs are being held

accountable for the first time in half a century. However, grilling the accused on television debates where they either blatantly deny everything, or make ridiculous excuses, or put on an indecipherable show of aggression, serves little or no purpose except to provide entertainment. The illegalities are rarely pursued to their logical conclusion, because they are deemed to be no longer topical. So the perpetrators continue to get away with a slap on the wrist; and nothing really changes. *C'est la vie.*

Narendra Modi – A Man for All Seasons

His aim is to spin a dream of India that only he can fulfil. His forte is that he almost makes it sound believable.

I can hear the groans already. There he goes Modi-bashing again, they snigger. I must be stubbornly misguided. Political pundits and savants are constantly telling me NaMo the Magnificent is the one point solution for the ills that inflict our benighted nation. Modi's ascension to the throne is inevitable and unstoppable. He is the new messiah who will get rid of corruption, have us all cruising along on carpet-top roads, luxuriating in uninterrupted electric power; and put the faltering Indian economic engine firmly back on track. Anyone who questions his unalienable right to be Prime Minister is not only uninformed, but also unpatriotic.

One may not be enamoured of Narendrabhai but one cannot help but gasp in admiration at his speechifying. He has perfected the art to a sublime level. He starts off calmly and sedately and with perfect cadence. His mellifluous opening "*Bhaiyon aur Behenon*" instantly warms the cockles of a rapt audience. They tingle in anticipation of what is to follow. The one-liners and clever barbs expertly targeted at the Congress hierarchy have them rolling in the aisles. Like this gem about the Finance Minister "Chidambaram has come from Harvard, but I have come from HardWork." They particularly admire his cleverness in using intemperate remarks uttered by his political rivals and turning the tables on them. Modi's exploitation of Mani Shankar Iyer's sarcastic "*chai-wallah*" barb against him was a masterstroke. Making virtue out of a reality, he appealed to the wounded pride of tens of thousands of India's tea vendors and co-opted them as his loyal followers and standing army. He made out Sonia Gandhi's "*khoon ki kheti*" remark as a vindictive, desperate cry of an adversary who has exhausted her store of effective weapons. Almost on cue, he can lead his audience to delirious shouts of *hai hai*. Towards the end of his speech, his voice rises to a crescendo, like a Beethoven symphony racing to a thundering climax. Whichever way you look at it, it is a bravura performance.

Modi is a politician for all seasons. He instinctively gauges what a particular audience wants to hear and adroitly tailors his address to suit the prevailing temperament. He caters to the human instinct of preferring to kick a man when he is down, rather than listen to a litany of his virtues. He realizes that taking clever pot shots at his political opponents will usually evoke greater enthusiasm than talking about the achievements of his Party. Take his recent speech in Kolkotta where he shamelessly pandered to Bengali pride. Why, he even managed to rope in President Pranab Mukherjee, who happens to be a Bengali, by shedding crocodile tears for the latter over the injustice done to him by the Congress Party in denying him his rightful post as India's Prime Minister. The intention was obvious. Anticipating an inconclusive verdict in the forthcoming Lok Sabha election, he was trying to curry favour with the man who might be called upon to give a final verdict. I suspect, however, that Mukherjee is too shrewd a politician to be swayed by such transparent tactics.

At a business enclave of Muslims "Ummat Business" held in Ahmedabad in February, Modi donned the avatar of an avuncular guidance counsellor and extolled the latent talents of Muslim youth. He gave assurances that his government would do everything to promote and encourage their skills. His audience was either too bedazzled or too polite to ask the anointed one why he had not done anything for Muslims in the past 12 years, in a state where he had ultimate authority and as one who virtually governed by decree.

Modi's next stop was in Assam where he declared how his heart bleeds for the neglect and injustice meted out to the people of the Northeast by the Congress. He conveniently forgot to mention that the Northeast has not

(Continued on page 37)

CCTV Confusion

“Sardar” Sanjay Matkar

Maharashtra Government officials have shown a distinct lack of knowledge on how the system should be designed, deployed and how it should function!

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is the new mantra of security. The Maharashtra Government has floated tenders for CCTV surveillance systems in the cities of Pune, Nashik, Nagpur, and of course Mumbai. The CCTV surveillance system in Mumbai envisages 6,000 CCTV cameras spread all over the city and will take five years to be installed and become operational.

The project has had setbacks since its very conception. Tendered three times, and once granted to Gujarat based Sai Infotech System for Rs. 650 crores, the project did not materialize since the vendor was unable to provide the requisite bank guarantee. What is most interesting about this specific case is that the original offer from Sai Infotech was for Rs. 1,051 crores. No explanation was asked by the Maharashtra Government about the reduction in the quotation by 50% by the vendor or if such an explanation was given, the Government did not feel the need to share it with the people of Mumbai.

Groping in the Dark

So, what is wrong with this entire deal? First and foremost, the Maharashtra Government officials have shown a distinct lack of knowledge on how the system should be designed, deployed and how it should function. The tender documents are sold by the State's Home Department at a cost of Rs.50,000 per set and requires that the vendor must give a signed undertaking not to divulge the design concepts of the required CCTV system since it is “highly confidential”. This is rather amusing since detailed designs of citywide CCTV systems already deployed in London (UK), Seattle City and Boston City (USA) are available on the internet for those who would like to look for it. The fact is that the Maharashtra Home Department's *babus* have no idea what is needed.

The CCTV system is supposed to aid the Police and Intelligence agencies to

1. keep under surveillance areas that have a high crime rate or potential to be either a base for terrorists or the target of their attack,
2. observe the flow of traffic (pedestrians and vehicles) in high risk areas to assess potential law and order problems and take action to contain such problems

in the shortest possible time, and

3. use CCTV footage to analyze a crime that has been connected and detect the perpetrators in case of a disturbance or terror attack.

Why Use Outdated Technology?

The CCTV surveillance system that is currently being tendered by the Maharashtra Government at a cost of Rs.640 crores involves use of decades old technology using analogue signals. The latest technology uses digital signals transmitted over wireless network which is better in quality, speed and more accurate in imaging.

In terms of expenditure the analogue technology will involve digging a few hundred kilometres of trenches all over the city to lay the fibre optic cable – a major part of a needless cost – and will also involve setting up outdated camera systems. Add to that other factors such as earnest money, performance bank guarantee, political kickbacks, the public exchequer will be paying much more for a system that is already outdated.

On the other hand, using digital signals will not only give a wider and saturated coverage of the city, but will also give better picture quality and faster transmission time. The signals will be relayed via the existing mobile telephony network, totally doing away with the cost of laying out a fibre optic cable network. Digital technology facilitates face and gait recognition. Additionally, such a system comprising 6,000 or even 10,000 digital cameras will not cost more than Rs.100 crores and can be deployed in six to eight months.

Such systems and software designed in India by local engineers are deployed abroad by Indians and/or Indian companies. However, government procurement procedures, are so inflexible that only a privileged handful of companies will qualify and will, in all probability deny the intelligence and police services the best technology that will assure the general public of higher standards of crime prevention and detection.

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Manmohan Singh and India's Foreign Policy, 2004-2014

A Performance Review (Part II)

B. Ramesh Babu

There is hardly a major global issue that can be dealt with effectively without India's participation/acquiescence.

Economic development at home continues to be the governing reality of the nation's foreign policy. This came into high relief when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressed the Annual Conclave of the Ambassadors/High Commissioners abroad early in November 2013. He listed the following as the five defining principles of India's foreign policy. Since this is virtually his 'farewell address', it is worthwhile quoting him in full.

"First, recognition that India's relations with the world – both major powers and our Asian neighbours – are increasingly shaped by our development priorities. The single most important objective of Indian foreign policy has to be to create a global environment conducive to the well-being of our great country and the rest of the world.

"Second, that greater integration with the world economy will benefit India and enable our people to realize their creative potential.

"Third, we seek stable, long term and mutually beneficial relations with all major powers. We are prepared to work with the international community to create a global economic and security environment beneficial to all nations.

"Fourth, we recognize that the Indian sub-continent's shared destiny requires greater regional cooperation and connectivity. Towards this end, we must strengthen regional institutional capability and capacity and invest in connectivity.

"Fifth, our foreign policy is not defined merely by our interests, but also by the values which are very dear to our people. India's experiment of pursuing economic development within the framework of a plural, secular, and liberal democracy has inspired people around the world and should continue to do so."

