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# **AGRICULTURE**

## HINDU 11.5.11 AGRICULTURE

### **The wheat mountains of the Punjab**

M.S. Swaminathan

*The arrival of large quantities of wheat in the grain markets of the Punjab-Haryana region is a heart-warming sight, while poor storage is a matter of national shame.*

It was in April-May 1968, that the country witnessed the wonderful spectacle of large arrivals of wheat grain in the mandis of Punjab like Moga and Khanna. Wheat production in the country rose to nearly 17 million tonnes that year, from the previous best harvest of 12 million tonnes. Indira Gandhi released a special stamp titled “Wheat Revolution” in July 1968, to mark this new phase in our agricultural evolution. The nation rejoiced at our coming out of a “ship to mouth” existence. Later in 1968, Dr. William Gaud of the U.S. referred to the quantum jumps in production brought about by semi-dwarf varieties of wheat and rice as a “green revolution.” This term has since come to symbolise a steep rise in productivity and, thereby, of production of major crops.

Wheat production this year may reach a level of 85 million tonnes, in contrast to the seven million tonnes our farmers harvested at the time of independence in 1947. I visited several grain mandis in Moga, Khanna, Khananon and other places in the Punjab during April 23-27, 2011 and experienced, concurrently, a feeling of ecstasy and agony. It was heart-warming to see the great work done by our farm men and women under difficult circumstances when, often, they had to irrigate the fields at night due to a lack of availability of power during the day. The cause of agony was the

way the grains produced by farmers with loving care were being handled. The various State marketing agencies and the Food Corporation of India (FCI) are trying their best to procure and store the mountains of grains arriving every day. The gunny bags containing the wheat procured during April-May 2010, are still occupying a considerable part of the storage space available at several mandis. The condition of the grains of earlier years presents a sad sight. The impact of moisture on the quality of paddy is even worse. Malathion sprays and fumigation with Aluminium Sulphide tablets are used to prevent grain spoilage. Safe storage involves attention to both quantity and quality. Grain safety is as important as grain saving. Due to rain and relatively milder temperature, grain arrivals were initially slow, but have now picked up. For all concerned with the procurement, dispatch and storage of wheat grains in the Punjab-Haryana-Western U.P. region, which is the heartland of the green revolution, the task on hand is stupendous.

Farmers in Punjab contribute nearly 40 per cent of the wheat and 26 per cent of the rice needed to sustain the public distribution system. The legal entitlement to food envisaged under the proposed National Food Security Act cannot be implemented without the help of the farm families of Punjab, Haryana and other grain surplus areas. Farmers are currently facing serious problems during production and post-harvest phases of farming due to inadequate investment in farm machinery and storage infrastructure. The investment made and steps taken to ensure environmentally sustainable production and safe storage and efficient distribution of grains will determine the future of both agriculture in Punjab and national food security.

On the production side, the ecological foundations essential for sustainable food production are in distress. There is an over-exploitation of the aquifer and nearly 70 per cent of irrigated area shows a negative water balance. The quality of the water is also deteriorating due to the indiscriminate use of pesticides and mineral

fertilizer. Over 50,000 ha of crop land in the south-west region of Punjab are affected by water logging and salinisation. Deficiencies of Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Zinc are affecting 66, 48 and 22 per cent of soils in Punjab respectively. No wonder factor productivity, i.e., return from a unit of input, is going down. Unless urgent steps are taken to convert the green revolution into an ever-green revolution leading to the enhancement of productivity in perpetuity without associated ecological harm, both agriculture in Punjab and our public distribution system will be in danger. Worried about the future fate of farming as a profession, the younger generation is unwilling to follow in the footsteps of their parents and remain on the farm. This is the greatest worry. If steps are not taken to attract and retain youth in farming, the older generation will have no option but to sell land to real estate agents, who are all the time tempting them with attractive offers. Global prices of wheat, rice and maize are almost 50 per cent higher than the minimum support price paid to our farmers. Our population is now over 1.2 billion and we can implement a sustainable and affordable food security system only with home-grown food.

A disturbing finding of Census-2011 is the deteriorating sex ratio in the Punjab-Haryana region. The female-male ratio among children has come to its lowest point since independence. Already, women are shouldering a significant portion of farm work. If the current trends of youth migrating from villages coupled with a drop in the sex ratio continue, agricultural progress will be further endangered. The prevailing preference for a male child is in part due to the fear of farm land going out of a family's control, when the girl child gets married. I hope the loss of interest in taking to farming as a profession among male youth will remove the bias in favour of male children. I foresee an increasing feminisation of agriculture in the green revolution areas. While the drop in the sex ratio should be halted, steps are also needed to intensify the design, manufacture

and distribution of women friendly farm machinery.

