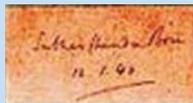


Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine



The Mystery Deepens



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; and rejects any ideology, movement or policy that sets one group of citizens against another, be it based on class, caste, religion or envy.

Netaji Betrayed?

Ashok Karnik

The reported surveillance mounted on the relatives of Netaji Subhaschandra Bose from 1948 to 1968 raises many questions. There are no answers as documents that could provide the answers are locked up by the Government. The controversy started because of some files of the Intelligence Bureau were declassified by the Government. While the Government stonewalls declassification of IB files in general, despite their clearing the time bar (25 years), these particular files got declassified, causing great embarrassment to the Congress as its Government led by the iconic Pandit Nehru was placed in the dock for snooping over a hero's family. It is true that Netaji's death in a plane crash in 1945 was shrouded in mystery and was not accepted by many in India. There were rumours of his being in the Himalayas, in Russia, Germany and several other places. Later, a sadhu, Gumnami Baba, staying in Ayodhya till his death in 1985, was rumoured to be the real Netaji. Why would Netaji live in such anonymity and secrecy? Such developments added to speculations about Netaji's whereabouts.

Did the IB files reveal the purpose behind the surveillance? Was it to find out if Netaji was still alive? It appears that India (IB) and UK (MI 5) were working together on this operation. The cooperation between the two countries was not as shocking as made out by the media as such cooperation is not unusual even if it is *sub rosa*ⁱ. Did they believe that Netaji was still alive and some countries (USSR and who else?) were helping him to secure political space? The way to detect any mischief was to keep track of his relatives' activities. The surveillance continued from 1948 to 1968 which is illogical as the chances of Netaji coming back and stirring up Indian politics had long disappeared. It is well known that the Congress did not get along with Netaji when he was in India but it did recognize the fight of the Indian National Army (INA) under Netaji to liberate India. Even if the fight was lost, the patriotism of the INA stirred people's imagination and Netaji was a hero for the entire country. Netaji and Nehru might have differed on the ways to gain freedom but their aim was the same. Was there a need to treat Netaji as an adversary? Netaji's relatives allege all kinds of plots to eliminate Netaji – from Stalin killing him to sending him to Siberia, his becoming a fakir and promise

of his reappearance at a suitable time as if he was an avatar! This created complications in an already confusing situation. We are left with half-baked conjectures as we have very few facts to work with. It is only the IB files that hold the facts. It is possible that the claims of the Congress and the NDA that the information in the files could be adverse to our foreign policy interests are true and the files may never be made public. The truth may never emerge.

It was argued that the air-crash in which Netaji supposedly died was deliberately planned to hide his departure for Russia. Three Commissions of Enquiry could not clear the mystery as Netaji's family continued to demand fresh enquiries into his death. The unexplained part was why Netaji did not appear in India after Independence if he was still alive? He would have got a hero's welcome and might have changed the course of the country's polity. He was not the one to go into hiding for fear of being eliminated by his political enemies. By default, therefore, the theory of his death in the air-crash sounded more logical. This takes us to the surveillance scenario. It is known that doctrinaire communism did not accept that India had obtained true freedom and that revolutionary struggle had to continue. As stated earlier, India (IB) and UK (MI 5) were partners in the fight against communist subversion. Did Nehru believe that Stalinist Russia would use Netaji to undermine the Congress regime? Hence Nehru's anxiety to know what the Boses were doing! It is true that in the heydays of Stalin, Russia was aggressively spreading communism; India and the USSR were yet to move closer as they did later. Netaji's ideological leaning were never discussed seriously as he was only concerned with India's freedom. Could the Nehru Government not have announced that as a national hero he was welcome in the country any time? Why treat his nephews as hostile elements? Could the uncertainty about Netaji's death not be handled with greater finesse? A national hero should have been accorded the honour and dignity he deserved despite political differences with him. Will the truth emerge ever? Till then speculations cannot be avoided.

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ⁱ *sub rosa* : denotes secrecy or confidentiality

Freedom First

The Liberal Magazine – 63rd Year of Publication
No.575 May 2015

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Editorial

The last few days have witnessed renewed interest in Subhas Chandra Bose and many have reminisced and written on various aspects of his charismatic personality. He was once the idol of both young and old. His sudden disappearance and reports of ‘being seen’ and the probabilities of making a come-back had filled people with a sense of mystery. An alternative to the Congress was envisaged at that time by the younger generation and there was expectation in the air. A few pages of this issue explore these aspects.

Political changes in the country have not dimmed memories of the Swatantra Party and in some regions, its future prospects may still hold some promise. And these are explored in a three-part article on the history of the Swatantra Party in Gujarat by Dr. Usha Thakkar.

The issue also examines the state of the economy as it presents divergent perspectives from different angles in a thought-provoking article by Sunil Bhandare. And juxtaposed with the presentation by Dr. B. Ramesh Babu in his piece on Modi goes abroad again, we see the complexities of the Indian economic scene.

It is with a deep sense of reverence that we remember our Founder, Minoo Masani on his 17th death anniversary on the 27th of this month.

RS

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Kashmira Rao ● **COVER:** Nitin Raut & Narendra Kotak ● **Photo Courtesy:** Wikipedia
PUBLISHERS: Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) 3rd floor, Army & Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.
Phone: +91 (22) 22843416 ● Email: freedom @vsnl.com / freedomfirst1952@gmail.com ● www.freedomfirst.in
PUBLISHED BY J. R. Patel for the ICCF and printed by him at Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Fort, Mumbai 400001.
Phone: 91 (22) 22660357 / 22665526 ● **TYPESET** by Narendra Kotak, A-605/606, Mahavir Platinum, Govandi, Mumbai 400043.
SINGLE COPY: Rs.20.00 ● **ANNUAL:** Rs.200 ● **TWO YEARS:** Rs.350 ● **THREE YEARS:** Rs.500 ● **Overseas** (IInd Class Air Mail) Annual: \$20 or £10
Cheques to be drawn in favour of *ICCF* and mailed to the publishers at the above address.

Was Jawaharlal Nehru Responsible for “snooping” on Bose?

V. Balachandran

Declassified British archives also speak of a loud disconnect between Nehru's strategic policies and the priorities pursued by the IB.

The recent controversy on whether Jawaharlal Nehru had personally authorized “snooping” on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and family has resulted in predictable squabbles on partisan political considerations. The clamorous TV debates that we see on this subject daily by the assemblage of usual faces who are chosen not for their knowledge but more for their easy availability also do not help us in coming to any conclusions. My brief analysis has already appeared in a national daily on April 12.

Before coming to this particular subject I need to give a brief outline on how “snooping” is officially done. Indian Telegraph Act 1885 gave a monopoly to the Government of India to operate telegraphic communications and for licensing private broadcast systems. Since public security was involved, the government retained the power under Section 5 to intercept any communication during any “emergency” or on “Public safety”. For doing this, four conditions were specified: Preservation of sovereignty and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign countries, maintenance of public order and/or preventing incitement to violence. Written orders have to be issued before any interception is done. Since 1885, the Central and state governments have specified rules from time to time specifying who are the competent authorities to grant permission and what procedure has to be followed for interception. These principles are being followed and modified for interception of land line telephones/cell phones and also for digital transmissions now.

The East India Company and later the British government were primarily bothered with crime. All energies were devoted in suppressing crime and gangs. All intelligence gathering by Provincial and princely State Police was used to watch crime and gangs. However this perspective changed after the First War of Independence (Great Indian Mutiny) in 1857. There was need to watch unrest against the British rule. The Whitehall (British Government) took over the entire responsibility of governing five British provincial governments. It also started controlling 562 princely States. A new law “An Act for the Better Government of India” was passed in 1858. Secretary of State for India was made totally in control, assisted by the Viceroy & Governor General. Indian Civil Service (ICS) was created. Lord Canning altered

Dalhousie’s annexation policy with “perpetuation of the states as different entities” but with tighter control. As the late V. P. Menon had said, “The Indian States thus became part and parcel of the British empire in India”. A “Political Department” under the direct charge of the Governor General was created with Indian Political Service officers (ICS & Army) and police forces. Secretary of State for India “kept close control over the activities of the Political Department”.

Meanwhile Col. (later General) William Henry Sleeman completed his work of suppressing thugs by 1848 which he started in 1829. He prosecuted 4,500 thugs. Of them 504 were hanged and 3,000 given life sentence. Only 250 were acquitted. After he was moved as Resident of Oudh, the most coveted post for a British officer in India in 1848, his team known as “The Thuggee & Dacoity Department” was converted as the centralized intelligence arm of the new Political Department. This became ‘DIB’ (Delhi Intelligence Bureau) during the British days and Intelligence Bureau (IB) after Independence. This unit came to be directly controlled by Whitehall. During the 1920s an office known as ‘Indian Political Intelligence’ (IPI) which was jointly run by India Office, Scotland Yard and Government of India took total control of security and intelligence. IPI which was started by a lone Indian Police (IP) officer in 1909 to keep an eye on the Indian revolutionaries grew into a massive organization by the Second World War. By 1935, arrangements were made in all colonies integrating intelligence, police and security organizations to face freedom struggles. In 1929 DIB was headed by Sir David Pertie who later became Director General of MI-5.