Let me urge the readers to look at the PM's delineation of India's international objectives carefully and

appreciate the pride of place given to the economy in the scheme of things. Independent India came into a world that was a given reality. We had no role in it. The crucial challenge confronting the nation then was to protect its newly won freedom in the bipolar world wherein the US and the USSR were literally forcing all nations to choose between them. The policy of non-alignment was the conceptual response and the pragmatic strategy to win and sustain some degree of autonomy in the cold war era characterized by an all out worldwide conflict (short of a violent war) between the two military blocs equipped with nuclear weapons.

A quick re-look at the guiding principles elaborated by the Prime Minister will reveal how far India has moved in the global power structure over the decades. From a situation of seeking some elbow room in the bipolar world, India has grown to the stature of proclaiming "the creation of an international environment conducive to our betterment and that of the rest of the world" as the country's objective number one!

There is hardly a major global issue that can be dealt with effectively without India's participation/acquiescence. Obviously, our vast and growing economy – the third largest in the world – is the foundation of the country's elevated place in global affairs. Manmohan Singh's greatest success was the stellar performance of the Indian economy under his leadership. Unfortunately, we have to refer to this achievement in the past tense. From the peak of 10.25 per cent in 2010 the GDP growth has plummeted to 3.2 per cent in 2012. The prospects for the immediate future are only marginally better. While external factors (like the global recession) affected the country adversely, the main causes for the phenomenal failure are to be found at home. The UPA Government led by Sonia and Singh cannot escape responsibility. High inflation, jobless growth, sick agriculture, drastic fall in the value of the Rupee, declining inflow of foreign investment, policy flip flops, inept leadership at the top, not to talk of pervasive corruption and the super scandals galore. UPA-2 has become a byword for inept leadership

and policy paralysis. It is indeed most ironic that the nation's economy is in ruins under the captaincy of an expert economist! There is much wisdom in the axiom that experts should be on tap, not on the top!"

Be that as it may, the nation's foreign relations scene over the decade of 2004-2014 is not devoid of some achievements. We did well in the realms of South-South cooperation, North-South equation, multi-polarization of world politics, and moving closer to the US in order to counter China. On issues of trade & tariff, and global warming, for example, we worked closely with all the developing countries in tune with our declared goal of countering the entrenched hegemony of the US and the West.

The expectation that the rising economies of China, India, ASEAN countries and Brazil would pull the world out of the recession is an indication of the perceptible shift in the North-South equation. The centre of gravity in world affairs has shifted from the Atlantic to Asia-Pacific. Refusal of the Third World to yield on the agreed commitment of "differentiated responsibilities" on global warming despite repeated onslaughts by the West is a good example of the altered balance of power. However, I should caution that what we have seen so far are early skirmishes and the "war" ahead on this front is going to be tough and protracted!

Confrontation (in the Himalayas) and cooperation (on the North-South divide) is still the prism through which India looks at China, our most dangerous adversary. Orchestrating this double edged policy has been a tight rope walk, which has been very unsatisfactory from our perspective. The recent aggressive expansionism of China ignited the long dormant territorial disputes with Japan and many countries in Southeast Asia, which is compelling India to re-order and re-tool its China policy. It is high time our top leadership realizes that the only way to deal with the Dragon is to build a credible countervailing power.

Firstly, India should continue to strengthen its defence capabilities in the border region on a war footing. The recent build up of airlift capability in Ladakh is most welcome. Secondly, we have to keep strengthening our strategic partnership with the US. Our proximity to the US is the only thing that worries China greatly. The visit of Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan, as the Chief Guest on Republic Day (26 January 2014) is and should be seen as a new beginning. India should shed its inhibitions in taking the US-Japan-India-Australia strategic partnership forward in a big way. Today Japan is more ready to come close to India than ever before. We should grasp the opportunity with both hands.

Our long standing policy of South-South cooperation with a view to influence the North-South equation in favour of the poor and developing countries is at last getting somewhere. IBSA and BRICS are the inter-continental institutional manifestations of the concept and strategy that were in the making for so long. If the proposed BRICS Bank moves forward rapidly and we are able to build a global monetary and fiscal alternative to the US dollar in the next decade, the Third World countries would win a "second war of independence" from the West. That takes some doing and China is willing and ready to lead the pack. But, this can and will be torpedoed if the Dragon goes ahead with its aggressive designs in the South China Sea and beyond.

The visit of the German President Joachim Gauck to India on 6 February 2014 so soon after the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister suggests a concerted new initiative by G-4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) to secure seats in the expanded United Nations Security Council.

Though many people around the world do not know, over the years India has emerged on the world scene as a significant donor of economic aid and appropriate technical assistance at less cost, especially to Asian and African countries. Since the beginning of this century India's economic, political and cultural relations with Latin American countries have registered a paradigm shift and the potential for the future is literally limitless.

In conclusion let me say that our economic slowdown and the policy paralysis under the Sonia-Singh regime have put a halt to our rise as a major global player. Let us hope that the 2014 elections will lead to a reversal of the downward trend!

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The Health of Democracy

In America, politics too often look dysfunctional and gridlocked. Elsewhere, from Brazil to Thailand to Ukraine, people have taken to the streets in protest. Is this evidence that representative democracy is failing to adjust to the age of the internet and social media? Or is democracy working more or less as it should, giving opportunities to citizens to express dissatisfaction with their leaders? The subject of an *Economist* debate starting 1st February.

The Economist, February 18, 2014.

The Lessons Learnt at ‘Angarmala’

Sharad Joshi

I started my experiments in agriculture way back in 1976. Towards the end of December in 1976, I bought a piece of agricultural land in the village of Ambethan in Chakan Tehsil of Pune District of Maharashtra. I named the farm “Angarmala”. I still remember that when I took possession of the land on 1st January 1977, the seller signaled the completion of the transfer formalities by presenting me with a handful of soil from the farm. And herein lies a story!

I was so enthusiastic that I started field bunding on the same day. Bunding was necessary as the land had a natural slope at both ends and a stream was flowing through the middle of the land. I had to build bunds to impound the water to arrest the soil from being washed away during the monsoon to level the land. When I started constructing the bunds by digging the soil, many types of insects, worms surfaced. I was a novice to the world of insects. Thinking that it was a valuable and rare treasure, I thought of collecting the specimen of the insects and worms and preserving them with their names. The seller of the land however told me that there was no need to do this as any small child from the village could not only identify these insects and worms but also explain their features. I was quite amazed that even small children from farmers’ families knew all about the worms and insects in the soil.

The second surprise came when I undertook the work of Contour Mapping. A contour map is essential for designing farm layouts and managing surface water. It requires erecting bamboos all over the field and then getting them to be at one level with the help of instruments. A village boy present on the field at that time told me there was not need for any instrument. The level of the land could be known by just bending our body a little and demonstrated what he meant by ascertaining the level correctly. The engineers from Kirloskar Company who were working on it certified its correctness!

This led me to recall an incident which took place at a school in a remote tribal area of Thane district in Maharashtra run by Smt. Tarabai Modak and Smt. Anutai Wagh. A government inspector from the education department had arrived in their school for inspection. He started asking the students general knowledge

questions like who was the minister of the education department etc. which the children were unable to answer. During the recess Tarabai who was present in the classroom asked the children to collect leaves of various types. As soon as the class reassembled, she then asked the inspector to identify the trees by the leaves. The inspector of course, was unable to do so; but the clever village children not only knew their names but also their medicinal properties. The inspector was dumbfounded.

After getting to know the intelligence and knowledge of farmers’ children, I realized that the common perception that farmers are an ignorant lot was not correct. This understanding helped me a lot while putting forth my views on agriculture policies. When I was asking for remunerative prices for agricultural products, many intellectuals stupidly argued that if the farmers made fortunes from agriculture, they would waste their money on weddings, festivals, liquor and the like. It is normal for any rational human being to spend some part of his or her income on leisure and pleasure, be it a professor, a collector, professional or a farmer for that matter who spends some part of his income in pursuit of whatever makes him happy; may be even on some unproductive activity. The intellectual argument was conveniently used



to explain the poverty of the farmer by blaming him for indulging in wasteful and unnecessary expenditure on weddings, festivals etc. Mahatma Phule in his major critique “*Shetkaryacha Aasud*” (Farmers Whipcord) depicts the exploitation and plight of the peasantry and shudras (downtrodden) in the country. He describes the real picture of the farmer’s ‘feast’ at a wedding where the host is able to serve only the bare minimum to the guests. The description reads as follows – “On the auspicious day everyone comes with his own brass plate and is served a Roti (of Jowar) or Rice (that too of the cheapest variety called “*Kani*”) or *Bajra Khichdi* with mutton curry, prepared from the ribs and intestinal parts of a goat. The guest would be lucky if he gets 4/5 pieces in his plate”.