Tasks ahead: The first task is to defend the gains already made in improving the productivity and production of wheat, rice, maize and other crops. For the purpose of providing the needed technologies, it will be advisable to set up soon a Multi-disciplinary Research and Training Centre for Sustainable Agriculture at the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. This centre can be organised under the National Action Plan for the Management of Climate Change developed under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, which includes a Mission for Sustainable Agriculture. Such a centre should initiate a Land and Water Care Movement in the Punjab in association with the farming community. The other urgent task is the promotion of appropriate changes in land use. Over 2.7 million ha are now under rice leading to the unsustainable exploitation of the ground water. Our immediate aim should be to find alternative land use for about a million ha under rice. This will be possible only if farmers can get income similar to that they are now earning from rice. Possible alternative crops will be maize and arhar (Pigeon pea). Quality Protein Maize will fetch a premium price from the poultry industry which is fast growing in the Punjab. Arhar being a legume will also enrich soil fertility as well as soil physical properties. Other high value but low water requiring crops like pulses and oilseeds can also be promoted. At the same time, there could be diversified basmati rice production in over a million ha. In addition to Pusa Basmati 1121 which occupies the largest area now, Pusa Basmati-I (1460) and Pusa Basmati 6 (1401) can be promoted. These have resistance to bacterial leaf blight. Varietal diversity will reduce genetic vulnerability to pests and diseases.

For handling the over 26 million tonnes of wheat which will be purchased during this season, a four-pronged strategy may be useful. First, distribution through railway wagons could be expanded and expedited. One wagon can handle 2,500 tonnes. Currently 30,000 to

40,000 tonnes of wheat are being dispatched each day through wagons. With advanced planning, this quantity can be raised to over 1 lakh tonnes per day. They can be dispatched to different States for meeting the needs of PDS, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), School Noon Meal Programme, Annapoorna, etc. Second, the present Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and godown storage systems can be improved with a little more investment and planning. In Punjab there are 146 mandis and 1,746 Purchase Points. They could be grouped and their infrastructure improved. Third, storage in modern silos, like the one put up at Moga by Adani Agri-logistics, and another one coming up in Amritsar, should be promoted. This will help to adopt an end- to-end system from the point of view of procurement, cleaning, quality assurance, safe storage and distribution. The cost of building silos to store a million tonnes of food grains may be about Rs.600 crore, if the required land is made available by state governments. An investment of about Rs.10,000 crore would help to establish a grid of modern grain storages with a capacity for storing, in good condition, over 15 million tonnes in the Punjab-Haryana-Western U.P. region. Lastly, export options can be explored after taking steps to make food available to the hungry, as suggested by the Supreme Court. Also, we should ensure that adequate food grains will be available for implementing the proposed Food Security Act. Export should be done only if the global food prices are attractive and if the profit made is distributed as bonus to our farmers, as suggested by the National Commission on Farmers. It is time that we organise a National grid of grain storages, starting with storage at the farm level in well designed bins and extending to rural godowns and regional ultra-modern silos. Post harvest losses can then be minimised or even eliminated and food safety ensured. Unless the prevailing mismatch between production and post-harvest technologies is ended, neither the producer nor the consumer will derive full benefit from bumper harvests.

*( M.S. Swaminathan is Chairman, MSSRF, and Member of Parliament of the Rajya Sabha.)*

# **CORRUPTION**



## **Decade of spectacular moral failure**

Rajiv Dogra

**During the past decade we have seen corruption soar to an unimaginable level in our country. In China, scores would have been put to death for similar crimes. But not so in India where we take a relaxed view and adopt an unhurried approach towards dealing with corruption. Our leaders are more worried about the political consequences of acting against corrupt individuals, not the image of India and its people**

Let us, for argument's sake, concede the point that judged in terms of economic progress the last decade represents a shining moment in India's independent history. But it must also be admitted, unreservedly, that it has been a decade of the most spectacular moral failure.

Had it been China, scores of the corrupt may have been put to death; as indeed they have been. Many other countries have a streamlined system of dealing with the malaise of corrupt practices. In the UK, for example, the Financial Services Authority seizes all the bank accounts and stops business operations of the accused party till it has been cleared of all charges. In the US, the authorities lost no time in putting people like Maddof and Rajaratnam to prison and taking control of their financial empires while a legal process was

simultaneously put in motion.

In contrast, we take a Hindu view of it all. It takes ages for us to make up our minds and to initiate any sort of action. Even then we hesitate, political considerations weigh heavily in prosecuting the guilty. The emphasis, it seems, is often on finding the mitigating circumstances, the loophole that will let the important off. In the process delays are interminable; in some cases the evidence has long since been tampered with or even destroyed. Sadly, we as a nation have taken a liberal, all accepting view of the violations of sacred public trust. Our forgiving nature has unfortunately encouraged the violators to become more, and yet more, brazen.