The declassified British intelligence papers revealed by Christopher Andrew, author of the mammoth (1044 pages) “The Defence of the Realm- Authorized history of MI-5” indicate that Indian intelligence activities were tightly controlled from London through IPI and DIB before Independence. Indian police officials were utilized for this work. In 1934 Sir Holt-Wilson, a senior MI-5 officer recorded: “Our Security Service is more than national; it is Imperial. We have official agencies cooperating with us, under the direct instructions of the Dominions and Colonial Offices and the supervision of local governors, and their chiefs of police, for enforcing security laws in every British

Community overseas. These all act under our guidance for security duties..."

What was not, however, anticipated was that even after 1947 this very close liaison continued between MI-5 and our IB, like a junior partner. One of the unwritten agreements during the transfer of power to India in 1947 was the secret positioning of a "Security Liaison Officer" (SLO) at New Delhi as MI-5's representative. This was obtained by Guy Liddell, then Deputy Director General of MI-5 with the consent of Intelligence Bureau according to declassified archives. British archives quoted a communication from the late T. G. Sanjeevi Pillai, IB's first Director on the need for maintaining close liaison with MI-5. A British Government website defends this decision: "When India ceased to be part of the Empire on 15 August 1947 and was partitioned into two independent States, India and Pakistan, there were profound implications for the British intelligence. From every point of view, economic, geographic and political, India remained of key strategic interest to the British government, and in the early Cold War context good intelligence on the region was, if anything, even more important than before". Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the Home Minister under whom IB worked. There is no official confirmation whether Nehru was consulted before this arrangement. This point will be known only if the IB records of that time are declassified.

As a result of this junior status, IB closely followed Britain's intelligence priorities even though an independent democratic country was born. DIB Sanjeevi did not like V. K. Krishna Menon although he was a close confidante of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The dislike was shared by Guy Liddell who audaciously assured his government that "we are doing what we could to get rid of Krishna Menon". However they did not succeed. Nehru continued having confidence in Menon. B. N. Mullik, the second director also carried on with this policy and preferred integrated approach with the British. According to British archives he "encouraged" Walter Bell, the then SLO to visit IB's headquarters and outstations to see for himself the work IB was doing in preventing Communist subversion. In 1953, during his visit to London, Mullik sought MI-5's help in bolstering our counter espionage machinery.

Declassified British archives also speak of a loud disconnect between Nehru's strategic policies and the priorities pursued by the IB. Apart from the Krishna Menon episode, the disconnect was evident during the exchange visits of Soviet leaders Nicolai Bulganin and Khrushchev to India and Nehru's visit to the USSR which heralded closer Indo-Soviet relations in 1955. One year later there was a chill in the Indo-UK relations when Nehru condemned the Anglo-French invasion on the Suez. Andrew says, quoting British records that this, however, "had little impact" on the IB-MI5 collaboration. IB even allowed an MI-5 officer to study their records on Moscow's

subsidies to Indian Communists. In 1957 Mullik wrote to Roger Hollis, MI-5 chief, "In my talks and discussions, I never felt that I was dealing with any organization which was not my own". Thus Christopher Andrew concludes, "Nehru, however, either never discovered how close the relationship was or – less probably – did discover and took no action".

Normally any intelligence liaison with an independent foreign country should have been maintained by Britain's foreign intelligence service known as MI-6 but in this case MI-5 resisted all such attempts till 1971. British archives also quoted the then Director IB S.P.Verma, writing obsequiously to the MI-5 Chief that he did not know "how he would manage without a British SLO", when told about his withdrawal.

How was Subhas Chandra Bose put on surveillance? From 1919 onwards Britain considered the "Red Menace" as their top security challenge. Our bureaucracy and the fledgling IB that we inherited from imperial Britain also continued that policy till 1975 when Mrs.Indira Gandhi gave them a strong admonition for watching Communists and not Communalists during the annual IB conference, which I had attended.

The above background needs to be kept in mind before we jump into any conclusion that Jawaharlal Nehru had ordered IB snooping on Bose's family members. Declassified IPI records indicate that Bose was kept under watch since April 1924. In 1922, the Indian revolutionary Abani Mukherjee was sent by the Comintern to India. Purabi Roy, Netaji's biographer says that he spent nearly eleven months in Calcutta meeting Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Bose. She says: "After his return to the USSR, Abani Mukherjee stated in his report to Comrade Petrov, the secretary of the Eastern Section, Comintern in Moscow: '...The right hand man of C. R. Das, Mr. S. Bose, being a pro-communist, and a friend of ours, we have a good influence over the Swaraja Party'". (Dr. Purabi Roy, *The Search for Netaji: New Findings*, Page 30, Purple Peacock Books, Kolkata- 2011)

British intelligence must have started watch over Bose and his family after this. Amiya Nath Bose, Netaji Bose's nephew had also mentioned in his blog that it was Communist leader Soli Batliwala who was the link between the Communist Party of India and Subhas Chandra Bose in 1939 to forward the latter's proposal to the Soviet Union. A full picture will be available only if we declassify all our IB and Bose records. High decibel TV debates are not enough.

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State of the Economy – Issues and Challenges

Sunil S. Bhandare

In substance, the global perception and outlook about India has strongly moved in the positive terrain. But from within that does not seem to be the case.

The most vexatious issue currently confronting the Modi Government is *the perception-reality divergence conundrum*. Globally, there is a growing appreciation of India's on-going progress with economic reforms agenda as well as growth performance and outlook. There are at least three impressive report cards for India – one each from the IMF, the ADB and the most latest being from the Moody's Investors Service, which has revised India's credit outlook to "positive" from "stable". But several experts and keen spokespersons of business and industry do not seem to be amused – they believe nothing much has changed at the ground level. And the reforms implementation and growth turnaround continues to be tardy.

Global Assessment Versus Local Perception

Let us recapture quickly the sequence of this discernible shift in the global perception. Not long ago [early March 2015], the IMF acknowledged that "the Indian economy is the bright spot in the global landscape, becoming one of the fastest-growing big emerging market economies in the world". It has also expressed confidence about strengthening of the growth momentum in the current year, which would be driven by stronger investment, declining inflation, commendable efforts towards fiscal discipline, government's efforts towards ease of doing business, and the longer-term advantage of the youngest workforce in the world.

In a similar vein, the subsequently released report of Asian Development Bank [ADB] points out that, as widely expected, India would overtake China in terms of growth performance – and more sharply so in 2016. Further, it recognizes that with Developing Asia remaining steadfast in its projected growth rate, there is going to be a gradual enhancement of India's share and status in Asia's economy. The report also concedes that India's inflation outlook is improving compared to the scenario of the past four or five years and that this has positive implications on managing the competitiveness of India's exports as well as relative exchange rate of the rupee *vis-à-vis* those of its major trading partners in this region.

Admittedly, both these assessments [IMF and ADB]

about India as well as of the global economy are governed by a set of assumptions. In particular, their separate forecasts are strongly influenced by the current low international oil prices, which certainly is facilitating inflation management and propping up economic growth. Indeed, ADB report also cautions that "the drop in oil prices provides an opportunity for many governments to take action nowthe window of opportunity is expected to be fairly short, as a gradual rise in oil prices is expected in 2015 and 2016".

From the perspective of our policy makers, both the IMF and the ADB reports have a series of well-meaning policy suggestions – many of which are surely being responded to. Illustratively, the IMF suggests that India needs to [a] address bottlenecks in the energy, mining and power sectors; [b] increase investment to help close major infrastructure gaps; [c] simplify and expedite the process of acquiring land and obtaining environmental clearances; [d] reform the agriculture sector to ensure greater efficiencies in the public system for food procurement, distribution, and storage; and [e] make labor markets more flexible, to encourage young job-seekers and boost presently low female labor force participation; and [f] improve education to meet rising shortages of skilled labor. Several of these find reflection in the ADB's report. But one of its crucial suggestions is that India may have to diversify industrial bases and export markets, and also recalibrate the linkage with China because of the latter's moderating growth.

Turning to the most recently released [April 9, 2015] assessment by Moody's: "India has grown faster than similarly rated peers over the last decade due to favourable demographics, economic diversity, as well as high savings and investment rates". Further, it expresses confidence that "there is increasing probability that actions by policy makers will enhance the country's economic strength and, in turn, the sovereign's financial strength over the coming years". Consequently, there is now a greater chance of upgrading of sovereign rating, which for a long time has been in the lowest investment grade level.

In addition, over the last eleven months, through his vigorously successful economic diplomacy with almost

all the major countries of the world [including his latest foray in France, Germany and Canada], the Prime Minister has placed India's growth agenda, be it "Make in India", "Digital India", indigenization of defence manufacturing or nuclear energy development on the global canvass. He has carried with conviction the message that his government endeavours to deliver what it promises – the success of the latest budget session and the passing of some of the key economic legislations offer adequate testimony on this score.

In substance, the global perception and outlook about India has strongly moved in the positive terrain. But from within that does not seem to be the case. And there is a constant reverberating voice "...impatience creeping in as to why no changes are happening and why this is taking so long having effect on the ground". Not surprisingly, the PM Narendra Modi has had to speak out his mind on this issue very candidly in his recent exhaustive interview with the *Hindustan Times*. Some of his statements seek to bring out some glaring contradictions, when he points out that "I would request the media to counter-pose two things together – the allegations our Congress friends level against us and the complaints that businessmen have; the Congress says we are a government of industrialists and industrialists say we do nothing for them!"