Looking at the practical knowledge of the farmers’ children I wondered if such questions relating to agriculture were asked in an IAS exam how many candidates would be able to answer them satisfactorily? I am convinced they they would fare badly. Thus, success in the examination depends upon the nature of questions. I concluded that if the questions related to agriculture, the farmers’ children would do well in the examination. In other words, what is the desirable criteria, desirable qualities expected at the time of appointments to high positions. Is the intelligence of the interviewee really tested? What position calls for a high level of intelligence and which professions? It is in this context that an amusing thought occurred to me, that a bus conductor uses his intelligence most. He has to calculate the fare every now and then depending upon the distance and the number of stops. This led me to think that a job we consider simple requires an extraordinary level of intelligence! And this convinced me that the belief that a farmer is illiterate, ignorant, lazy, that he is addicted and spends a lot is misconceived. I was convinced that the only reason for the poverty of farmers and their indebtedness is their exploitation by society.

I decided to do some research on the subject and

turned to the library of the Gokhale Institute in Pune to corroborate my conclusions. The work of referring to books, making notes was quite easy compared to the hard work required in farming. Luckily I recalled reading about a debate between Preobrazhensky and Bukharin that took place in Stalin’s time on “Terms of Trade and Class Relations” by Ashok Mitra. I realised that the thoughts and principles I advocated are based not on the thoughts of one person like Michael Lipton but on several such sources and research and also my own experiences in agriculture. My multi-dimensional reading which includes various subjects in various languages contributed considerably in shaping up my thoughts; this also includes my experience of the agitation by French farmers. All this reading combined with the experience I was gaining as an agriculturist helped me in formulating the basic philosophy of the Shetkari Sanghatana and the strategy of farmers’ agitation.

When I look back, I remember those small children in Angarmala who provided the information about small insects and also taught me how to ascertain the level of the land. They may not be aware that the information and the practical knowledge they shared with me was the starting point of my thinking which ultimately turned into a gigantic institution called “Shetkari Sanghatana”.

The principles/thoughts of Shetkari Sanghatana are so basic and special that they provide answers to the questions on subjects ranging from the prices of onions to the creation of the world. The important thing is they do not provide the answers in patches but all answers are interrelated and tied with the same string.

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Swatantra Bharat Paksha abstains from participating in the 2014 Elections

Swatantra Bharat Paksha (SBP) is the only liberal party in the country. It has prepared a cogent manifesto that not only responds to all the problems in the country but is also internally consistent. We find that none of the political parties are in a position to pursue the kind of liberal agenda that SBP supports and the people at large are not prepared for accepting the vision of the SBP. On the contrary all the parties are moving towards currying favour of the *poor*, the *hungry* and the *minorities* as also catering to the needs of the *urban* classes.

Under these circumstances, the SBP decides to abstain from taking part in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. However, **Shetkari Sanghatana** activists are free to contest the elections with the support of any party of their preference as also help in every way possible the candidates so contesting the elections.

SBP will, however, continue to be an active member of the liberal alliance and try its best to ensure that the liberal programme becomes acceptable to the nation at large at an early date.

Sharad Joshi, National President, Swatantra Bharat Paksha. E-mail: sharadjoshi.mah@gmail.com

International Women's Day 8th March 2014

Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy

J. S. Apte

8th March is celebrated as International Women's Day all over the world for more than 80 years. Though a lot of work and a number of reforms have been done in the field of women's welfare, there is still a long way to go. State of World Population Report 2013 paints a grim picture of "Motherhood in Childhood."

About 19 percent of young women in developing countries become pregnant before the age 18 - that is 20,000 girls below the age 18 become mothers everyday. Child marriages lead to motherhood in childhood. These marriages are totally unplanned, unwanted and unwelcome. This phenomenon is an unfortunate outcome of a variety of factors - poverty, gender inequality, sexual violence, coercion. A pregnancy in childhood can have immediate and lasting effects on a girl's health, education and earning potential. About 70,000 adolescent girls in developing countries die annually of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. This is a huge wastage of human capital. The phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy is closely related to issues of human rights. A pregnant girl is forced by her parents to leave the school. Thus she is deprived of her right to education.

According to estimates for 2010, 36.4 million women in developing countries below the ages of 20 to 24 report giving birth before the age 18, of this 17.4 million are from South Asia. Among developing regions, west and central Africa have the maximum percentage - about 28 percent. Developed countries are no exception to adolescent pregnancies. Of the annual 13.1 million births to girls between ages 15 to 19 worldwide 680,000 are from developed countries. Among the developed countries, the United States has the maximum adolescent birth rate.

Adolescent pregnancies are not the concern and problem only in developing countries. Hundreds and thousands of them are reported each year in high and middle income countries also. In developing countries most adolescent pregnancies occur within marriage but in developed countries they occur outside marriage. There is a significant difference between the two types of countries. Adolescent pregnancy has a triple impact on health, education and family economy. Maternal death, illness and disability including obstetric fistula complications of unsafe abortion come under health impact, while school dropouts leading to loss of educational opportunities is the educational effect Family budgets get affected due to loss of employment opportunities.

A number of countries have devised a variety of

programmes for prevention of adolescent pregnancies. Jamaica has instituted a government foundation that enables pregnant girls to continue their education and return to school after they give birth. Kenya gives free school uniforms that increase enrolment, reduce dropout rates by 17 percent. Legislation has a limited role in preventing adolescent pregnancies. According to a recent UNICEF paper, in India though 47 percent of girls are married before 18, only 11 people were convicted for performing child marriages in 2010 despite legislation forbidding it. For most poor families an adolescent girl is a cause of their concern for her security. She is viewed as a financial burden.

A promotional programme for adolescent girls in Bihar was implemented by Pathfinder International Prachar. A government programme has its objective of changing behaviour with the aim of delaying marriage and promoting healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies among adolescent and young couples in Bihar. Bihar has the highest prevalence of child marriage (63 percent) and maximum share (25 percent) of girls between the ages of 15 to 19 who have begun childbearing. The results of the programme are quite encouraging. Participants were 44 percent less likely to be married and 39 percent are less likely to have a child than girls outside the programme area. Prevention of adolescent pregnancy is indeed the need of the hour.

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

Small Farmers are Good at...

Small farmers are good at growing vegetables because of fragmented land holdings.

But many state governments, including Maharashtra, have failed them by not giving them access to markets. Maharashtra still refuses to dismantle the APMC, possibly because small farmers are too weak to protest.

Gujarat, along with Netafim (the world's largest micro irrigation company) has shown that the twin problems of fragmented holdings and reaching out to the markets can be overcome with the help of appropriate technology and good administration.

Will Maharashtra listen?

R. N. Bhasker in a covering note to his article **Land Fragmentation and New Challenges** in *DNA*, 13 January 2014.

A Mantra for Better Governance

Gogineni Sambasivarao

Did you ever wish we had a magic wand that could make our government and leaders work better? It so happens that there is something similar, and it is not impossible to get. Still, do you think it is impossible? Then, go on with this.

The magic wand is providing an opportunity to people to express their liking or disliking of any government service provider from the postman to the President of India, ward member to Prime Minister, from grass-root level government employees, key officials to all people's representatives, political parties and dealers of government services, like ration dealer, cooking gas agency etc. This can be made possible with the enactment of an Act, namely the People's Opinion Act. The Election Commission (EC) could be the implementing agency.

According to the Act, the opinion-seekers [the service providers who are designated to draw people's opinion] are allotted a permanent three digit number valid across the country. The numbering code will be like this: Village Sarpanch 100, ward member 101, Village panchayat secretary 102, postman 120, sanitary inspector 121, ration dealer 110, cooking gas dealer 111, Chief Minister 200, Prime Minister 300, Union home minister 302. This number will remain the same regardless of who is in that post.