It was beyond the realm of public imagination, just a few years back, to think that a single case of corruption might involve a colossal sum of 1.76 lakh crore. For the people who had once prided themselves on being frugal, on not leaving even a morsel of food uneaten in the plate, it was shocking to learn that some thought nothing of pocketing crores of rupees of Government funds. And they got away with it routinely. But as is often said; before the fall, the heights. Perhaps it is the same with the naked greed of those who have had a free run of the treasury so far. No more now.

People are in a state of sulk; towards the political parties in general and the Government in particular. The crowds which gathered in ever increasing numbers, each passing day at the Jantar Mantar, were clearly in a hostile mood. They weren't angry in the sense of those who had gathered at the Tahrir Square in Cairo, but they were equally determined and potentially perhaps as hostile. Anna Hazare was the difference between the crowds at the Tahrir square and those at the Jantar Mantar.

In Cairo they didn't have an alternative plan or a leader who could

point the masses towards life after the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. At Jantar Mantar, Anna Hazare had come prepared with a plan; that of the Jan Lok Pal Bill. That was the big difference between the two; Egypt is floundering in the eddies spun by its Army and other vested interests, here in India the 'civil society' has been better prepared.

Still, some question whether Anna Hazare is truly a great man, whether he deserves all that he was made out to be during and after his Jantar Mantar fast? Whether the Gandhi like crown, which people are placing around his head, is well deserved? But to engage in this argument would be futile; a false debate. The issue is not whether Anna Hazare is a great soul or a committed social reformer. The point is whether he has been able to address the epiphany of Indian distress. There, the answer must be in strongly affirmative terms.

The sense of a pure and grand India, which seemed reachable a year back, is now fraying at its political edges. Scams and corruption bewilder people by their immensity. Rumours about plenty for some and misery for majority, concessions for some and red tape for masses get confirmed routinely in the national media. All of it couldn't be mere allegations.

Therefore, the tide of public sentiment is strongly in favour of reforms and for wiping the system clean. Both are desirable and doable because in the initial decades of our independence we had a relatively clean system where a significant number were honest and upright. Anna Hazare, or the absolute probity of his supporters, is not, and should not, be the central point at this moment. That battle should be joined separately, and a determination about their absolute probity should be made in due course on its own merit.

What is vital now is to understand the temper of the times and the desire of people for change; the wiping clean of the tainted national slate. Like the argument about chicken and egg it will be futile to debate as to how much and who is responsible for the present rot? Or how completely is the political, bureaucratic and business class corrupt? The fact is that they are all deeply dented and hence the need for a clean sweep.

The external observer, the foreign investor, is usually the first to detect signs of discomfort in a country because he is held to account by his company's board for profit or loss of its investment. The World Bank's global index on the 'ease of starting a business' ranks India at 165th place in a list of 183 countries. The foreign investor has already begun to doubt the Indian story. Last year the Foreign Direct Investment fell by a third, and in January this year it fell by 48 per cent. While in Brazil the stock market is booming reflecting the confidence of the foreign and domestic investor, here in India it lurches uncertainly.

Within India, the mood among the business people is not particularly sunny; a Legatum Institute survey of Indian entrepreneurs found that only 11 per cent thought that the Government was doing a 'very good job'. Inflation is dogging progress. Despite these warning signs, and against the proven economic theory and practice, we are being told by the Government that high inflation and high growth go together! While verbal feints such as these may deceive people momentarily, but they are all too aware of the fact that the wild horses of inflation must be tamed before the nation can find its full growth potential. And people also know that an establishment, or a significant part thereof, which skims the cream as a matter of course can hardly point the nation towards great glory.

*-- The writer is a former Ambassador.*

TRIBUNE 11.5.11 CORRUPTION

### **Booking tainted babus**

#### **Consensus on their inclusion in Lokpal Bill welcome**

THE joint drafting committee on the Lokpal Bill has rightly evolved a consensus on bringing the IAS, IPS and other civil services officers within the ambit of the Lokpal Bill. This is a refreshing development because corrupt bureaucrats have been getting away all along by twisting laws and subverting the system. It is noteworthy that the committee has decided to review the laws that have drawn flak for shielding corrupt bureaucrats. As a first step, once the Lokpal Bill is duly enacted by Parliament, the Lokpal may not need the Centre's prior permission for prosecution of a bureaucrat of and above the rank of a Joint Secretary to the government. Significantly, the drafting committee has decided to examine in this context amendments to Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPEA). Under the DSPEA, the CBI cannot prosecute an official in a corruption case without the Centre's sanction.