Among other things, what transpires from this interview is that the PM is becoming somewhat impatient about the lack of adequate response from business and industry in terms of revival of both their investment intentions and actual investment programs. Thus, he makes his anguish clear "the private sector of the country is still stuck with legacy issues of governance – these include tax terrorism, duty inversion and selective exemption". Indeed, he has virtually exhorted [or appealed!] the businessmen to come forth by assuring them that "if you take one step, we will walk two for you".

The Tipping Point?

From the perspective of keen observers of the economy – many of whom seem to be greatly perplexed by the complexities of divergence between what the government proclaims [or even what the international institutions assess] and the ground reality. The most overwhelming issue remains: when and how soon would the economy be in the midst of a tipping point phenomenon – that magical moment when the turnaround would be for real and gather a sustainable momentum?

Let us see what the Reserve Bank in its latest monetary policy has to say. It points out that the outlook

for growth is improving gradually, and projects real GDP growth at 7.8% for 2015-16, higher by just 30 bps from 7.5% in 2014-15. This contrasts with what the Finance Minister has envisaged in his budget, namely, 8 to 8.5% real GDP growth rate. Even this cautious optimism in the RBI's growth forecast for the economy is predicated on considerations of [a] comfortable liquidity conditions enabling banks to transmit the recent reductions in the policy rate into their lending rates, thereby improving financing conditions for the productive sectors of the economy; [b] implementation of the latest Budget's initiatives to boost infrastructure investment and to improve the business environment; [c] conducive inflation outlook, delivering real income gains to consumers and lower input cost advantages to corporates; [d] a normal monsoon; and [e] continuation of the cyclical upturn in a supportive policy environment, and no major structural change or supply shocks.

In the same breath, the RBI highlights several formidable downside risks such as possible intensification of *el nino* conditions impacting the ensuing agricultural season; large deviations in vegetable and fruit prices given the current unseasonal rains; larger than anticipated administered price revisions; geo-political developments leading to hardening of global commodity prices; moderate and uneven global recovery; slowing down in China; geopolitical risks surrounding oil prices; and the uneven effects of currency and commodity price movements.

Concluding Observations

In summing up, immediate and substantial reconciliation between what the Modi government expects from the economy and what would be the actual growth performance seems extremely tough, if not impossible. Despite the best policy intentions and efforts of the government, positive stance of international institutions and inspiring foreign investment flows in stock markets, the real economy would follow its own logic of responding. All the stakeholders surely want restoration of investment cycle, acceleration of actual investment, industrial resurgence and the overall growth to gather sustainable momentum. But to make this happen the Modi Government has not only to pursue relentlessly their policy initiatives and developmental programs, but also fight the battle of conflicting perceptions in media and in the prevailing political ambience. At the same time, it must also deal with bridging the hiatus between what the government believes it has been doing and what the stakeholders think it is not doing enough or doing it with several fault-lines!

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Saffronization is Creeping Up on Us

Firoze Hirjikaka

Let me state at the outset that I am aware of many well-meaning individuals who definitely do not support any form of communalism, but are nevertheless inclined to give Narendra Modi a long rope.

There is an insidious agitation (I won't dignify it by calling it a revolution) taking place in our country. It has not arrived with a bang, but is slithering towards us like a poisonous snake. It goes by many names: communalism, Hindu pride, saffronization, etc., but it has a single objective; and that is to make it clear to the citizens of our nation that they are now living in a Hindu Rashtra; and it would be in their best interest to accept it. Let me state at the outset that I am aware of many well-meaning individuals who definitely do not support any form of communalism, but are nevertheless inclined to give Narendra Modi a long rope. In their eyes, Modi's principal virtue is that he demolished the despised Congress; and therefore they are prepared to be indulgent towards his party's sins of commission and omission. After all, the PM's avowed agenda is development and prosperity; and everything else is inconsequential. Is it?

Let us pause for a moment to evaluate the *achhe din* promised with such conviction before the general election. How many promises have been fulfilled? Let us examine the bald statistics. Our strict disciplinarian leader promised to cut down on wasteful government expenditure: for example, by severely curtailing frivolous trips by government officials. The reality: during the past year, the travel expenses of the Modi government have exceeded that of the Congress one. Farmer suicides have increased substantially. Corruption was supposed to be ruthlessly eliminated. In Haryana, IAS officer Ashok Khemka – who was once lionised by the BJP for exposing Robert Vadra – was summarily transferred by the same BJP government when his integrity became “inconvenient” for some party members and their industrial cronies. In fact, in Maharashtra alone, the home ministry headed by the “progressive” Chief Minister is holding back sanction to prosecute 100 officials caught with their hand in the till. The open enquiry into the humongous irrigation scam allegedly perpetrated by top NCP leaders was sought to be downplayed by the ruling party for electoral considerations; and it would have degenerated into an ineffectual in-house one, were it not for intense media pressure. I won't even dwell on the “15 lakhs in every pocket” because it has become a standing joke. The PM

has been harping on the importance of science and technology, but four top science institutions remained headless for months due the ego of a grossly unqualified HRD minister who enjoys his continued support despite overwhelming evidence of her unsuitability for the job.

Then again, there was Modi's promise that the much-vaunted Gujarat model would be replicated in the rest of the country. Well as it turns out, the Gujarat model has been revealed as a paper tiger. According to a recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the proclaimed successes of the Gujarat model have been wildly exaggerated. Modi periodically extolls the importance of the girl child. In reality, the sex ratio in Gujarat is considerably lower than the all-India average; and has in fact worsened in recent years. Implementation of the Right to Education act has been desultory. As for the much heralded development agenda, the CAG has indicted the Gujarat government for the high level of financial indiscipline, poor spending and lack of proper monitoring of government departments. Furthermore, the Gujarat government has recently passed the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Bill, which enhances the already abused powers of the state police and provides immunity for all actions carried out in a vaguely defined “good faith”. Furthermore, confessions before police – and we all know the brutal methods employed to obtain those – will now be admissible in court. It is a supreme irony that a party born out defiance to Indira Gandhi's emergency is now proposing to employ the same coercive tactics. I could go on, but you get the picture. The point I am trying to make is that while this regime is a definite improvement over the previous one, the promised golden days are a long way off.

All of the above however, can be tolerated and even forgiven. Unfulfilled promises, after all, have been the hallmark of every government since Independence. What is different this time is the creeping saffronization that is spreading its tentacles into most aspects of civil society.

The highly respected columnist Kuldip Nayar, in a recent column, opines that the situation is getting worse

because “Narendra Modi gets instructions from the fanatic Hindu organization, Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS). Many bureaucrats living in the parochial atmosphere are themselves imbibing the divisive outlook.” As if to underline its growing influence over the ruling party and project itself as a sort of godfather to the BJP, the RSS is proposing to shift its headquarters from Nagpur to the national capital. Twin towers to accommodate this move are already under construction.

And so it begins. When the Haryana Chief Minister decreed that all schools in his state must compulsorily teach the *Bhagwad Gita* – no doubt with the blessings of the eager-to-please HRD minister – many right thinking citizens were dismayed but not entirely surprised. The man, after all, is a committed RSS *pracharak*; and that was probably his chief qualification for the top job. However, when a similar ordinance is promulgated in Maharashtra, which has a purportedly “progressive” CM in Devendra Fadnavis, there is genuine cause for concern. When proudly communal outfits like the VHP and Bajrang Dal – as well as individual fundamentalists like Yogi Adityanath and Sadhvi Pragvi – openly propagate their warped vision of Hindu superiority, treat other religions with contempt and vandalise their institutions, it is deeply distressing and disgusting, but not entirely unexpected. Spewing religious bigotry and incitement to violence is, after all, their trademark. However, when a supposedly sophisticated BJP leader like Subramanian Swamy blandly proclaims in his Harvard accent that god resides only in Hindu temples and avoids places of worships of other religions, it is time to get really worried. Swamy is not outwardly a religious fundamentalist. He represents the mainstream of the BJP. One could even admire him for voicing sentiments that many of his party colleagues – nurtured by the RSS – sympathise with but are not brave enough to enunciate.

Other manifestations are revealing themselves with distressing regularity. Rajeshwar Singh, who gained notoriety for championing the *ghar-wapsi* pogrom in Uttar

Pradesh has been promoted to a senior position in the RSS. A BJP icon, Murli Manohar Joshi has advocated the inclusion of ancient Vedic remedies in the curriculum of mainstream medical colleges. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is exhorting the Hindu population to produce more children. The alternative, they warn, would be an India that would be controlled by Muslims by 2050. No less a personality than Home Minister Rajnath Singh has instructed the Border Security Force in West Bengal to vigorously stop the smuggling of cattle across the border to Bangladesh. His bizarre logic is that will drive up the cost of beef there and stop Bangladeshis from consuming beef. Are we now trying to export *Hindutva* to our neighbours? To top it all, our enlightened PM has publicly endorsed the ban on cow slaughter and presumably would be happy to see it implemented nation-wide. Incidentally, it is estimated that the cost of housing and feeding the huge numbers of unproductive cattle involved would cost the national exchequer thousands of crores every year, but apparently ideology trumps economics. Development anyone? If some of us are scratching our heads and wondering why our “progressive” PM is allowing all this nonsense to go unchecked, can you blame us?