Voters will SMS a figure comprising three sets of digits to a permanent phone number allotted by the EC to register their opinion. The first set in the figure represents the permanent number of the opinion-seeker / service provider. The second set is a single digit from 0 to 3. 1 stands for like, 2 for dislike, 3 for neutral and 0 means the voter wants to know the score of the service provider. The third set will have two or three digits which are the last digits of the voter's Aadhaar. Suppose 15 are the last two digits of my Aadhaar. If I want to register my dislike on my ration dealer, I will SMS 110 2 15. To register my liking on Union home minister I will SMS 302 1 15.

The EC keeps the score of every service provider on its website. It updates them once every 24 hours. Four figures appear in every service provider's / opinion-seeker's score. They are likes, dislikes, neutral and enrolled voter's number. The opinion of the voter is retained until he changes his opinion or the person in the post is replaced. The likes, dislikes and neutral start with zero when the person in the post is replaced. Voters may change their opinions whenever they wish. The SMSs will be free of cost. However, as the voters are about 80 crores and

opinion-seekers are in hundreds, a limit can be imposed on the number of SMSs a voter can send in a day, for example 5, to avoid traffic rush on the EC's server.

Since Aadhaar is a foolproof identification, only those who have Aadhaar and cell phone, are eligible for utilising this opportunity. To begin with, voters should enrol their Aadhaar, cell phone number, address, ward number and the details of government services used by him, i.e. gas agency's name and consumer number, ration card number and dealer number, and the school name in which his children are studying at enrolment centres like E-seva centres and get it authenticated through Aadhaar.

Aadhaar authentication, a service yet to be commenced by the UIDAI, is confirmation that the details provided by the voter are correct by comparing his biometric data with the existing information on their database. All government service delivery agencies collect their consumers' Aadhaar and make them available to the EC online. The EC will have software that automatically identifies those who will come under the purview of a particular voter once he gets his details enrolled. The EC officials accept the details of a voter received online by checking the data of the service provider. The latter will have to give their reasons online if they want to reject any enrolment. If they make any mistake, it can be brought to the EC's notice.

The voter should use the cell phone number enrolled otherwise the SMSs sent by him will be rejected. If s/he wants to change the phone number or even the address s/he can do so with Aadhaar authentication. The EC's server automatically identifies voter's Aadhaar through his phone number though it receives only two digits. If a family of five get themselves enrolled with the same phone number, the last two digits of Aadhaar of any two members are unlikely to be the same. If this happens the third set in their SMSs should have three digits instead of two.

When a voter sends an SMS consisting of '0' in the second set he will receive the score of the service provider / opinion-seeker. All details are confidential. It will not be possible for anybody to know who the opinion-

seeker was and what opinion a voter has registered after he sends an SMS. If any opinion-seeker forces a voter to send an SMS in his favour by threat or enticement, the voter can rectify it later with another SMS. Some more details about this idea:

- This idea is limited to eliciting people's opinion. Even if all the voters dislike an opinion-seeker s/he will not lose his post according to the Act. But people's opinion will put moral pressure on service providers/ opinion-seekers to improve their score and they in turn will put pressure on their subordinates for a better score.
- If the system is implemented all over the country for five years, people will have a great deal of awareness and experience. Then relevant Acts can be made to sack the service provider / opinion-seekers from their posts if they have more than 75 per cent dislikes for more than three months in a row.
- People's opinion can be collected on all bills approved by our legislatures through this system.
- There are many who may not know how to use a cell phone. That is why only numbers are used in this system which can be learnt with a little practice
- Until now, only about 40 crore people have Aadhaar and many rural areas do not have signal coverage. However, this should not be considered a hurdle or reason to provide this opportunity to those who

already have Aadhaar and cell phone coverage. As this will improve governance, there will be demand from the remaining areas for Aadhaar and cell signal coverage which the government will be forced to provide.

- The government may provide cell phone free of cost to the poor who cannot afford it. The Act prohibits sending SMSs on behalf of others beyond their family members, and it will be treated as a culpable offence.
- Honest politicians are gradually disappearing from politics as they cannot compete with the corrupt politicians. This system will help them, as a good score will fetch them victory.
- In theory, people are lords in democracy. But in our country people are treated as beggars while government employees and people's representatives have gradually emerged as lords.
- Politicians organize large rallies by mobilizing people in hoards luring them with money and liquor to show-off people's support. This system will put an end to that trend.
- At present people do not have a method to register their opinion peacefully after the elections. As a result it prompts them to resort to violence when they get a raw deal. This system will change such a situation.

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A Lost Opportunity

By declining to review its retrograde decision to uphold the validity of Section 377, the Supreme Court has lost an opportunity to revisit a verdict that has drawn widespread criticism for failing to extend constitutional protection to sexual minorities. While it is true that the scope for review is limited, there was some hope for the LGBT community when the Union government came forward to seek a review of the December 2013 verdict. Many jurists, activists and political leaders felt the ruling overturned a well-reasoned judgment of the Delhi High Court, which had read down Section 377 to de-criminalise consensual sex among adults irrespective of gender. It was seen as incongruous with the mores of our times. The verdict required a review on merits because of some intriguing conclusions. The Bench had ruled that "those indulging in carnal intercourse against the order of nature" constituted a different class, and that Parliament could treat the category differently from others. It had failed to see that 'order of nature' is itself an artificial construct rooted in the outdated view that alternative sexuality is unnatural. It had dismissed the LGBT

community as a minuscule fraction of the population, as though the relative smallness of a group disentitled it to constitutional protection

While holding that Section 377 suffered from no infirmity, the Bench had said it was open to the legislature to delete or amend it. The verdict had cast a shadow of doubt on the judiciary's decisiveness in enforcing fundamental rights. In a recent case concerning death row convicts and mercy petitions, it was reaffirmed that the Supreme Court was best equipped to adjudicate the content of fundamental rights. "This Court has always granted relief for violation of fundamental rights and has never remanded the matter," it said..... The situation is ripe for a legislative solution, but the process may not be easy, for not all members and parties will be able to resist the influence of religious conservative groups that are likely to oppose any amendment.

Excerpted from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-lost-opportunity/article5635619>. Courtesy Karmayug. Posted on the site by Thiagarajan Arunachalam.

The Case of Helicopters for VVIPs

Suresh C. Sharma

The Augusta Westland helicopter has been the only case of accepting equipment still under development.

In 1999, the IAF forwarded the Request for Proposal [RFP] for procurement of helicopters to eleven vendors to replace the aging MI 8 machines. The helicopters were required for use by VVIPs like the President and Prime Minister [PM]. The list of vendors is proposed by the Service HQ and the Ministry of Defence [MOD] may add or delete any names. The Service HQ define the Services Qualitative Requirement [SQR] against which the offers by the vendors are examined.

The EC 225 machine of Eurocopter was found to be suitable. When the then National Security Advisor [NSA], Brajesh Mishra, pointed out that the President and PM did not usually fly to places above 4500 metres, the SQR was revised to replace the altitude requirement from 6000 metres to 4500 metres and the number of helicopters was increased from eight to twelve. The revised SQR was sent to six out of the earlier list of eleven vendors. It needs to be checked whether Eurocopter whose machine EC 225 was judged suitable was included amongst the six vendors. Three vendors qualified for the helicopters. The Russian vendor declined to sign the integrity pact assuring that no middlemen were involved and was disqualified. Insistence by the PMO for a minimum cabin height of 1.8 metres eliminated all competition in favour of the chosen vendor – Finmeccanica.

Bending Procedures

Next steps in the procurement process are field trials, review by a Technical Oversight Committee [TOC] to check compliance for projects of Rs.300 crores or more with laid down procedure and price negotiations. Field trials are conducted in conditions where the equipment is planned to be used and claims of the vendors verified. It follows that trials would be conducted in India. An exception was made in the case of these helicopters and trials were carried out in USA and UK in January-February 2008. The helicopters of Augusta Westland were still under development and shockingly, the trials were conducted on two representative helicopters and a mock up of the passenger cabin. A different methodology was used to evaluate helicopters of other vendors. *It has been the only*

case of accepting equipment still under development.

The TOC comprising representatives of IAF, Defence Research and Development Organization [DRDO] and a Defence PSU not involved with procurement of the helicopters reported that the evaluation process of vendor selection, conduct of trials and compliance with SQR was in order. By now, it was clear that AW101 helicopter was the winner. *Instead of asking the vendor to extend the validity of their quotation, the MOD asked for fresh commercial quotes.* A benchmark figure is decided by the MOD and if the quotation of the vendor is lower than the benchmark, no negotiations need be carried out.