Corruption in administration has increased so much that it must be tackled on a war footing. If the latest proposal is pursued to its logical conclusion, as many as 300 corrupt bureaucrats could face speedy prosecution. And this will, certainly, make a lot of difference

to the quality of administration and governance. However, the powers that be should tread with caution and utmost circumspection so that the roles, powers and functions of existing institutions like the Central Vigilance Commissioner and the CBI do not clash and/or overlap with those of the Lokpal. The higher judiciary's role in the new Lokpal regime should also be properly defined. While the Centre is yet to take a stand on this issue, the civil society activists have reportedly extended an "olive branch" to the government by maintaining that all judicial-related matters will be referred to a seven-member Lokpal Bench first.

Another issue of consideration is the repeal of Article 311 of the Constitution which has protected the corrupt and non-performing civil servants from punishment. Because of the safeguards in this Article, most cases go in favour of the delinquent civil servants. True, it was amended in 1976, permitting a penalty to be imposed on the basis of evidence. However, even in the amended form, the safeguards tend to protract the proceedings indefinitely. If a Committee of Secretaries will have to inquire into the charges of corruption against a Secretary first before his prosecution, it must be given a timeframe to complete the inquiry so as to facilitate expeditious prosecution.

# **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

TIMES OF INDIA 8.5.11 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## **New IT guidelines to check illegal activities at cyber cafes**

Neha Madaan

The next time you visit the nearby cyber cafe, make sure to carry your identity card, says the [IT ministry](#), which has come up with strict rules to check nefarious activities from cyber cafes operating across the country.

The [Information Technology \( Guidelines for Cyber Cafe\) Rules 2011](#), which are part of Information Technology Act 2000, have also introduced a 'registration agency' as designated by the government to issue licenses to cyber cafes for their operation.

City's cyber cafe owners, who would earlier have to seek police permission for operating a cyber cafe, have welcomed the move.

Among other things, these rules also state that those under 18 years without photo identity card will have to be accompanied by an adult with valid ID card.

The rules also say that computers in the cafe be equipped with



commercially available safety or filtering software so as to avoid access to websites relating to pornography including child pornography or obscene information. Techno-legal consultant and faculty at the Asian School of Cyber Law, Sagar Raurkar, said, "The rules that came into force on April 27 this year. Earlier, rules and regulations for cyber cafes in Maharashtra were defined under the Mumbai Police Act,1951. However, the new rules by the ministry apply to all cafes in the country, which will help hasten inter-state criminal investigations, as many a time a perpetrator commits an offence from a cafe located in some other state."

According to the new rules, cyber cafes will henceforth be registered with a unique registration number with the registration agency.

The terms of registration include name of establishment, address with contact details including email address, name of owner, date of incorporation and type of service to be provided from cyber cafe, among other things.

Many cyber cafe owners have welcomed the decision of having a separate registration agency to issue licenses for operation. Gajanan Babar, president of Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad cyber cafe owners and operators' association, said, "Before the new rules, cyber cafes needed permission from the police to start operations. The issuing of licenses was a long and complicated process. With the separate registration agency, the process will be simplified to a great extent."

Manohar Palande, vice-president, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad cyber cafe owners and operators' association said, "For registration, cyber cafes had to provide documents such 'no objection certificates' from various departments, which is a tedious process. A separate registration agency will make this job easy."

The rules also say that the cyber cafe owner should store and maintain backups of the history of websites and logs of proxy server installed at cyber cafe for at least one year. Referring to this, Palande added, "Maintaining such backups of history of websites accessed by a user will prevent quite a few from visiting cyber cafes, as they may feel that their privacy is at risk."

Assistant police inspector of the cyber crime cell Sanjay Tungar, however, differs. "Those who visit cafes to access legal information and for legal activities have nothing to fear even if the history of websites accessed is stored," said Tungar.

Tungar added that any person visiting a cyber cafe will have to furnish an identity card in order to use a computer. Such documents may include identity card issued by any school or college, photo credit card or debit card issued by a bank or post office, passport, voters identity card, [PAN](#) card, photo identity card issued by the employer or any government agency, Unique Identification (UID) number or driving license.

"After the identity of the user has been established, the cyber cafe will have to maintain a log register with information of each user as well as the accompanying person for a minimum period of one year," added Tungar.

The rules also say that partitions of cubicles built inside the cyber cafe should not exceed four-and-a-half feet in height from the floor level, and that minors should not be allowed in these cubicles unless accompanied by an adult.

"The specifications aim to prevent obscenity inside cubicles," added Rahrkar.

# **LIBRARY SCIENCE**

TIMES OF INDIA 8.5.11 LIBRARY SCIENCE

### **Libraries take the digital route**

Swati Shinde Gole

Keeping pace with the times, [libraries](#) at research institutes have begun to digitise their book collections.