A secular constitution mandates a separation of temple and the State. It is what has allowed our country with so many diverse religions, sects and ethnicities to function as a democracy, however flawed. When the government of the day openly seeks to establish the ascendancy of one religion over all others, it is the start of a drift towards fundamentalism – the same trait we decry and detest in our neighbour to the West. I hope the Opposition takes up this matter in the Assembly. It is an issue that merits genuine debate – in contrast to the many frivolous ones whose principal aim is to embarrass the ruling party.

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Abusive words can't be used for Mahatma

The SC said that in the name of artistic freedom, poets and authors cannot use abusive words against others – including people such as Mahatma Gandhi – as every freedom is subject to restrictions. Marathi poet Vasant Dattatreya Gujar and publisher Devidas Ramachandra Tuljapurkar have been charged for using “profane” language in a political satire on Mahatma Gandhi.

Courtesy: *Hindustan Times*, April 17, 2015.

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.

Protocol Vs. Policy

Point

1a) Pakistan's national day on March 23, 2015 became an occasion to define diplomatic protocol and distinguish it from Policy. The Modi Government has consciously adopted a more muscular policy towards Pakistan and even refused to continue negotiations with Pakistan till it acted against terrorism. There is always an understandable pendulum swing from hard line to reconciliatory line vis a vis Pakistan. UPA was blamed when it became more reconciliatory than harsh and the BJP lauded itself for being tough; the reality is that at some stage a dialogue becomes inevitable. The Modi Sarkar did that and opted to open a window for dialogue. This goes against BJP's grain and its avowed anti-Pak stance. As the window opened, came the national day of Pakistan. Pak High Commission in New Delhi invited the Indian External Affairs Minister for the function and cheekily invited the separatist leaders from J&K. India which is opposed to the separatists being given place at the negotiating table were obviously in a dilemma and tried to find a middle path. Sushma Swaraj, the External Affairs Minister declined the invitation, but as a matter of protocol asked her junior Minister, Gen.(ret'd) V.K.Singh to represent India at the function. He attended reluctantly but that was enough to raise questions about BJP's muscular approach to Pakistan.

Counter Point

1b) The Government tried to deflect criticism by claiming that attending the national day function, despite the presence of the separatists there, was a matter of diplomatic protocol and did not mean any change in policy. The obfuscation did not jell as Gen. V.K.Singh made his displeasure known by claiming that he had merely done his duty but he was disgusted with the task given to him. What could the Government have done? Refused to attend the function because the separatists were also invited? Would that have been a breach of protocol? Questions would be raised over the Government's tough posturing and soft protocol. It is true that negotiations cannot be avoided but the route to the negotiating table has to be chalked out carefully as a false move can render the entire exercise fruitless. How to be tough with Pakistan while showing willingness to negotiate with it is the problem? Should the Modi Government put the negotiations in cold storage till Pakistan shows some remorse? India has to harden itself to accept that there could be no solution to the Indo-Pak problem in the near future. It is naïve to believe that India could persuade Pakistan to change track. Only dire circumstances down the decades would make that possible – perhaps!

What is Wrong, AAP?

2a) Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav were not the popular face of the AAP but they gave an intellectual veneer to the outlandish promises of AAP, made it appear to be a thinking man's party – not only a broom to sweep everything away. Their unceremonious ejection from key positions was shocking. One may not have agreed with what AAP was doing, doling out freebies and 'stinging' all and sundry. AAP made it a practice to castigate others for inefficiency and corruption. It was becoming farcical but nevertheless, in a dismal political scenario, AAP was emerging as a symbol of something new and potentially decent. Its over-simplification of issues was often jarring but one felt that its heart was in the right place. Now the edifice is crumbling and AAP looks as bad as other parties, if not worse.

2b) Allegations of corruption and sensational charges attract public attention and it becomes a habit to paint all opponents in black. It required an ideological basis for the hit and run tactics of AAP and Yogendra Yadav provided it with his suave and professorial demeanor and ideological coating. He was the most convincing spokesperson of the party. His departure may not affect the party numbers but reduces its debating ability and credibility; it is left with loud protesters, not debate winners. The bane of the do-good parties is that its leaders are always on the look-out for ideological purity and find fault with others for diversion from high moral grounds. Remember Madhu Limaye's explanation for the 'historical' need to break the Janata Party on the issue of dual membership (of BJP/RSS) and ultimately destroying the Janata Party Government? Too much dialectics and too little discipline!

The Missing VIP

3a) Rahul Gandhi is missing for long: is he on a holiday or doing introspection, or spending time with his girl friend? Worse speculations are doing the rounds, all due to the refusal to be candid. The BJP has taunted the Congress to find its own leader instead of finding fault with the BJP. By the time this is published, Rahul would have resurfaced and his presence or absence would have made no difference to anybody. The point is different: It is that the Government must have known where Rahul was all along as he is an SPG protectee. The Special Protection Group (SPG) which protects the families of present and past Prime Ministers must have sent its officers to provide security to Rahul and the Government must have sanctioned the officers' journey and expenses. SPG cannot function without Government's knowledge. Rahul Gandhi's whereabouts could not be as great a secret as made out but was a matter of privacy. He was and is entitled to it if he did not aspire for national leadership.

3b) It is to the credit of both the SPG and the Government that neither leaked out Rahul Gandhi's whereabouts. It is rare in these days of officials rushing to provide documentary proof to TV channels. There is confidentiality built in to the protection arrangement: security officials are with the protectee, not to snoop on him but to protect him from attack. If they become Government's agents to keep a watch over the protectees, they would become an embarrassment. No protectee would want them around and their professional ability would be over shadowed by their collateral interest. If Rahul's disappearance caused political embarrassment to the Congress, it has added feathers to the reputation of the SPG. Rahul should be free to take a holiday whenever he wants but why this Machiavellian secrecy? It does not add to his reputation and raises doubts about his interest in the political developments in the country. If Rahul wants to lead the Congress, he has to set aside his personal interests. That is the price to pay for power.

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.



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Modi Goes Abroad Again: Target Development Agenda at Home

B. Ramesh Babu

The foreign policy of a country is an integral part of the national policy and subserves the overarching goals of economic development and national security.

On the eve of his three nation foreign tour in April 2015, Prime Minister Modi declared: “My France, Germany and Canada visit is centered round supporting India’s economic agenda and creating jobs for youth.” It is also aimed at paring down the nation’s enormous oil import bill of about \$150 billion, which is likely to grow to \$300 billion by 2030. In this regard, the Modi Government is talking to several foreign lending agencies, including the European Investment Bank (EIB), Agence Francaise de Developpment (AFD) of France and KIW Bankengruppe of Germany.

The focus in France is on defence, manufacturing, civilian nuclear energy and infrastructure. Modi will meet President Francois Hollande on April 9, and the next two days will be devoted to meetings with different sections of the French society. The much postponed sale of the Rafale jet fighters will naturally be on the top of the agenda in Paris. In 2009, the Indian Air Force opted for the Rafale jets over the competing American and Russian fighter aircraft on grounds of technical superiority, joint production and some other features suited to our specific needs. However, the mega deal went into some serious problems soon afterwards. Team Rafale was displeased and distraught over the endless delay at the Indian end. The Deal comprised the sale of 126 Rafale aircraft, of these 108 were to be manufactured locally at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bengaluru. One of the hitches is the issue of responsibility for quality and compliance of specifications of the aircraft manufactured in India. The French side insists that ‘everyone is responsible for what he does.’ India insists that as per the contract the French companies are responsible for all the 126 Rafale aircrafts irrespective of where they are built. Let us hope that Modi and Hollande will overcome the hurdle and the urgently needed advanced jets will be delivered soon. It may be added that the cooperation between Dassault Aviation and HAL on the upgrading of 51 Mirage 2000 aircrafts currently underway is going on smoothly.

French nuclear giant Areva’s 2009 offer to supply EPR reactors with a possible follow up on enhancing their

capacity to 10000 MW is another big item on Modi’s agenda in Paris. India is one of the 7 partners in the International Thermo Nuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) coming up in Cadarache in France. The knowledge from this partnership will be used to build our own demonstrator reactors at home. This indeed is an example of Indo-French cooperation at the cutting edge of Nuclear Fusion Technology Research. It may be added that all the Indian nuclear plants are based on Fission. Producing electricity through Fusion will be much cheaper and safer. Modi Government has sanctioned huge sum for implementing the ITER project.

Coastal surveillance and insurance are the other sectors that are high on the agenda. As a part of the strategic talks in France, the Indian side is scheduled to discuss the question of sharing costs for setting up a 24 nation grid of coastal surveillance radars in the Indian Ocean to monitor civilian and military traffic in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India also could extend financial aid to the littoral nations in the task, which eventually would integrate the surveillance data from the French, the US and other naval military sites in the vast region. This whole enterprise is a part of New Delhi’s plan to enhance maritime domain awareness in the wake of 26/11 Mumbai attack and also in the context of China’s expansionism and its grand Maritime Silk Route scheme launched in 2014.

In response to raising the FDI cap in the insurance sector from 26% to 49%, a \$5 billion French investment could be expected. Agri-business and food processing are the other sectors where there is enormous scope for Indo-French co-operation. Manufacturing, infrastructure, agri-business and food processing are best suited to generate unskilled and skilled jobs in rural areas and small towns on a very large scale, a top priority of the NDA Government. Latest addition to the Prime Minister’s crowded agenda in France is that of building “Smart-Cities” in India. France is ready and willing to offer its expertise in furtherance of one of Modi’s pet projects. Modi is scheduled to visit the smart city of Toulouse. Pondicherry and Chandigarh already selected under the programme.