For Vendor's Benefit

In 2006, the IAF had estimated the price to be Rs.793 crore. In 2008, the negotiating team set up by the MOD placed the benchmark figure at Rs.4,877.5 crore. It was more than six times the earlier figure. The vendor asked for a price of Rs.3,966 crore. It shows that the MOD was prepared to pay an exorbitant price. Contrary to the established procedure, the IAF demanded additional systems during price negotiations which gave an opportunity to the vendor to demand higher price. A contract for supply of twelve 3-engine based AW 101 helicopters was signed in February 2010 with the UK based subsidiary of Finmeccanica for Rs.3,546 crores. An offset contract of Rs.1,118.09 crore was signed along with the main contract.

In 2012, allegations of giving bribes of Rs 375 crore by Haschike, Carlos and Michel, executives of Finmeccanica surfaced in Italy. In February 2012, CEO Giuseppe Orsi was arrested. The Government of India took action only after the arrest of the CEO and referred the case to the CBI who has named the former Air Chief Tyagi in the FIR. It is understood that the Italian prosecutors have documents referring to kickbacks paid to Indian politicians, bureaucrats and military officers. The contract was cancelled in December 2013, almost a year after the allegations surfaced in Italy. Three helicopters have already been delivered and 45% of the contract amount already

paid. The contract has been terminated for violation of the integrity condition of not employing any middlemen and the vendor has been blacklisted. The contract obligations provide for cancellation of orders, recovery of payment and penal action. Meanwhile the company has been blacklisted.

The vendor has asked for arbitration and has appointed former Supreme Court Justice Srikrishna as its arbitrator. The Attorney General has advised that integrity related issues are not subject to arbitration but has nominated former Supreme Court Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy as its arbitrator to safeguard our interests. Augusta Westland has taken it to be Government of India's willingness to accept arbitration. *It could be another step to help the vendor.*

The CAG in its Report has found that the entire process of acquisition of helicopters had not followed the laid down procedure. It lacked transparency and accountability. The report was presented to Parliament on 13 August 2013. The CAG has pointed out that deviations from the laid down procedure can be approved by the Defence Minister only in exceptional circumstances and has questioned the rationale of granting deviations on eight counts. In all these cases, the deviations were beneficial to the vendor and detrimental to India.

Reports of kickbacks by Augusta Westland have

surfaced in another case too the purchase of 197 helicopters for the Army Aviation Corps. There have been no allegations of bribes in deals with UK and Norway. The fault lies with us and not with the vendor. The black-listing of the company will make supply of spares difficult for the three machines already received. This difficulty has been experienced in previous cases of blacklisting of suppliers. Spares for Bofor guns and HDW submarines had to be procured from dubious sources. It is strange that the bureaucrats responsible for lapses in the procurement of these equipments were not punished.

The deal should be investigated for lapses in procurement process, failure of the TOC to point out deviations from the procedure, amendments to SQR during price negotiations and granting deviations from procedure on eight counts. There was delay in taking action immediately after allegations of bribes surfaced in Italy in February 2010. The investigating agency should check reasons for sending enquiries only to six vendors and the rationale of fixing the benchmark price at the high figure of Rs.4877.5 crore. The number of machines required was increased from 8 to 12. Who are likely to use it? The Ministry of Finance [Defence] examines any requests for purchase minutely. Did they call for the list of VVIPs? Did every one agree to the enhanced figure to enjoy free rides?

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Rambhau Mhalgi: An Exceptional *Aamdaar*

M. B. Damania

It has now become fashionable to ridicule politicians and to call them criminals. Such remarks may be justified considering that those in power have amassed fantastic amounts of money and a different set of criminal or taxation laws seem to apply to them. So, let me tell you some stories about a politician with whom I came into contact in 1977.

Ramchandra Kashinath Mhalgi, popularly known as Rambhau Mhalgi contested the elections to the Lok Sabha in 1977 from the Thane parliamentary constituency as a candidate of the Janata Party, after the end of Indira Gandhi's emergency rule. He defeated the Congress candidate Prabhakar Hegde, a well known and powerful lawyer. In 1980 he was re-elected to the Lok Sabha, this time as a member of the BJP.

As a member of the Lok Sabha, he was entitled to generous travel and daily allowances. Rambhau claimed only allowances which were a bare necessity. Coming by air from Delhi, he would walk to the bus stand and stand in the queue like any other passenger.

His meetings with citizen groups were like clock-work. He would announce the time of start and end of the meeting then keep punctually to time. He never carried notes nor was he accompanied by a secretary. He would guide discussions and give his opinion or instructions, point by point. Just before the end of a meeting, he would summarise the discussions. If the next meeting was after six months, he would recite this summary from memory and take up each point from where it had been left off at the previous meeting.

He taught us how to make representations to the government. He told us that as citizens of a free country, we had a right to proper service from government employees; so we should write directly to the department concerned. If there was no response, we should write to the government secretary. If still there was no satisfactory result, he would ask a question in parliament.

At that time, there was a severe shortage of electric

power. Some industries in Thane had a quota of 10 units per month which was not enough to burn one tube light.



Company reports of Tata Power repeatedly reported that their application for expansion of the Trombay generating unit was pending with the Central government. We asked Rambhau why the expansion was not approved when we were starved of power. He said "Give me a note". So we prepared a note for him, with excerpts from reports of companies and the Institution of Engineers. He asked a question in parliament: "Will the minister please state which applications for power generation are pending with the government and the status of each application." At the next session, he got the reply: "All applications have been approved."

Today, members of parliament demand a minimum Rs.10,000 for asking a question. With Rambhau, it was a matter of doing his duty. He never expected or took a single paisa.

On his own initiative, Rambhau made several petitions on subjects of public interest on which he felt strongly. He sent out regular reports to his constituency about what he was doing to deserve our confidence in voting for him. Perhaps there are other representatives who make similar reports; unfortunately, I do not know of any.

One day, he invited me to accompany him on a visit to the local state insurance office. I picked him up from a friend's house (he never used the government guest house). He talked to people waiting in queues and listened to their problems. He talked to the clerks and asked them why they were not able to give good service within reasonable time. They explained their problems. He then met the office manager and introduced himself. He said he had some suggestions and requested the manager to

note them. The manager said that whatever the Member of Parliament had to say, he should say to the state insurance head office in Delhi. Rambhau said that in that case, he would make his suggestions to the manager and ask in parliament what action was taken on his suggestions. The office manager was in a state of panic.

Sadly, Rambhau developed a malignant brain tumour. His party wanted to send him to USA for treatment and offered to pay all expenses. He said: "What will US doctors do, that our doctors cannot do?" He took whatever treatment was available at the Bombay Hospital. We asked

him if he needed anything. He asked for a small television (at that time there was no TV in hospitals). He wanted us to bring an old discarded TV. However, we contributed for a small black-and-white set which he gratefully accepted. He passed away peacefully after a few days.

Do such politicians exist anymore?

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The Magnificent Deeds of the Indian Army

Raj Mohindra

The expression of regret by the Mayor of Taranto (Italy) some time ago for the killing of two Indian fishermen by Italian marines from the Enrica Lexie, and his offer to take up the responsibility of educating the bereaved children gains significance from the city's historical association with India.

I discovered that association quite by chance in 1967 when I was an officer on board INS Brahmaputra. My ship was diverted to Taranto owing to a coup against King Constantine in Greece, our original destination.

The ship berthed in Taranto in the early hours of a Sunday. There was no one there apart from the shore berthing party of a few men.

As time went by, a large number of Taranto's residents, including several senior citizens, started congregating near the ship. They carried placards welcoming the Indians to Taranto. It was a mystery to us as to why such a crowd was building up. We were told that the news of the Indian ship's arrival was announced on the local radio. By the evening, the crowd had swelled. Several residents held placards inviting us to dinners, lunches and picnics.

I was invited to dinner by the family of the late Ms. Ines Ghosh, the Italian wife of the late Surgeon Rear Admiral J. N. Ghosh, Indian Navy. Ghosh met Ines in Taranto where he was a prisoner of war.