The [Deccan College](#) Post Graduate and Research Institute is in the process of scanning books between 1500 AD and 1900 AD, while the Bhaskaracharya Pratishthan, which has a rare collection of pure mathematics, also plans to use the digital platform.

One of country's foremost research institutes, the [Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics](#), has digitised its books from the 16th century onwards. Plans are afoot to make it available to the public through the internet on a membership basis. The Jayakar Library of the University of Pune has also scanned over 3,000 books so far.

The Deccan College received a grant from the [Union government](#) last year for this purpose. "The first phase of digitisation will consist of books published between 1500 and 1900. Work on the project began a year ago and we are half-way through. The grant is just

enough for us to digitise the books in this period. Once we receive more funds, work will continue," said Trupti More, a librarian at Deccan college.

The college has a collection of 1.7 lakh books in Marathi, Hindi and English, many of them travel guides from the 16th century. They also have manuscripts on the Vedas, astronomy and ayurveda.

Suresh Patil, chief librarian of Jayakar Library, said, "With changing reading habits and the advent of technology, libraries also need to update themselves. Digitising books makes it more accessible and convenient to readers, academicians and researchers. It increases the reader database and ultimately spreads knowledge."

Patil stressed that digitisation makes it easy to search for books, authors, theses and references.

"Earlier, we used to spend hours searching for books or authors. Now we just have to click a few times." Jayakar Library has over five lakh books and 2,300 manuscripts in Hindi and Marathi.

The Gokhale Institute will soon digitise over 20,000 books, mostly on social science and economics, dating back to the 1680s. Many of them have come apart and cannot be given to those wanting to read them. Instead the institute will scan them so that readers can either take a printout or download them, or even read them on the computer screen. The Institute has received a grant of Rs 20 lakh for the project from the [University Grants Commission](#).

Nanaji Shewale, chief librarian of the Gokhale Institute, said, "Once the project is complete, online access will become possible."

# **POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**

## HINDU 14.5.11 POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

### **A case for restraint and moderation**

Gopalkrishna Gandhi

*In the context of the election results, nothing so becomes a victor as grace in success, and nothing makes victory seem so well deserved as courtesy towards the one who has lost.*

This is a season of celebration, and of lamentation. Elections have distributed success and failure, victory and defeat. This is not an hour for restraint.

And yet, that is exactly what it should be.

In the elections held in 1934 to the Central Legislative Assembly, the Madras Presidency had 16 seats. Of these, three were reserved for Muslims and one each for the Depressed Classes and Landholders. In effect, the Congress had 11 seats to contest. Robust

opposition was given to the Congress candidates by the Justice Party, which was in power in the Province.

The Congress, which had been conducting a spirited campaign against untouchability and for social reform, faced opposition from the orthodox sections of the Madras population as well. "In the name of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva," a leaflet said, "we exhort you to teach those who wish to interfere with our religion a lesson they will never forget. Will you vote for God or for Mr. Rajagopalachari and his Congress nominees?"

The Presidency's voters were not awed by God. Certainly not by that version of God.

They voted, in that election, emphatically for the Congress, which won all 11 seats. "You have reason to be proud of your marvellous achievement," Congress President Vallabhbhai Patel wired CR.

Did crackers go off?

CR, as President of the Tamilnad Congress, had some suggestions for his party on how to take victory. "This is an hour of restraint," he wrote to S. Satyamurti who had won a dramatic victory in the Madras seat over Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar. "Our success," he said, "is no disgrace for our opponents. You must enforce this in all your talks, private or public."

Seventy-seven years on, after results for the elections held for five legislatures have all come in, it is worth asking: have restraint and moderation marked its successes? Or are we proving right the words of Oscar Wilde: "Moderation is a fatal thing, nothing succeeds like excess."

Wilde has also said something that would fit perfectly a victorious candidate's feelings in a 'hung' verdict: "The play was a great



success, but the audience was a disaster.”

Indian voters voting for governments within the States have disfavoured ambiguity. They have generally been voting emphatically, making the ‘play’ and the ‘audience’ agree with each other. It is another matter that the regional votes, categorical in themselves, when put together on to the chequerboard of our parliamentary results, have yielded less than a two-thirds or a three-fourths majority for the number one party.

But to come back to success and failure, victory and defeat.

Nothing so ill becomes a victor as gloating, nothing reflects so well on success as sobriety.