There is also talk of including Hyderabad and Nagpur.

Onto Germany

Modi's next stop in Europe is Germany, the powerhouse of the continent and the economic leader in the European Union (EU). Bilateral trade between the two countries increased remarkably over the years (21.5% in post-recession period of 2010). Investments by the German and Indian firms in each others' countries are sizeable and are expected to grow rapidly. India is the partner country at the Hannover Trade Fair, world's largest annual trade and technology exhibition and sales operation. More than 400 Indian firms have stalls in the Fair this year.

While in Germany, Modi's focus will be on manufacturing, skill development and clean energy. Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC) is the largest foreign chamber in India. In 2006, IGCC celebrated its 50th anniversary and has set up the goal of 20 billion Euros by 2012. Textiles, leather goods, software and agro-exports are the major Indian exports to Germany. Cut flowers, flowering and ornamental plants, chicory, orchids, dried and preserved vegetables, poultry products, processed meat and natural honey are the main agro-products exported to Germany.

Onto Canada

Canada is the final destination in Modi's three nation foreign tour. But, it is equally, if not more crucial for taking his Development Agenda forward. The Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper welcomed the forth coming visit of the Indian Prime Minister with these words: "Canada and India enjoy a close friendship based on shared values of democracy, pluralism, and mutual interest in expanding trade. India's growing economy presents enormous opportunities for Canada and I look forward to meeting with Prime Minister Modi to further strengthen bilateral relations and expand our trade and investment ties with a view to benefiting citizens of both countries."

Commenting on his visit to Canada, Modi declared that "Soon after Independence, Canada was one of our most important partners in economic development. We look forward to resuming our Civil Nuclear Energy cooperation with Canada, especially for sourcing uranium fuel for our nuclear power plants". As of 2014, bilateral trade between India and Canada added up to 6.3 billion Canadian dollars and the target is to reach the 15 billion mark by 2015. This may seem difficult, but, if the Foreign Investment Promotion Act and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement are signed during Prime Minister Modi's visit, the target is reachable, according to Sidney Frank, Canadian Consul General based in Bengaluru. The 1.2

million Canadians of Indian origin play a prominent role in the country's economic, social and cultural development. At the time of writing this article, there were unconfirmed reports that the Indian Diasporas in Canada is planning a Madison Square Garden type show in Toronto!

Canada's equation with Modi goes back when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. Gujarat has been a partner country for Canada in many Vibrant Gujarat events. About 600 Canadian companies do business in India in the fields of infrastructure, bio-technology, engineering, communications, energy and solid waste management, etc in India. Bilateral trade between the two countries was over 5.1 billion Canadian dollars in 2011, almost in balance, and growing steadily. Indian exports to Canada include organic chemicals, precious stones and metals, knit and woven apparel, machinery, and iron and steel. Our imports from Canada include peas and lentils, fertilizers, paper and paper board, wood pulp, machinery, precious stones, iron, and steel.

Canada has rich experience in public-private-partnership (PPP), a favoured model of generation investment capital in Modi's scheme of things. By far, the most prominent areas of cooperation between the two countries are Joint Research and Development in the field of nuclear energy and uranium supply to India's Pressurised Heavy Water (PHWs) nuclear reactors.

Conclusion

The foreign policy of a country is an integral part of the national policy and subserves the overarching goals of economic development and national security. Foreign tours by the key leaders and direct interaction with their counterparts in other countries are the means to further national interests. The Prime Minister's three nation tour is aimed to attract investment from abroad on a very large scale. The sectors of our economy that are likely to benefit most may be listed as manufacturing, infrastructure, trade, defence production, nuclear energy, IT and communications, solar and other renewable energies, and research and development in science and technology, agro-products and food processing.

Unlike the Asian Tigers in the recent past and China till recently, India did not follow the "FDI fed and export led growth" model. In our scheme of things foreign investment has always been secondary, reinforcing the massive domestic effort. In the context of the transformed and business friendly climate he fostered, Modi is seeking to harness foreign policy initiatives and successes in foreign relations to turn the tide at home. The opposition is making it difficult for him. That is the way our system

functions. But, it is for him and the BJP to deliver on the domestic front. Almost year is gone. Technically speaking he has four more years to go. However, Modi and the NDA Government have to pull their act together before the palpable disappointment degenerates into national disillusionment!

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BJP's strategy in J&K remains an enigma

The latest incident of separatists and their followers including the chief ideologue Sayeed Gilani hoisting the Pakistani flag in Srinagar is an affront to the self-respect of India but also an act of sedition under clause 124 (a) of our Constitution. And yet in the television discussion the defence, a representative of Bharatiya Janta Party could not carry conviction while Nizamuddin Bhatt of Peoples Democratic Party with whom BJP has formed the government was plainly out of depth with reality. It may be a small group that is involved but it has the potential to grow bigger if the Centre fails to arrest such seditious tendencies.

It may be recalled when Masarat was released a month ago when there was consternation in the country knowing that he was involved in many terrorist activities. The BJP came with an explanation that he cannot be rearrested and the Home Minister Rajnath Singh said that he can only be arrested if he commits any act under which he can be charged and rearrested.

The question is, is not this show of defiance by hoisting the Pakistani flag serious enough to jail him? The chief minister Mukti Mohammad Sayeed, whose sympathy with Pakistan is known, appears to remain unperturbed. It may be noted that 4,767 soldiers died after the Kargil war and Pakistan is flexing its muscles now and then mounting terrorist attack across the border and this type of attitude of 'Wait and See' will only mean that BJP which is riding high in popularity can easily lose voters' sympathy and its dream of continuing for a prolonged period in power may be in real danger. Wonder whether the BJP's strategy is to give a long rope to the separatists so that emboldened they commit some serious act of terrorism or sedition when the Centre will move with a heavy hand? This is fraught with lot of uncertainty and may boomerang if the mischief is not nipped in the bud.

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The Iranian Deal: Whose Fate Will it Seal?

Nitin G. Raut

With West Asia on the boil and the beguiling vagueness of the FA, Obama will perhaps bequeath a legacy which may be a hot potato for the next U.S. administration.

The 2nd April, 2015 accord, half heartedly called “Framework for Final Agreement”, is cautiously signed between the five UN Security Council Permanent Members – the USA, Russia, China, Britain and France (P-5) plus Germany and Iran to curb Iran’s quest for acquiring a nuclear bomb. It tentatively aims at lifting economic sanctions against Iran in return for Iran agreeing not to fabricate nuclear bombs. The six-day hectic negotiations at Lausanne, Switzerland ended on 2nd April 2015 which the participants while expressing optimism tempered it with caution. Neither the P5+Germany nor Iran is forthcoming on specifics except generalities. A positive hope is lacking.

As the contours of the Six Nation Iran Deal are yet not clear, it is expected to be operationalised only by 30th June, 2015. The negotiations at Lausanne which went through a torturous course began in 2003 and gained momentum in the last quarter of 2014, were basically over Iran’s capacity or potentiality to acquire nuclear weapons and the Six Nations’ efforts to compel Iran to curb it. This was preceded by the US led UN sanctions which drastically curtailed Iran’s oil exports and forestalled its access to international monetary institutes. Iran’s thrust at Lausanne was to end diplomatic isolation and have the sanctions lifted to rejuvenate its economy, crippled by sanctions. It was this compulsion that forced Iran to come to the negotiating table.

Iran’s metamorphosis from a pro-western Pahlavi monarchy into an Islamic Republic under the Ayatollahs in 1979 is now history. Iran had always considered itself a cradle of Persian civilization as distinct from the Arabs and has always coveted hegemony in West Asia. Possession of nuclear weapons is the ultimate aim of such radical and bigoted regimes, where powers flow for N-Bomb. It aspires regional hegemony for dominance by military strength and not by democratic means.

In the Lausanne talks, Iran was more interested in getting the US led sanction regime dismantled and unshackling its oil exports without any cast iron guarantees of shelving its nuclear weapon programme. To begin with there is still no authoritative data on Iran’s stockpiles of nuclear material or the extent of knowhow Iran possesses

on N weaponisation.

The Framework Agreement (FA) at Lausanne which envisages Iran to give at least one year’s notice to the world in the event of Iran deciding to make a nuclear bomb will defeat the very purpose of the Deal, as it then matters very little if Iran gets the N bomb today or in the future. The Deal, if it materializes by 30th June 2015, can also mean that Iran will, in the interregnum, get time to consolidate its economy to a level where it can go nuclear irrespective of the Deal or international opinion. It would then be a case of locking the stables after the horses have bolted. Such interregnum can itself be abused to build nuclear weapons by Iran. It is well known how Iraq had sent International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors on a leather hunt when inspection was sought of its nuclear reactor under Saddam Hussein’s regime. Moreover, Iran’s Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has powers to overrule even its President Hassan Rouhani even if he is elected by people. So can the sanctity of the Deal be assured in the first place?