There I heard heart-rending stories of World War II. They narrated how when the British 8th Army comprising British, Australian, Canadian, Indian and troops of other nationalities invaded southern Italy in July 1943

the soldiers from all armies except the Indian Army indulged in rape, molestation and plunder.

One of the elderly ladies present told us how she was being chased by two Allied soldiers when an Indian soldier intervened and protected her. He told them not to harm her because she was his sister!

In another instance a posse of Indian soldiers voluntarily guarded an apartment building and prevented soldiers of the other Allied armies from entering it. There were numerous stories of heroism like this. These marvellous episodes bore testimony to the ethical standards and professionalism of the Indian Army.

The following day there was a special reception in honour of the personnel of INS Brahmaputra in the town hall. Meanwhile, invitations from the citizenry continued to flow, so much so that the late Captain Erach Debu, Commanding Officer of the ship, volunteered to keep harbour watch in the ship himself and let all his officers go ashore to attend the functions.

Several shops refused to accept money for the merchandise purchased by the ship's personnel.

When the ship left port finally after four days, virtually the entire town was on the jetty with several bands in attendance to bid adieu. It was a very moving and emotional experience.

The ethics of the magnificent Indian Army and its gentlemanly officers and men is still etched in the memory of the citizens of Taranto.

Captain Raj Mohindra, I.N. (Retd.)

The Legacy of Maulana Azad

Dr. T. H. Chowdary

Maulana Azad was not psychologically of a Pakistani bent of mind. He was a Muslim Indian who (for the preservation of Muslims' safety and influence through larger numbers) did not want the partition of India and creation of Pakistan.

Abul Kalam Azad is portrayed as a great nationalist Muslim totally dedicated to the preservation of united India that is, no partition and no Pakistan. His presidential address to the Indian National Congress in 1940 is quoted in vindication of his faith. To any perceptive person it is clear from his speech that Azad did not want the division of India not so much in his belief in single nationhood as in the preservation of the strength of the large number of Muslims in an undivided India. In fact, while presiding over the Muslim League session in Calcutta in 1928 he even gave expression to the terrible idea that the Hindu minority in the Muslim majority Provinces of Bengal, Punjab, North-West Frontier, Sindh and Baluchistan would be a hostage so that Muslims in the rest of the Hindu majority provinces would not be treated unfairly. Is this a profound or a profane idea?

Maulana Azad was indeed a great Islamic scholar. He was born in Mecca. He lived in Calcutta. In spite of all his scholarship and background, he had no following among the Muslims of India. In 1946, he was not elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal or Delhi or from anywhere else in India or any constituency reserved for Muslims. He was elected from the Congress-ruled North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) courtesy, the nationalist Muslim leaders Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Khan Sahib. After partition, NWFP became a part of Pakistan. Maulana Azad lost his membership of the Constituent Assembly. He was brought back to the Constituent Assembly from a general non-Muslim constituency in Bihar. He was a Muslim leader of Hindus in the Congress and not a leader of Muslim masses or electorate.

That the so called nationalist Muslims had little following was evident from the fact that in the 1937 elections, while the Muslim League won 106 seats out of 485 reserved for Muslims, the rest were won by non-Muslim League provincial Muslim parties in the Punjab and Bengal

and Muslim independents in the rest of India. The Congresses' nationalist Muslims got zero seats. In 1940 Mohammed Ali Jinnah stridently spelt out the two-nation theory and demanded the partition of India asserting that Muslims are a separate nation and that Pakistan should be created as a national homeland for the sub-continent's Muslims. His call was taken up by almost all Muslims in the country. In the 1946 elections, out of 485 Muslim seats in the Provincial Assemblies, the Muslim league won 425; Congress contested only 58 seats and got 26. The nationalist Muslims voting for the Congress brand of a single nation and undivided India were 1.4%. It is therefore clear that the *Muslims in the Congress were leaders of Hindus and not of Muslims.*



When independent India was making the Constitution, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad led the Muslim members

to demand the continuance of a separate electorate and weighted reservations (50% more than Muslim population justified for Muslims). Fortunately, under the inspiring leadership of Sardar Patel, a few former Muslim League members like Begum Aizaz Rasul denounced the idea of two-nations and a separate electorate in post-partition free India. Christian, Parsi and Sikh members also denounced reservations for minorities and separate electorates. It is obvious that the so called nationalist Muslims have had little following in any of the Indian Parties ranging from Communists to the Congress (Sardar Patel used to say that the only nationalist Muslim he knew in the Congress was Jawaharlal Nehru).

Maulana Azad was not psychologically of a Pakistani bent of mind. He was a Muslim Indian who (for the preservation of Muslims' safety and influence through larger numbers) did not want the partition of India and creation of Pakistan. That he was repudiated by the Muslims of India was clearly expressed in a speech he made to bewildered Muslims gathered in Jama Masjid in Delhi on 23 October 1947 when he regretted that his co-

religionists had ignored his advice. Here are his words:

“I hailed you, you cut off my tongue. I picked up my pen, you severed my hand. I wanted to move forward, you cut my legs. I tried to turn over, and you injured me in the back. When the bitter political games of the last seven years were at their peak, I tried to wake you up at every danger signal... I warned you that the two-nation theory was the death-knell to a meaningful and dignified life, forsake it. To all this you turned a deaf ear. And now you have discovered that the anchors of your faith have set you adrift. The debacle of Indian Muslims is the result of the colossal blunders committed by the Muslim League’s misguided leadership.” (*Syed Saiyidin Hameed’s translation of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad’s talk in Urdu – cited in “Jinnah-India-Partition-Independence (2009)” by Jaswant Singh. Published by Rupa, Delhi.*)

As Union Education Minister for eight years, Azad saw to it that the history of India presented in the text books was negationist; that is, cover up deeds perpetrated by the Muslim invaders and settlers and converts – loot, slaughter, destruction of temples, zazia tax, forced conversions, forcing widows of dead soldiers into harems, sale of captured children in the slave bazaars of Baghdad, burning of libraries and appropriation of defeated peoples’

properties to constitute Wakfs for the welfare of Muslims etc.

In his autobiography *India Wins Freedom* posthumously published, he expressed the opinion that he erred in backing Jawaharlal as Prime Minister. He opined that Sardar Patel would have been a better Prime Minister. Gandhiji prevailed upon Sardar Patel to withdraw from the contest for Presidentship of Congress, once in 1928 and again in 1945, in favour of Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji’s fear in 1945 was that Nehru would never agree to be number two in a cabinet headed by Sardar Patel and therefore there would be a rift in the Congress.

Maulana Azad’s legacy is wrongly reflected in the establishment of an Urdu University named after him, in Hyderabad. There are plans to open five more Urdu Universities. These would be that many Aligarh Muslim Universities, to produce Muslim Leaguers as of yore. May this not happen.

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Alexander's Failed Invasion of India

In an address to Cadets of the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun in 1957 the legendary Russian General Marshal Zhukov said that Alexander's actions after the Battle of Hydaspes between his army and that of King Porus suggest he had suffered an outright defeat. In part two (FF 560 February 2014) Plutarch the Greek Historian wrote that after that defeat Alexander's soldiers were in no mood to take on the kingdom of Magadh led by an even more powerful army commanded by the Nandas. We conclude with Alexander's retreat:

Hundreds of kilometres from the Indian heartland, Alexander ordered a retreat to the great jubilation of his soldiers. The celebrations were premature. On its way south towards the sea, Alexander's army was constantly harried by Indian partisans, republics and kingdoms.

In a campaign at Sangala in Punjab, the Indian attack was so ferocious it completely destroyed the Greek cavalry, forcing Alexander to attack on foot. In the next battle, against the Malavs of Multan, he was felled by an Indian warrior whose arrow pierced the Macedonian's breastplate and ribs.

Says Military History magazine: "Although there was more fighting, Alexander's wound put an end to any more personal exploits. Lung tissue never fully recovers, and the thick scarring in its place made every breath cut like a knife."

Alexander never recovered and died in Babylon (modern Iraq) at the age of 33.

There is also a follow-up piece: Alexander vs Porus: Beyond the fog of war¹.

Here are some excerpts:.

In his book, *Foreign Influence on Ancient India*, Krishna Chandra Sagar says 150 years before Alexander, Indian archers and cavalry formed a significant component of the Persian army and played a key role in subduing Thebes in central Greece.