In the 1962 election to the Lok Sabha, the constituency of North Bombay saw a celebrated contest between V.K. Krishna Menon from the Congress and Acharya Kripalani, an independent supported by almost the entire Opposition. “A vote against Menon is a vote against me,” Prime Minister Nehru had said. And campaigning for the battle-scarred freedom warrior, Rajagopalachari had “blessed” the Acharya, calling his contest a great gain for democracy “whether we win or not.” Krishna Menon won, resoundingly. And the first thing he did was to call on the defeated veteran in his temporary abode in the city to which neither belonged.

In 1977, when the democratic opposition led by Jayaprakash Narayan won a victory that would have been thought impossible even a few weeks earlier, the man of whom it was said, “not since Mahatma Gandhi has a single individual without power of office exerted as much influence on India,” did something that would have been thought equally impossible. Shortly after the Janata government had been installed, JP called on Indira Gandhi, against whose National Emergency he had pitted his lifetime's reputation as

a political organiser, and his renal health as well.

In 2004, after being sworn in Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh observed a high-minded practice in calling on the man he had faced as the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha for five tense years and whom he was now succeeding — Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Nothing so becomes a victor as grace in success, nothing makes victory seem so well deserved as courtesy towards the one who has lost.

But there is more to the ambient dynamics of victory and defeat than the grace or gracelessness that can accompany them. Something integral to the contestation itself is involved. And that, in a mature democracy, is the acknowledgment of three features of elective trust: first, its conditionality; second, its reversibility; and, third, its supremacy.

The voter reposes trust, rather than power. The elector confers opportunity rather than sovereignty.

The elected are wont to regard victory as anointing, success as coronation. They are in grievous error, even if only momentary, in thinking so. And in the progress towards the moment longed for they believe, mistakenly in large part, that elective trust is manipulable, purchasable and eternal. Whence, the celebration with crackers, with colours, with conceit.

To go back to the most democratic organisation in the country before Independence, we must not forget that Gandhi, yes, the Mahatma himself, was virtually outvoted within the Congress when at Haripura in 1938 the AICC set his nominee Pattabhi Sitaramayya aside and elected Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the organisation. We must not forget that in 1967, the invincible Kumaraswami Kamaraj, who had said he would win his seat in

Virudhunagar “without disturbing his sleep,” was defeated by an unknown, Parimalam Srinivasan. We must not forget that in the same year, Bombay's strongman S.K. Patil was defeated by 37-year-old George Fernandes in an incredible result. We must not forget that in 1984 the redoubtable and respected Somnath Chatterjee was defeated by a 29-year-old Mamata Banerjee in what came to be called a ‘giant-killing’ contest in Jadavpur. Howsoever strong the political claimant, the individual with the vote in the collectivity of voting, is infinitely stronger.

And, more pertinently, like the proverbially high-on-memory elephant, the voter makes a quiet decision about when to garland the wooer and when to twirl its trunk around the dazed supplicant and, lifting the prone frame high, bring it down to earth.

It is a truism that the Indian voter cannot be taken for granted. It follows that candidates cannot be complacent. Also, that victors need not gloat and those defeated – I do not wish to use the phrase ‘vanquished’ – need not lament. But more important than this, those elected, whether they sit in the Opposition benches or with the ruling party, should know that the vote is a notice, not a certificate. They should know that the dust of defeat and the syrup of success rest in adjoining jars. The first is invariably earned retrospectively. The second is received on trust conditionally, retrievably, and with the confidence of ownership. It can be taken right back unless two things are respected: First, the dignity of the voter who is indistinguishable from the travails of India's common humanity. Second, the intelligence of the voter, which is no less than any master mathematician working on Differential Calculus.

*( Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former Governor of West Bengal.)*

HINDUSTAN TIMES 10.5.11 POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

## **Homegrown heroes**

Sagarika Ghose

The last vote has been cast. The surveys are out. Electronic voting machines stand at the ready. In 48 hours, the voice of the Indian voter will thunder and we will know who has been chosen to rule in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Assam.

Verdict 2011 has been about local personalities. Every contest this time has been a presidential contest among local heroes. Parties, manifestos and national leaders have faded into irrelevance. Instead, towering local personalities are the determinants of electoral victories. The 2011 polls have shown how desperately national parties need to nurture local leaders. They have shown that the era of the national parachutist from Delhi has come to an end.

In Kerala roars the Malabar lion, 87-year-old VS Achuthanandan. The CPI(M) politburo in Delhi tried to deny him a ticket. But public uproar forced the lofty leadership at the Left headquarters to eat humble pie and

today Achuthanandan fights from Malampuzha. Rahul Gandhi made the mistake of calling him aged, a remark seen in Kerala as both disrespectful and ill-informed. In a state where the number of elderly is expected to constitute 15% by 2021, age is to be respected — not scoffed at. Achuthanandan may be an octogenarian warhorse, but he's also seen as the regional fighter against a dictatorial Delhi, an anti-incumbent against his own deeply divided party, the politically-incorrect, spartan, son-of-the-soil who speaks his mind about Islamic terror and enjoys an approval rating unusual for a sitting CM. The Left's fortunes in Kerala revolve around the personality of Achuthanandan and whether or not voters believe he deserves a second term.