Iran has made no secret of its ambition to be the West Asian regional power and Israel is the main target of Islamic Iran. It has supported the Shia dominated Hezbollah whose militants are entrenched in Lebanon and along with Hamas are a thorn for any peace initiative with Israel or for a democratic Palestine State co-existing peacefully with Israel. In Yemen, the Iranians are backing Shia Houthi insurgents who have swept Yemen and captured its capital Aden, sending its President Abed Hadi in exile to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. It is already flexing its muscle in West Asia by spreading terror and supporting armed rebellion and insurgency. West Asia, as a result today, is vertically split between Shia and Sunni regimes raising fear of regional instability. Saudi Arabia in a rare show of its military power is bombing Iran’s allies in Yemen. At the Lausanne conference, these aspects were not even dealt with and conflict continues. Nor was recognition of Israel made a condition precedent to lifting the sanctions. Such undertakings from Iran would have made the Deal more credible and inspired some confidence.

In fact Iran has no hostile neighbour despite the Sunni ISIS threat in Syria and Iraq. Its target of N Bomb

is only Israel. Israel has strongly opposed the FA as it is unlikely to have control over Iran's nuclear research or ascertain the extent of the knowhow of N Weapons in Iran's possession. In that event does it mean the P-5 States and Germany are tacitly condoning Iran's clandestine N programme. Moreover in the event of the Deal being finalized by 30 June 2015, there is no explanation as to how Iran can be controlled from acquiring N Bomb by secret means and will the Deal assure the World that Iran will refrain from enrichment of Uranium as the restrictions are not ad infinitum. The Deal with its loopholes may even trigger a passive N-Weapon race and given the volatile political situation. West Asia will become a potential nuclear flash point. The N-Deal does not address the legitimate fears of Israel as Iran does not recognize Israel's existence and has always called for its annihilation and even dubbed Holocaust as a historical myth! Failure of the Lausanne talks to clarify the ambiguities only raises a suspicion that Iran's pretence of the use of nuclear power for peace can be a camouflage to conceal its present and future N-Weaponsation Plan. Israel is not the only nation that is apprehensive of Iran's intentions. Saudi Arabia and UAE have the same apprehensions but are not vocal in opposing the Framework Agreement. In fact for the Saudi Arabia's Wahabi Monarch radical Islam of Iran or ISIS is a bigger threat to the Kingdom.

Iran's ostensible climb-down or submission to the seemingly stringent conditions of the Framework Agreement is to be perceived in the larger context of sectarian conflict of Shia v/s. Sunnis struggle for West Asian Leadership. Iran has propped up Syria's Assad against Sunni ISIS, the Iraqi Shia regime, the Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon and Gaza Strip against Israel and now Houthis in Yemen to form a Shia firewall to encircle Saudi Arabia. It also needs time to consolidate its political gains and restore its economy to health if it has to emerge as an unchallenged

leader of West Asia. The FA will give Iran the respite it is looking for. If Iran succeeds it will throw new challenges not foreseen by the FA and the blaze of sectarian conflict in the oil rich region may even send the world economy into a tailspin.

In 1994, a more or less similar accord was signed between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to curb its N programme in return for economic aid by the Clinton Administration. But DPRK has observed the accord more in breach than in faith and continues its nuclear tests with impunity. Is such precedent encouraging Iran to sign the Framework Agreement knowing full well that the Western Powers' War weariness will work to its advantage? In his address to the US Congress, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had pointedly said that a no deal with Iran is even better than any bad deal and that was before 2nd April, 2015. In fact some more pressure on Iran would have yielded better results.

The Obama Administration in its penultimate year is more eager for this "historic FA" as the last year 2016 will lack credibility to pursue negotiations. With West Asia on the boil and the beguiling vagueness of the FA, Obama will perhaps bequeath a legacy which may be a hot potato for the next U.S. administration. If in the unfortunate event of Iran emerging at the top of chaotic West Asia, it is Israel that will have to be on extra guard. Ayatollah Khomeini had once said "We will put America beneath our feet". And Israel as an U.S. ally is the bête noir of Iran.

It is called a Deal but whose fate it will seal is anybody's guess.

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QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

- 1) Should a Supreme Court Judge make it an issue of secularism if he is personally inconvenienced by an official function on a 'holy' day? Is it not up to him to decide if the holy day is more important than the official function? He can choose one and ignore the other. If the Courts/Government agree to avoid official functions around such days, most of the year would be lost.
- 2) Should TV Channels dig out issues to make every evening artificially exciting? It looks every day as if a national calamity is impending and only the TV debate could avert it.
- 3) The latest Opinion Poll in a magazine is confusing. A lot of statistics without any enlightenment. Too early to decide if the Modi Government has failed or succeeded. How can a Government be judged in 10 months? Why organize a Poll if no conclusion is possible? Just to attract attention?

Contributed by Ashok Karnik

The Swatantra Party in Gujarat: A Shooting Star (Part I)

Usha Thakkar

*The emergence of the Swatantra consolidated the opposition forces
to fight against the Congress in Gujarat.*

*This is the first part of the three-part article on the history
of the Swatantra Party in Gujarat.*

The Indian National Congress, energised after winning two general elections in post-Independence time, decided to march forward with its progressive policies. At its session in Nagpur in January 1959, it put forward a bold programme of a new three-pronged agricultural policy: governmental takeover of the grain trade, ceiling on land holdings; and cooperative cultivation. This alarmed some stalwarts like C. R. Rajgopalachari (Rajaji). Charged with the passion to organise a strong opposition to the centralisation of power in the Congress, Rajaji announced along with M. R. Masani, N. G. Ranga, V. P. Menon and other leaders the formation of the Swatantra Party on June 4, 1959 at Madras (now Chennai).

The Party's opposition to socialist ideas of Nehru and advocacy of free enterprise attracted some sections of the society. Often described as a Party with feudal elements, it had in its fold former princely states, rich farmers, merchants, industrialists, bureaucrats, intellectuals. With leaders like Rajaji, Masani, Bhailal Patel (Bhaikaka), H. M. Patel and K. M. Munshi the Party had created ripples in the nineteen sixties. The Party declared its opposition to socialism, state control, 'statism' and heavy taxation. It believed in intensive programme of agricultural improvement and protection of cultivators' rights of ownership and management of the land, incentives for higher production in industry and enterprise, and restoration of the constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of property, trade and employment. It emphasised the need for a broad-based opposition Party to safeguard democracy. It had emerged as a force to reckon with in Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar and Gujarat as well as in national politics. This was, however, short-lived. The Party emerged and vanished like a shooting star in the sky of Indian politics.

Though the Swatantra Party could not form the government in Gujarat, for some years it remained a formidable opposition Party to the Congress. It made its presence felt in the 1962 and 1967 assembly elections before fading away from the political scene. This paper is an attempt to explore its political chart, political currents and undercurrents as well as the reasons for its emergence

and fading away in Gujarat. It catches glimpses of the course of electoral outcomes and the dynamics of political process at the state level operative in a nascent democracy.

Caste politics has become a part of the mainstream electoral politics as years passed. This paper shows the rise of the powerful role of the castes in politics of a new democracy with a traditional social set up. It also unveils that the implementation of the idea of the two-Party system often involves electoral compromises that mar the very idea of democratic opposition, and the ambitions of leaders pursued at the cost of the interests of the Party. The first part of the paper traces the rise of the Party in Gujarat. The second part deals with the context and results of the 1962 and 1967 elections in Gujarat. The third part discusses the decline of the Party in Gujarat and concluding observations.