Alexander, however, knew no fear. More than anything else, he wanted to invade India. It would prove to be a strategic blunder.

Marshal Zhukov's take

"Following Alexander's failure to gain a position in India and the defeat of his successor Seleucus Nikator, relationships between the Indians and the Greeks and the Romans later, were mainly through trade and diplomacy. Also the Greeks and other ancient peoples did not see themselves as in any way superior, only different."

This statement by Russia's Marshal Gregory Zhukov on the Macedonian invasion of India in 326 BCE is significant because unlike the prejudiced colonial and Western historians, the Greeks and later Romans viewed Indians differently. For instance, Arrian writes in *Alexander Anabasis* that the Indians were the noblest among all Asians.

In fact, Arrian and other Greeks say the Indians were relentless in their attacks on the invaders. They say if the people of Punjab and Sindh were fierce, then in the eastern part of India "the men were superior in stature and courage".

All this is glossed over by Western historians, in whose view the one victory over King Porus amounted to the "conquest of India". But the Greeks made no such claim.

Battle of Hydaspes – Hardest ever

Greek contemporary writers describe the Battle of Hydaspes (Jhelum) as the hardest fought of all Alexander's battles. Frank Lee Holt, a professor of ancient history at the University of Houston, writes in his book, *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions*: "The only reference in Arrian's history to a victory celebration by Alexander's army was after the battle with Porus."

Alexander's army did not indulge in celebrations after the Battle of Gaugamela where they defeated 200,000 Persians. No wild festivities were announced after the Battle of Issus where they defeated a mixed force of Persian cavalry and Greek mercenaries.

The fact they celebrated after the Battle of Hydaspes suggests they considered themselves extremely lucky to survive after the clash with the Hindu army, with its elephant corps.

If Porus lost, why reward him?

According to the Greeks, Alexander was apparently so impressed by Porus he gave back his kingdom plus the territories of king Ambhi of Taxila who had fought alongside the Macedonians. This is counterintuitive. Ambhi had become Alexander's ally on the condition he would be given Porus' kingdom. So why reward the enemy, whose army had just mauled the Macedonians?

The only possible answer is at the Battle of Hydaspes, the Macedonians realised they were dealing with an enemy of uncommon valour. Sensing defeat they called for a truce, which Porus accepted. The Indian king struck a bargain – in return for Ambhi's territories, which

would secure his frontiers, Porus would assist the Macedonians in leaving India safely.

Alexander's post-Hydaspes charitable behaviour, as per Greek accounts, is uncharacteristic and unlikely. For, in battles before and after, he massacred everyone in the cities he subdued.

Why pay off a vassal? Before the battle, Alexander gave king Ambhi 1000 talents (25,000 kilos) of gold for fighting alongside the Macedonians. The only explanation is Ambhi was driving a hard bargain. He knew the rattled Macedonian army was seeking to quickly exit India. He thought he could use the Macedonians to remove his rival Porus. However, Porus' decision to offer Alexander combat checkmated those plans.

Tired of fighting: Lame excuse

Greek sources say Alexander retreated from India because his soldiers were weary, homesick and close to mutiny. Imagine if German soldiers had told Hitler they were tired of fighting. They would have been summarily shot. In Alexander's time, the punishment was crucifixion.

The Macedonian army had a system of rotation where large batches of veteran soldiers were released to return home (with sufficient gold and slaves). In their place, fresh troops eagerly poured in from Europe.

If they were weary of constant warring, it is inexplicable why these soldiers chose to fight their way through obstinately hostile Indian territories. The homesick soldiers would have preferred the garrisoned northwestern route they took while coming in. Why would a brilliant commander subject himself and his troops to further

violence when all they wanted was a peaceful passage home? Clearly, the Macedonians were in a mess and not thinking straight. Not the sign of a victorious army.

Alexander's tragedy was he was in a Catch-22 situation. The Macedonians and Greeks welcomed the wealth from the conquered lands, but the man who ensured this flow was *persona non grata*. In Greek eyes a Macedonian was hardly an equal. The Greeks hated Alexander for sacking their cities and enslaving their people. In his own country, he was an outsider for being half-Albanian, from his mother's side. The common people suspected him of murdering his father.

So in order to retain the loyalty of his troops, Alexander had to wage constant war while also taking great personal risks in battle. For, he could not be seen as weak, let alone beaten. A few years before the Indian campaign, a large part of the Macedonian army was massacred by the Scythians (Hindu Shakas, the Buddha's clansmen) at Polytimetus, present day Tajikistan. Alexander warned his surviving troops not to discuss the massacre with other soldiers.

Strabo the Greek Historian wrote: "Generally speaking, the men who have written on the affairs of India were a set of liars... Of this we became more convinced whilst writing the history of Alexander.

(concluded)

From the Net. Contributed by Col. T. S. Tanwar, Pune. ts.tanwar@gmail.com

ⁱ http://indrus.in/blogs/2013/06/03/alexander_vs_porus_beyond_the_fog_of_war_25749.html.

ⁱⁱ By Rakesh Krishnan Simha

The RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan takes School kids' Questions

Pranav Rajkumar, a student of Thakur Vidya Mandir:

Question: *In India and various parts of Mumbai there are so many slums and poor people; why should it be wrong to create more extra money, and distribute it among these people?*

Answer: Whether it is money, food, clothing, whatever, certainly some amount of distribution is warranted in a poor country. But if you are really distributing something, the best thing to distribute is opportunity. Can we distribute opportunity? And this goes back to the saying, if you give somebody fish he will be back tomorrow for more; if you teach him to fish, he will be independent, he won't have to come back. It does mean a certain basic level of nutrition, access to school, access to better education, access to scholarships. Those are very important; they give a

chance to break away. But they should not feel they are permanently in a situation where they are continuously going to get. It makes them lose respect for their situation. But if they can become independent they have both self-respect and respect of others. I think we should aim to broaden opportunity; we should look for children falling behind and make sure they have the chance to succeed.

At a *Times of India's* Newspaper in education (NIE) meet when RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan interacted with 800 children from Mumbai's schools.

The Times of India, February 2, 2014

universities for studies. They have a different prescription for the ordinary people. The choice of medium of instruction should be left to the parents and no compulsion should be exercised to promote views of local politicians.

Private Tuitions

The Act lays down that no teacher should engage himself in private tuitions or private teaching. This is all well but misses the point as to why do children need private tuitions. Parents who desire their children to undertake medical or engineering degree invariably arrange tuitions. We can see these kids going for private tuitions after school hours. It is a reflection on the standard of teaching

and learning. The correct approach should be to enhance the quality of teaching.

Higher Studies

Admission to class IX should be based on the result of tests. Higher education, particularly in technical and medical subjects, is vital for the prosperity of society and steps must be taken to ensure high quality of teaching from class IX onwards so as to be competitive in the world.

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Jamboree and Junket in the Aftermath of Muzaffarnagar Riots

Dr. Jyoti Marwah

My father's generation saw a divided India and our children are now destined to see a divided Uttar Pradesh in Muzaffarnagar. God forbid if this becomes the order of the day it could be a Further Divided India. The developments strike an incongruous note, if the intent is understood as intentional displacement of people to create vote bank ghettos through veiled ethnic cleansing or to use unassuming people to grab land or to make sugar bitter. The players behind the tragedy in Muzaffarnagar need to be grabbed and refrained from sending such signals to the rest of the country.

The apathy displayed by the Uttar Pradesh government is unimaginable and one wonders, as to how the neglect has been so pervasive. With more than 59 dead over a period of five months, since 24th August 2013 the government has been unable to find a solution, with concerted action to the problems faced by nearly 9000 displaced and homeless families from 24 villages in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts. The riots have been the deadliest in the last decade. The Supreme Court has had to jolt the government into action asking them to file affidavits, while the Yadavs resent the CBI probe into the matter.

Heightened insensitivity and apathy has been visible in the junket and jamboree extravaganza of the ruling party in Uttar Pradesh. While the people in tents shivered and children died in the cold, with temperatures falling to 1.5 degrees celsius, 22 ministers and MLAs went on a 20 day junket to Turkey, Greece, the Netherlands, UK and UAE apparently under the guise of a 'study tour'.

For the jamboree at Saifai in Etawah district of UP, the hometown of the Chief Minister, a two week extravaganza was organised where ten planes were chartered to ferry Bollywood stars and VIPs from Mumbai and Delhi amidst the misery of the riot affected victims of Muzaffarnagar, they danced and celebrated for what the misery and misfortune of thousands in the state?