In West Bengal, storms Ma Durga in a crumpled sari, 56-year-old Mamata Banerjee. She's not a goddess isolated in some brahmanical temple. She is a footpath kali who has waged a single-minded battle against the Left Front for over two decades. Sheer persistence and tenacity have built the Mamata Banerjee cult in the state. The Bengal Congress gave up fighting the Left two decades ago. Banerjee herself suffered crushing defeats. But now she is the Lech Walesa of India, the anti-communist hero who is set to defeat, through democratic politics, one of the oldest communist regimes in the world. No one knows much about the Trinamool, its programme, who exactly are its second-rung leaders or what kind of governance it will deliver. It's Banerjee who has fought a presidential contest in Bengal. Her possible victory is a good moment for the Congress to reflect on why it let a natural born politician like her leave the party. Why did the high command not nurture her as a state president and why is it that any talented local leader is sooner or later forced to leave the Grand Old Party?

In Tamil Nadu, it's a face off between the Dravida patriarch, 86-year-old Karunanidhi and the state's very own Cleopatra, 63-year-old Jayalalithaa. When politics is personality-based, the role of family becomes crucial. The once-revolutionary DMK patriarch's family is seen to be drowning in corruption. Goonda raj and family raj have

destroyed Kalaignar's Dravida idealism. Those who rule through presidential politics also die by presidential politics. When a beloved leader loves his own sons and daughters more than he loves the sons and daughters of Tamil Nadu, a personality cult sours rapidly. The 2011 verdict in the state revolves around the personality of Karunanidhi and whether voters want to punish him or give him another chance.

In Assam, the election once again centres around the personality of the Ahomiya-for-all-seasons, Tarun Gogoi — the only Assamese leader most Indians have heard about. The CNN-IBN post-poll survey suggests that Gogoi is set to return to power for a record third term. His success lies in his peace deal with Ulfa, the development-oriented government he is seen to have delivered in spite of serious corruption charges and the fact that there is no other leader to pose a challenge to the Gogoi persona.

State elections magnify personality-based politics and now general elections are no different. Even a party like the BJP, which apparently doesn't believe in personality-based politics, was forced to make AB Vajpayee into a larger-than-life figure. The Congress won the 2009 election in urban India because of the promise and goodwill embodied by a Manmohan Singh.

In state elections, there is another critical dimension: the regional leader — be it a Nitish Kumar or a Narendra Modi or a Mamata Banerjee — must be deeply rooted in the political culture of that state. National leaders can parachute in and out in their helicopters, address stage-managed rallies and declare their fondness for the local cuisine. But at a time when regional identities are becoming sharper, elections will be won by state-level popular personalities who fight presidential campaigns. This might partly explain why the Congress is still struggling to revive itself in Uttar Pradesh or why, post-YSR, it is on the backfoot in Andhra Pradesh.

However seductive a party manifesto, however clever the backroom deals, it is the dominant local personalities — not national faces — who win assembly elections. A good example of political re-invention in this context is Naveen Patnaik. From being a Manhattan party animal, he is now a son-of-the-soil Oriya leader. If Patnaik can do it, why can't India's Generation Next politicians? They may not quite be 'Amul Babies' yet they appear disconnected from the perseverance required to become true blue local heroes.

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## **TERRORISM**

TRIBUNE 14.5.11 TERRORISM

### **Realities of geopolitics**

Premen Addy

**The Pakistani street rages against the American infidel, but this stems from impotence. The country would be lost without American aid that keeps it afloat.**

Osama bin Laden lived and died by the sword, the Monster perishing at the hands of its American Dr Frankenstein. US Navy SEALs shot him dead in his mansion hideout in the Pakistan garrison of Abbottabad within a stone's throw of the country's prestigious military training academy.

The irresistible force had prevailed over the elusive quarry. It will now be up to Hollywood to provide the script, select the actors and market the product for screens across the globe. There are fistfuls of dollars to be made as Rambo, like his previous incarnation, Zorro, rides again. The narrative, in keeping with the package, will be a manifestation of soft power with hard power lurking menacingly in the background.



America, for whom Osama bin Laden was once a heroic cold war jihadist, reduced him to a corpse to be fed to the denizens of the Arabian Sea. It was payback time for the humiliation and pain of 9/11.