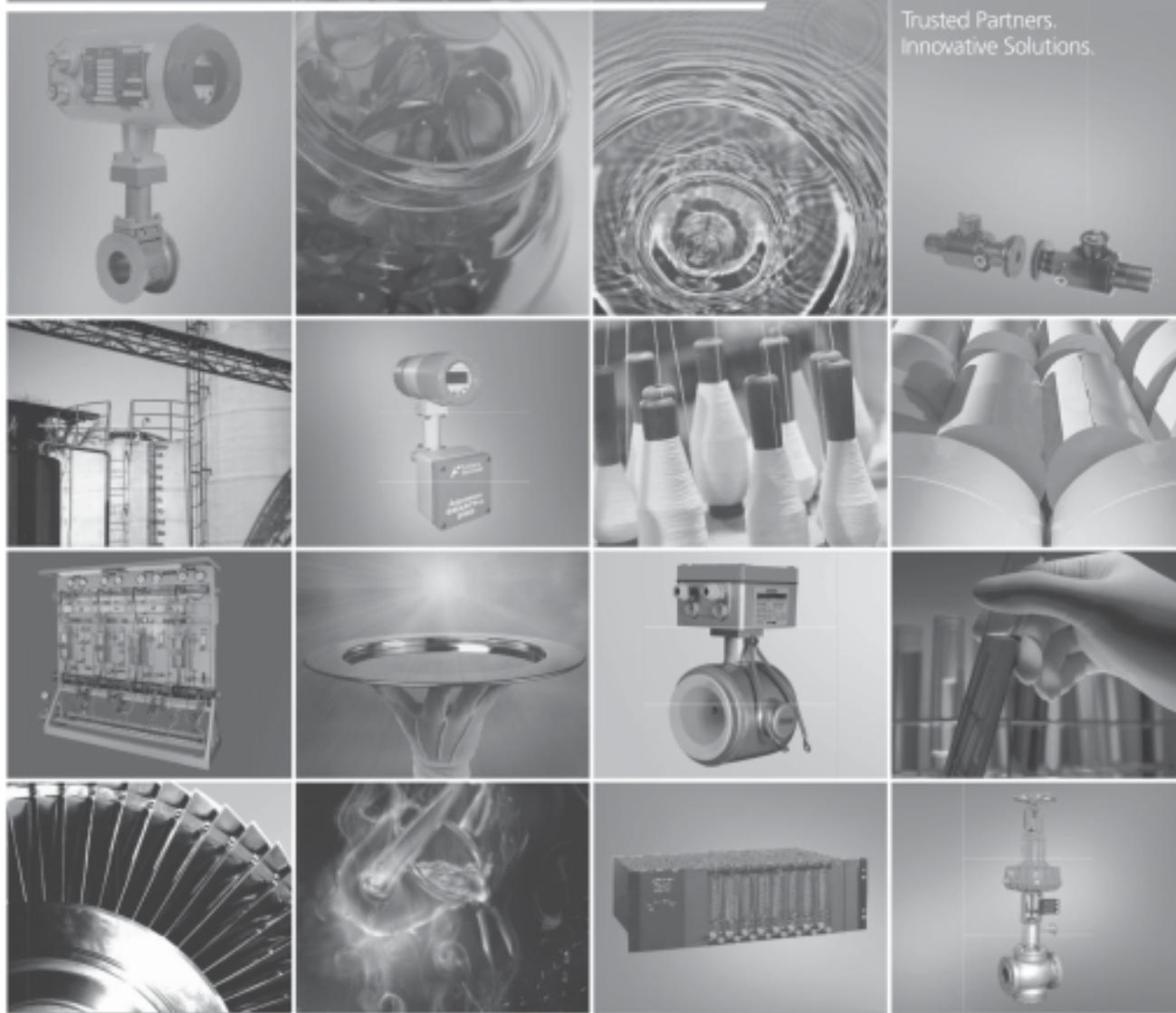
The Rise of the Party in Gujarat

When the All India Agricultural Federation had met in June 1959 at Madras to consider the formation of opposition to the Congress, Gujarat had taken a leading part in the deliberations. The heated controversy over land ceiling and cooperative farming had by then revitalised rightist forces in Gujarat. Many delegates from Gujarat attended the preparatory convention of the Swatantra Party in Bombay in August 1959. The preparatory convention appointed the nine-member Regional Committee and entrusted Bhailal Patel with the work of organising the Swatantra Party in Gujarat. The Gujarat branch of Swatantra Party was inaugurated on September 14, 1959 and an ad hoc committee of ten members was appointed. The Swatantra Party in Gujarat started functioning in September 1959 and the first convention of the Gujarat branch of the Swatantra was held in Nadiad on October 20, 1960.

Rightist ideology is not new for Gujarat largely because of the social and economic forces operating here. The larger middle class in the cities and villages has blunted the edge of economic disparity. The Ryotwari system had also created a wide spread class of small land-holders. Abolition of Jagirdari and Girasdari had turned many tenants into land-holders. This class of peasant proprietors is attached to their land, is educationally advanced and politically enlightened.



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The most notable community among the farmers is that of the Patidars. They have brought prosperity by their hard work and investment of capital earned abroad. Their contribution to the Satyagrahas of Bardoli and Kaira has been impressive. Many of them were antagonised by the land-reform measures of the Congress government. They resented the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1948 on the ground that it out-stepped its declared purpose by infringing upon their property rights rather than protecting the tenants against exploitation. They nurtured a widespread grievance that they were asked to sacrifice their property rights over land, when the urban properties had been left untouched. The growing rightist dissatisfaction against the Congress was reflected as early as 1952. The Kutch Rajput Sabha in Kutch, the Saurashtra Khedut Sangha and Praja Paksha in Saurashtra, Purushottamdas Patel's group in North Gujarat, and Krishikar Lok Paksha and Lok Paksha in Central and South Gujarat were the rightist forces that had fought the 1952 elections, and had won roughly 20% votes. This, however, did not make any impact on the poll results, mainly because of lack of cohesion among them, their failure to create an ideological philosophy out of their grievances, and their overdependence on nebulous discontent and comparative neglect of organisation (Desai, 1963: 144-5)ⁱ.

The emergence of the Swatantra consolidated the opposition forces to fight against the Congress in Gujarat. The group of Purushottam Patel in Mehsana had joined the Congress after the formation of Gujarat. But a sizeable part of it led by Ramchandra Amin joined the Swatantra. Rightist elements were drawn to the Swatantra Party. In this context, the component of the Kshatriyas became very important for the Swatantra for the electoral victory. Bhaikaka had gauged the political importance of the Kshatriyas and the Patidars mainly because of their numerical strength. He wanted the opposition to have a wider social basis and thought of an alliance between the two communities that could be of immense value to the Swatantra. He worked for this despite the widely known antagonism between them.

Under his leadership, the Swatantra Party had set two aims: consolidation of various forces into a cohesive force under the Swatantra umbrella, and widening the social base of the Party especially by winning the support of the Kshatriya community, and building an alliance between the Kshatriyas and the Patidars. During its short span, the Party did manage to achieve this to a great extent. In addition to the deep rooted antagonism between the Kshatriyas and the Patidars, there were also differences of land ownership interests between the Patidars of Gujarat area and Saurashtra area as also between those of Kshatriyas of Gujarat area and Saurashtra area.

The Kshatriya group is heterogeneous, consisting

of Rajputs and Kolis and others. The former consider themselves superior. The economic conditions of various Kshatriya groups differ and there is a wide gulf among them. Tenancy legislations and competitive politics have increased rivalry between these two communities. (Shah, 1975; 32)ⁱⁱ

The Kshatriyas in Gujarat have been largely 'have-nots'. Conflicts between the Patidar land owners and the Kshatriya tenants have a long tradition. Faced with the growing challenges from the Patidars, the Congress had sought the support of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha in 1952 and 1957 elections (for details of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha see Shah, 1975) and benefited by it. Bhaikaka had noticed the strength of the Congress due to the support of the Kshatriyas. He himself was defeated in the 1952 elections by Natwarsinh Solanki, a Kshatriya candidate and one of the pillars of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha.

In 1957, the Congress, having faced the tension on linguistic issue, was eager to retain the support of the Kshatriyas, but the aspirations of the Kshatriyas had increased considerably as they became aware of their bargaining position vis-a-vis the political parties. The leaders could not get specific commitments from Congress. Narendrasinh Mahida, a powerful leader of the Kshatriyas, was pro-Congress but found it difficult to convince his colleagues to stay with the Congress. The Congress, facing popular uprising in support of Maha Gujarat, encouraged Mahida to undertake an election tour. Mahida left the Sabha in June 1957 for a short while but soon came back to its fold, where Natwarsinh Solanki and Bhagwandas Chhasatiya were keen to have him back. Mahida, supported by Solanki and Chhasatiya tried to forge an alliance of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha with the Congress. At its convention at Dakor on 4th April 1958, the Sabha unanimously accepted its alliance with the Congress. However, by mid-1959, differences cropped up. The Congress felt that the Sabha's demands were increasing. The Sabha on the other hand felt that promises were not fulfilled and their efforts were not liked by the local Congress persons, particularly the Patidars. Soon the anti-Congress voices were vocal. Solanki took the lead in organising anti-Congress grievances of the Kshatriyas. The Swatantra leaders attracted leaders like Solanki and Chhasatiya. At its Bayad convention the Sabha announced its break from the Congress. Mahida did not approve of the decision, but could not prevent it. The Congress lost the support of the Kshatriyas in the 1962 elections and paid a heavy price. (Shah, 1975:91-136)

As Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha started getting disenchanted with the Congress, Bhaikaka tried hard to win them. After severing its relation with the Congress at its Bayad convention in March 1961, Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha extended support to the Swatantra.

Assembly and Lok Sabha Elections of 1962

The Swatantra benefited as the Congress weakened. In 1961 session at Bhavnagar the then Congress President, Sanjeeva Reddy, talked about 'ten years rule', i.e., the persons in power for ten years should voluntarily give up the office and take up organisational work. This created furore among many members and caused a rift between the organisational and ministerial wings of the Party. The organisational wing tried to keep persons with ten years in office out of election contest in 1962 and aimed at ousting Jivraj Mehta. However, three aspirants for the position of the chief minister - Balvantrai Mehta, Thakorbhai Desai and Babubhai J. Patel - were defeated. Internal politics of the Party affected its performance adversely.

The Congress's loss of the mass base in 1962 was huge as compared to the 1957 elections, and the Swatantra benefited from this. The Swatantra contested in 15 out of 16 districts of Gujarat; it did not contest in Amreli. It fielded 106 candidates for 154 seats of the Assembly and won 26 seats. The major gains of the Party were in the districts of Kutch (5 out of 5), Kaira (10 out of 15), and Panchmahal (5 out of 11 seats). The remaining 6 seats were secured from 4 districts of Baroda, Ahmedabad, Mehsana and Sabarkantha. The Party came second in 55 places, and lost deposit in 21 places. Jaydeepsinhji of the princely state of Devgadhi-Baria constituency in Panchmahal district secured the highest number of votes.