The Government of Uttar Pradesh having failed the people has resulted in Islamic groups sending help and doctors to attend to the health of the people as children are dying of pneumonia and diarrhoea. The last casualty being the death of a 20-day old infant, born in the refugee camp and died there, as reported by NDTV in a coverage on the eve of India's 64th Republic Day. Does it not sound odd to refer to these internally displaced people as refugees in their own country? Is it a repeat of the biggest and first ever incident of ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri pandits, in their own country on 19th January 1989?

It is extremely unfortunate that generation after generation our children are faced with such unimaginable misfortune and tragedy. Surely the experience will remain etched in the lives of those who were victims of this deep rooted conspiracy which has uprooted and destroyed the fabric of their family life. Down the line no one will remember the failure of the Samajwadi party's government to resolve the fears and apprehensions of these people. It will be looked upon as the country's failure to stand by them in their hour of need as is felt by the Kashmiri pundits today.

A law and order situation in Muzaffarnagar had

become a full blown riot for several reasons on some faulty assumptions of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Muzaffarnagar is in the heart of the sugar belt of Uttar Pradesh and Akhilesh Yadav's Government was unable to resolve the sugar cane related matters in the recent past which had left the Jat's agitated. However the government did not anticipate violent Jat reaction relying on the traditional Jat-Muslim combine arising out of economic commonness of purpose. The Samajwadi Party was confident of no backlash by the Jats even if they favoured the Muslims as the Muslims lived mainly in the towns and were a majority whereas the Jats lived in the villages being a minority. Unexpectedly the intensity of the riots shifted to the villages. Thirdly they were sure that problems related to the sugar mills would not get mixed up with the Jat-Muslim conflict.

In their game plan SP failed to recognize that the Jat-Muslim unity had already begun to wane since 2011 when Narendra Singh Tikait of the Bhartiya Kisan Union had begun to alienate the Muslim farmers by starting the elimination of the muslim farmers from the union. Mufti Zulfikar Ali the Shahar Mufti of Muzaffarnagar has reported that the Jat community was not pleased with Ajit Singh's RLD on joining the Congress UPA, hence Jats had already shifted their allegiance to the BJP.

Mulayam Singh Yadav has played caste and communal cards for too long now. He first began by experimenting with the Muslim-Yadav combine, then moved to Ahir-Jat-Gujjar combine and now to ATM politics but

the party does not seem to be gaining or growing in popularity. The position of the party is far from good with either of the groups.

I spoke to more than a dozen people seeking their views on the riots in Muzaffarnagar and parallel issues of ethnic cleansing in Kashmir, it was unbelievable to find that not a single one of them had any view on the incident and appeared withdrawn from the happening. On further prodding the first query as to why it happened in Muzaffarnagar, they were confused about the truth of the whole matter. Truly enough that remains to be true for all of us. Further discussions got them involved into thinking on the gravity of the issue and then I found that there was some concern for a worrisome future that threatens India in the wake of these newer dimensions of communalism.

It is time that every educated Indian begins to educate others not just in the three R's but on issues of contemporary and current concerns. This responsibility must be shouldered by teachers in schools and colleges, Self Help Groups and Non-Government Organizations. The threat of 'Dynastic communalism' is as great as newer parameters in the practice of 'communalism.'

DR. JYOTI MARWAH, I/C Principal & Head, Department of History, ICLES' Motilal Jhunjhunwala College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Navi Mumbai 400703, Member, Board of Studies (History) & Faculty of Arts, University of Mumbai, Jmarwah01@yahoo.in

Cornucopia *(Cont'd. from page 18)*

been on the BJP's radar for decades, but Modi does not bother about inconvenient facts. The icing on the cake was when he managed to establish a tenuous connection between the famed Assam tea and his chai-wallah origins. This man is a class by himself. His aim is to spin a dream of India that only he can fulfil. His forte is that he almost makes it sound believable. By the time reality sinks in, it will be too late to do anything about it.

And so the Modi juggernaut rolls on. This is quite an achievement considering that there are senior members within the BJP itself who are not comfortable with Modi's autocratic style of functioning. Modi has positioned himself so brilliantly that anyone from his Party who would dare to voice dissent would be immediately denigrated and deemed unpatriotic. As things stand now, Narendrabhai is unstoppable. The Congress has become irrelevant. The

ego of regional party leaders will ensure that they cannot form a viable united front. Since the BJP will in all probability form the largest block in the forthcoming elections, but still fall short of a majority, the regional leaders must be salivating at the prospect of horse trading for ministerial berths in the new dispensation. They have watched in envy and frustration how Congress leaders have been raking in the moolah while in power. They are hungry for their share of the pie. If it involves playing second fiddle to Modi, it is an acceptable compromise. *Modi Zindabad.*

FIROZE HIRJIKAKA is a retired civil engineer, a blogger and a freelance writer and a member of the Advisory Board of Freedom First. leonardo8_99@yahoo.com.

Muzaffarnagar Riots: Democracy Under Threat

Dr. R. K. Cheema

Muzaffarnagar, a medieval town, had been a secular stronghold for centuries and today has been left scarred, ravaged and numbed into silence. The genesis of the violence and riots in Muzaffarnagar is traced to an eve-teasing incident in Kawal village on 27 August 2014. More than a week long, the riots turned communal, challenging the democratic system and the attitude of the political parties in UP. The political parties should take the responsibility of creating division amongst the Jats and the Muslims and also deviating from their claims of social inclusion. Politics, police and media – all together have added to the grievances of the marginalised and weaker sections of the people of Muzaffarnagar and villages in the vicinity.

Lisad village in Shamli district, a home to more than 200 Muslim families was vandalized and burnt to ashes. Mosques and Madarsas were attacked in Lisad. All signs of economic independence and growth were targeted exhibiting institutionalized rioting. Heartless people proclaimed their wicked acts. The height of violence was the use of wood cutting machine to butcher children who were later burnt. Such acts cannot be ever pardoned and compensated in any form. 147 villages in the Shamli, Baghpat and Muzaffarnagar districts were affected by the riots. The total number of displaced, even according to conservative official estimates, was close to 40,000 people. Huge support came in from the locals. The affected villages were about 20 kms from the relief camps which the riot victims found difficult to approach. The bewildered

Muslims of Kawal were unable to reconcile the harsh allegations of being beneficiaries of concessions by the Samajwadi Party, with the everyday reality of living in their own villages under the protection of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC). A blame game started and the Congress was blamed for not placing the Communal Violence Bill in Parliament.

It seems eve teasing was just an excuse that acted as a spark to the issue of communal disturbances in the region. The negligence and dispassionate and unresponsive attitude of the UP government further aggravated the situation. Even today, in the 21st century there are large number of villages which do not have proper road connectivity and safe and secure environment in public places for women. If Akhilesh Yadav – a young and present generation CM is unable to gauge the seriousness of such situations then no youth would have faith in him and come forward to join politics.

The Human Right of prevention from communal and targeted violence has been violated. The police administration and judiciary have been inactive in stopping violence and are equally liable to such culpable offences. Once the seeds of communal disturbances are sown in Muzaffarnagar, it will not be the same ever.

Dr. R. K. Cheema,
Department of History,
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The RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan takes School kids' Questions

Shreyas, Guardian School:

Question: *In social media we come across posts that ask us to promote indigenous goods. Does it really help the economy of the country?*

Answer: If people want to buy local or buy domestic that is their choice. If they want to help the neighbourhood shop by going there, that is their choice. But to force it by saying 'we are going to keep out imports' or 'we are going to prevent you from exercising choice' is more problematic. It is problematic partly because you are reducing choice, forcing people to buy domestic stuff, regardless of how well-made it is; you are perpetuating the monopoly of the producer

and reducing incentive to improve. We went through that in the '60s and 70s'. You are also pushing up costs, Remember, a number of goods become input for another's goods that also become shoddy. So by forcing people to buy domestic, you can perpetuate a culture of shoddiness in the economy. Better to allow competition. If customers want to buy domestic that is their choice, but it should be out of free will rather than government diktat.

At a *Times of India's* Newspaper in education (NIE) meet when RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan interacted with 800 children from Mumbai's schools.

The Times of India, February 2, 2014

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