The anger sweeping America at perceived Pakistani perfidy is broad and deep. Television anchors, radio talk show hosts and their guests join the print media in ritual excoriation of the country's Pakistani ally. The same is true of Britain. *The Times* Parliamentary sketch writer, Ann Treneman, was scornfully dismissive of Prime Minister David Cameron's prevarications on Pakistan in the Commons. However, scribes given to denouncing Islamabad's double-tongued tactics were equally convinced that the West's support for Pakistan was a vital Western interest. Senior US Senators Kerry and Lugar are similarly persuaded of Pakistan's continuing importance as a strategic ally, however fraught the present state of US-Pakistan relations.

The Pakistani street rages and fulminates against the American infidel, but this stems from impotence. The country's governing military-political-bureaucratic nexus would be lost without the infusions of financial aid that keep the nation afloat, and is the primary source of their own self-enrichment. The marriage is set to continue regardless.

Pakistani interests in Afghanistan, say dissembling Anglo-American advocates, must be secured against Indian influence. A retired Pakistan-born Anglican bishop Michael Nazir Ali, in an article in *The Times*, writes of the need to force India to the negotiating table on Kashmir since this was no longer a bilateral issue but a matter of international concern. The self-effacing spirit of Indian diplomacy is a facilitator to casual insolence. India should not be afraid of its own shadow, warned VP Menon, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's close aide many moons ago. Mr Mukul Deva appeared to rediscover this no-nonsense approach in his TV presentation on Indian security and best practice — which is to exercise restraint when the occasion demanded but to be boldly resolute in the

application of force in the national interest. It is more effective to be respected than liked since statecraft is not about popularity stakes in the hand-wringing, breast-beating fraternity.

It carries the scent of Munich 1938 when Britain and France connived in the surrender of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany, calculating, no doubt, that Hitler would turn his legions in Russia's direction. The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. Far from Pakistan-controlling-Pakistan, Pashtun nationalists including the Taliban may undo the sanctity of the Durand Line and reclaim Afghanistan's pre-British territory to the Attock, which is now part of Pakistan.

The ebb and flow of imperial need drives US policy worldwide. Today's favoured client may become tomorrow's implacable foe. Osama bin Laden orbited this karmic cycle, as did Saddam Hussein and Panama's General Noriega. Saddam helped the CIA hunt down Iraqi communists and eliminate them. His armies engaged in a bloody conflict with Iran with much encouragement from his American handlers.

But the Iraqi dictator got above himself by invading oil-rich Kuwait prior to which he had expressed an interest in making his country's reserve currency the Euro instead of the US dollar. He was soon brought to heel and executed, the ghoulish preliminaries to his hanging duly televised for international consumption. Muammar Gaddafi tried to drum up support for an Arab-African economic coalition based on the gold dinar as replacement for the American dollar. That Iraq and Libya are oil-rich states compound their problems. As banana producers their troubles might have been less potent.

International politics refract Lord Wellesley's system of Subsidiary Alliances with Indian powers, at the close of the 18th century, in pursuit of British supremacy in the Subcontinent, while Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, half a century later, when local clients were replaced by British representatives in an enforced arrangement, was redolent of

the Sicilian mafia. Today, human rights and democracy are for breast-fed infants. Time to get real. The Arab Awakening in Egypt has recorded the burning of two Christian Coptic churches in Cairo. As in US-liberated, Iraq it is back to basics.

May 9 marked the 66th anniversary of the Soviet Union's defeat of Nazi Germany, the most complete victory in the greatest war ever fought on planet earth. One was privileged to watch the celebrations in Moscow on Russian TV and hear Prof Geoffrey Roberts' assessment of Joseph Stalin's leadership, without which, he averred (along with others before him like Averell Harriman, President Franklin Roosevelt's wartime envoy to the USSR), that the Soviets would surely have collapsed, with the entire world fair game for Nazi barbarism.

"...the guts of the German army have been largely torn out by Russian valour and generalship. The people of all the Russias have been fortunate in finding in their supreme ordeal of agony a warrior leader, Marshal Stalin, whose authority enabled him to combine and control the movements of armies numbered by many millions upon a front of nearly 2,000 miles" said Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, in a memorable eulogy to Parliament in 1944.

AJP Taylor, the eminent English historian, wrote: "Every line of policy ran, had to run, through Stalin's study. Stalin alone made every great decision throughout the war and many of the small ones, too.... Simply from the physical point of view, it is amazing that one man could have accomplished the things he did. Unlike any other commander ever known, Stalin literally ran every front himself."

His warts like Oliver Cromwell's — cruelty and ruthless repression — have disfigured his historical image, but as Shakespeare said of Julius Caesar, "he bestrode the narrow world/Like a Colossus...".

It is time India held a "Russia Day" to commemorate the heroism of a

much valued strategic partner. It will educate Indian youth and their elders to better understand contemporary realities.