For the Lok Sabha elections in 1962, the Swatantra fielded 14 candidates for 22 seats of Gujarat. It won 4 seats - Anand, Kutch, Kaira and Dohad; secured second place in 9 and lost deposit in Bhavnagar constituency. The most prominent victory was that of Narendrasinh Mahida of Swatantra who defeated Maniben Patel in Anand by more than 20,000 votes. Himmatsinhji of Kutch won defeating Bhavanji Arjun Khimji, the strong candidate of the Congress, who had been winning since 1952. He won both the Assembly and the Lok Sabha seats. He gave up the Assembly seat. Pravinsinh Solanki, Natwarsinh Solanki's son, who had recently returned from England, won the Lok Sabha seat from Kaira. Hirabhai Baraiya of Swatantra won the Lok Sabha seat in Dohad. Lilavati Munshi, a Swatantra candidate from Broach constituency, lost to Chhotabhai M. Patel of Congress, despite campaigns by Rajaji and Munshi. Bhanumati Dahyabhai Patel also lost from Bhavnagar as well as Surendranagar. Among other losers of the Swatantra for the Lok Sabha elections were Maganlal Joshi from Jamnagar, Pashabhai Patel from Sabarkantha, and Ramchandra Amin from Mehsana. The Swatantra had a strong base in Kaira because of Bhaikaka and support of Kshatriyas.

The Party did well in both the elections. In 1962 it won 26 assembly seats (6.9 % seats and 24.32 % votes in the assembly, and 4 parliamentary seats (18.18 % of seats

and 24.99 % of votes). It displayed a good grip in Kutch, Central and Northern parts of Gujarat, but Saurashtra and South Gujarat were its weak points. It emerged as the alternative to the Congress in place of the PSP (Praja Socialist Party) or Janata Parishad.

The 1963 bye-elections were important. The Swatantra contested two seats of the Lok Sabha and won both: Parshottamdas Bhil in Dohad and Minoo Masani in Rajkot. Rajkot election became the site to test the strength of the Swatantra against that of the Congress. The political climate at that time was changing. Old loyalties began to be restored and new grievances began to take place against the administration and the Congress. In 1962 some of the ex-rulers, like that of Rajkot, pushed by the Swatantra Party and the changed political climate made bold to contest against the Congress. (Maru, 1965:997)ⁱⁱⁱ

The Congress had won all the three earlier general elections in this constituency. Masani, though the General Secretary of the Party, was an outsider in Rajkot. The Congress had fielded Jethalal Joshi, a person of credibility with forty years in public life. Bhaikaka, the then President of the Swatantra Party in Gujarat, and Jaydeepsinhji, its General Secretary, brought the Patidars and the Kshatriyas together. Rightist parties like the Jan Sangh promised support. The campaign was full of excitement. Congress leaders like Indira Gandhi and Y. B. Chavan campaigned for their Party, while Rajaji, Munshi, Gayatri Devi, Jan Sangh leader Atal Behari Bajpai and the socialist leader J. B. Kriplani, and the Saurashtra Khedut Samaj helped the Swatantra election campaign. Bhaikaka worked with amazing zeal and skill: he mobilised workers and energised the organisation. Masani's national image, Swatantra's effective election strategies and the support it got from traditional interests helped the Swatantra candidate's victory that was a blow to Nehru's prestige.

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ⁱ K. D. Desai, Emergence of the Swatantra Party in Gujarat, *Journal of Gujarat Research Society*, April 1963

ⁱⁱ Ghanshyam Shah, *Caste Association and Political Process in Gujarat: a study of Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rushikesh Maru, Fall of a Traditional Congress Stronghold, *Economic Weekly*, June 19, 1965.

To be continued

Agriculture and Rural Indebtedness - VII

R. M. Mohan Rao

*Freedom from British Rule did little to improve the lot of the farmer.
This is so even today 67 years after Independence.*



In this, the VII part of the series on the indebtedness of farmers, Professor Mohan Rao continues the discussion on farmers' participation in development programmes and various policy initiatives such as the role of the State vis-a-vis Indian agriculture, the phenomenon of rural indebtedness, rural credit and the nature of safety nets to deal with risks and uncertainties.

III

Policy Initiatives

4. Safety nets to overcome risk and uncertainty

At present the farmer alone bears all the risks while others enjoy the fruits of his labour and risk taking. In this context the following interventions are considered helpful in mitigating the risks faced by farmers.

- Crop insurance must be recast by considering the village as a unit with relatively low premia, to start with, to induce the majority of farmers to get into the scheme to make it viable and operative in the long run.
- Transparency in the settlement process of claims; this requires the involvement of Bankers' and farmers' representatives as part of damage committees to build confidence measures and facilitate greater participation by farmers.
- The minimum support prices must be extended to all crops and they must be notified well in advance of sowing season to send right signals to the farmers to decide what to grow or not to grow.
- There must be nodal agencies to purchase all major agricultural produce, as there are no such agencies for many crops.
- Introduction of an effective marketing extension

system goes a long way in increasing awareness as well as enlightening farmers about the nature of market risks associated with the crops grown by them.

5. Measures to promote viability and profitability of farming

The problem of viability of farming is of an urgent nature and cannot wait till long-term solutions are found. The following deserve immediate attention:

- Livestock production in India is the endeavour of sub-marginal, marginal and small holders contributing to the livelihood of over 70 million rural households despite the absence of a national extension support system and mostly depending on traditional money lenders for credit. Evolving a unified policy framework for livestock sector targeting women as development partners in animal husbandry projects – their successful implementation helps in a large measure to make small farms viable entities.
- Safeguarding and strengthening the livelihood and security of the resource of poor farmers and farm labour should be the basis of all trade and investment policies as rightly suggested by Dr. M. S. Swaminathan. In this context, investment in small agro-processing units in rural areas based on crop and dairying deserves attention as they help value addition and is livelihood intensive with potential for employment generation in the

rural areas.

- With the development of agriculture with advancing technology, women are losing avenues for their positive contribution to the economy of the family. In this context, imparting certain skills and developing professions exclusively for rural women helps marginal and small farm households to become viable and face crisis situations without resorting to extreme steps.

6. Cost of production and profitability

The rising cost of production and decline in yields and profitability has to be addressed urgently as they are causing growing indebtedness and severe crisis among the farming community. Some of the steps that call for attention are:

- Lack of supply of quality seeds and their high cost which is playing havoc with farmers' lives has to be sorted out immediately by ensuring at least partial supply through Government / Cooperatives.
- Announcement of Minimum Support Prices before the commencement of the sowing season to help farmers take appropriate decisions besides notification of nodal agencies for purchase of various crops.
- Developing cost effective technologies particularly for crops grown in rain fed lands and largely grown by marginal and small farmers.
- Ending Government meddling with market for farm products or at least limited to abnormal situations as such interventions often adversely affect the farmers.

7. Technology

Given the current situation of agricultural technology in the country and the likely neglect of the problems of 'orphan crops', rain-fed areas and poor farmers, where returns on investment are likely to be comparatively less; and with the recognition of Intellectual Property Rights, the following interventions are essential to make technology, friendly to farmers particularly the small and marginal in unfavorable areas :

- Technological advances in crop production should be reoriented to issues which greatly reduce dependence on water, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides
- The focus of attention of technology has to shift

from increasing production to increasing earnings of individual small and marginal farmers and particularly those in unfavourable areas.

- Given the predominance of small and marginal holdings, technology development has to address itself to its cost-effectiveness and affordability to the vast majority of poor farmers.
- Technology bears fruits only when it is widely adopted at the field level. This emphasizes the need for relevance, with a focus on farmers' concerns and requirements. In this context, farmers' involvement in research process, which is very limited at present, assumes significance.
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PROFESSOR R. M. MOHAN RAO, retired NABARD Chair, Waltair, Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of serialising his Paper is to invite readers to share their views on the issues raised and recommend policies that would ensure a fair deal for India's farmers.

If you are interested in getting a copy of the full text, kindly e-mail freedomfirst1952@gmail.com or telephone/write to us as *Freedom First*, 3rd Floor, Army & Navy Building, 148 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001.

To be continued

Poor Farmer

We can live without **Cigarette**,
still the one who makes **Cigarette is Rich ...**

We can live without **Alcohol**,
still the one who makes **Alcohol is Rich ...**

We can live without **Mobile**,
still the one who makes **Mobile is Rich ...**

We can live without **Car**,
still the one who makes **Car is Rich ...**

But we cannot live without **Food** at all,
still the **Farmer** who provides us **Grains**
for **Food is Poor ...**

Courtesy: laughingcolours.com

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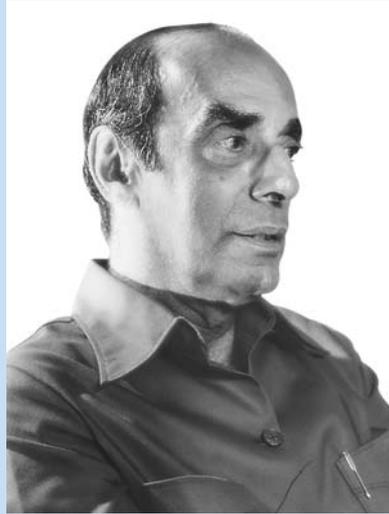
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Remembering the Founder on his 17th Death Anniversary



Minoo Masani

Founder, *Freedom First*

(20 November, 1905 - 27 May, 1998)

The Party died, but its philosophy,
Once maligned, now is public polity.
As governments, too late, see how and why,
Excess State control, made things go awry.
This comes with no acknowledgement of source:
But the concept survived with its own force.
Not near New Delhi's centrestage for years,
His death elicited few public tears -
No public funeral, or State "*samadhi*"
Accorded feckless heirs of "Dynasty".

- Dr. Louella Lobo Prabhu

Cited in *Freedom First*, No.438, July-September 1998