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Let noble thoughts come to us from every side
Rig Veda

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS

ANNUAL INDICATORS	Units	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09 (Proj.)
Population (as on 1 Oct)	in crores	101.9	103.8	105.5	107.3	109	111	112.2	113.8	115.4
GDP at current market prices (new series)	Rs.crore	2102314	2278952	2454561	2754621	3149412	3580344	4145810	4713148	-
GDP:Per Capita (current prices)	Rupees	20,631	21,955	23,266	25,696	28,920	32,372	36,950	41416	-
Gross domestic savings (current prices)	% of GDPmp	23.7	23.5	26.4	29.8	31.8	34.3	34.8	-	-
Gross domestic capital formation (cur. pr)	"	24.2	24.2	25.2	26.8	31.6	34.5	36.0	37.5	-
Central Govt. Gross Fiscal Deficit	"	5.7	6.2	5.9	4.5	4.0	4.1	3.4	3.0	-
Sectoral shares (of GDPfc at current prices)										
Agriculture & allied	% of GDPfc	23.4	23.2	20.9	21.0	19.2	18.8	18.3	17.8	-
Industry	"	26.2	25.3	26.5	26.2	28.2	28.8	29.3	29.4	-
Services	"	50.5	51.5	52.7	52.8	52.6	52.4	52.4	52.8	-
Prices (Annual Average)										
WPI of All commodities (wt 100.00)	Apr 1993=100	155.7	161.3	166.8	175.9	187.2	195.5	206.1	215.9	-
CPI-IW General index: India	Jul 2001=100	95.93	100.07	104.05	108.07	112.2	117.2	125.0	132.75	-
Agriculture: Production										
Foodgrains	mln. tns.	196.8	212.9	174.8	213.2	198.4	208.6	217.3	230.7	235.1
Cereals	"	185.7	199.5	163.7	198.3	185.2	195.2	203.1	215.6	220.0
Rice	"	85.0	93.3	71.8	88.5	83.1	91.8	93.4	96.4	99.0
Wheat	"	69.7	72.8	65.8	72.2	68.6	69.4	75.8	78.4	80.0
Pulses	"	11.1	13.4	11.1	14.9	13.1	13.4	14.2	15.1	15.3
Oilseeds	"	18.4	20.7	14.8	25.2	24.4	28.0	24.3	28.8	30.7
Sugar cane	"	296.0	297.2	287.4	233.9	237.1	281.2	355.5	340.6	314.0
Industry & Energy										
"Index of industrial production (wt 100) (Annual Average)"	Apr 1993=100	162.69	166.99	176.64	188.97	204.8	221.52	247.05	268.02	-
	% change	5.06	2.64	5.78	6.98	8.37	8.16	11.53	8.49	-
Commercial energy production	MTOE #	230.9	237.9	246.9	259.2	272.0	283.83	298.55	73.45	-
Electricity generation by public utilities	bln. kwh	501.2	517.4	532.7	565.1	594.5	617.5	662.5	704.5	-
External Transactions										
Exports	US \$ mln.	44,147	43,958	52,823	63,886	83,502	103,075	1,26,276	1,59,089	1,91,000
Imports	"	50,056	51,567	61,533	78,203	111,472	149,144	1,85,081	2,38,605	3,19,000
Forex reserves ^	"	39554	51049	71890	107448	135571	145108	191924	299147	-
Foreign direct investments in India (net)	"	4031	6125	5036	4322	5987	8901.0	21991	32327	-
Portfolio investments in India (net)	"	2760	2021	979	11356	9311	12494	7004	29096	-
Rupee exchange rate (Annual Average)	Rs / USD	45.61	47.55	48.30	45.92	44.95	44.28	45.29	40.24	-

Indicators: Monthly	Units	Jul-07	Aug-07	Sep-07	Oct-07	Nov-07	Dec-07	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-08	Jul-08	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08	Nov-08
Prices																		
"Wholesale price index (All Commodities)"	1993-94= 100	213.6	213.8	215.1	215.2	215.9	216.4	218.2	219.9	225.5	228.5	231.1	237.4	240	240.8	241	-	-
	% change	4.71	4.14	3.51	3.13	3.25	3.83	4.47	5.27	7.52	8.04	8.86	11.82	12.35	12.62	12.05	-	-
Agriculture																		
Actual rainfall (All-India)	Millimetres	259	299	194	75	14	16	19	19	32	37	38	159	276	249	175	62	14
Dev. from normal rainfall	Per cent	0	-2	14	-22	-49	1	-19	-14	21	-15	-31	22	-15	2	0	-40	-54
Stock of Rice (Central pool)	mln. tns.		6.67		10.65	10.05	11.15			13.84	12.86	12.13		9.793	8.472			
Stock of Wheat (-do-)	mln. tns.		10.862		9.02	8.36	7.352			5.8	17.69	24.12		24.38	23.259			
Investments (CMIE CapEx database)																		
		Mar-'02		Mar-'03		Mar-'04		Mar-'05		Mar-'06		Mar-'07		Mar-'08		Sep-'08		
"Project investments outstanding* (as on)"	Rs.crore	1,486,938		1,382,122		1,503,040		1,931,500		2,761,339		4,293,108		6,118,218		72,44,738		
	project count	5,805		6,942		8,835		9,434		9,688		12,281		14,501		15,835		

Note: (a) % change is year on year (y-o-y) basis; (b) # MTOE: Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent; (c) ^ Total value of foreign currencies held by Govt. of India (excl. gold & SDRs); (d) * It is the sum total of the project costs of all the outstanding (Live) capital expenditure projects happening in the country. These projects may be under announced or under-implementation stage.

Source: i3 (i-cube) at Planning Commission, New Delhi, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)



About the Issue

India has long prided itself as the largest democracy in the world. This was a lonely choice made in the 1950s among the emerging nations of the world. Since then there have been several instances when questions have been raised whether democracy in India can endure the test of circumstances. And on each such occasion India has answered in the affirmative.

Elections are the foundation–stone of any democracy. It is heartening to note that in the recent round of assembly elections spread across Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, etc., more than sixty percent voter turnout has been recorded affirming the role of independent election machinery and the electorate. The 15th Lok Sabha Elections of India are scheduled to be held soon. The ex-President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam had in fact called Voting “a Sacred Mission” to encourage the population at large and the numbers reflect such optimism.

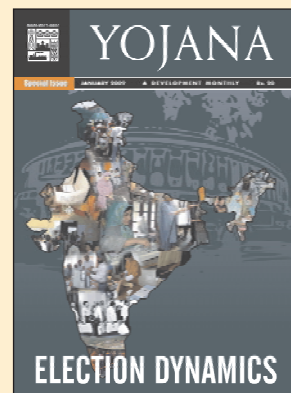
According to the Constitution of India, the entire electoral machinery is supposed to function under the Election Commission of India, which has been granted freedom of functioning from the executive under Article 324 of the Constitution of India. Holding regular periodic elections, based on universal adult suffrage (granted under Article 326 of the Constitution) in a vast country like India with huge population, is indeed a herculean task.

This issue of Yojana is dedicated to this monumental exercise of elections, recognising its myriad facets – the role of election commission in micro managing the task, the adjudating of constituency boundaries by the Delimitation Commission, the art of campaigning, the issue of electoral reforms, star power in elections or the corruption and criminalization now associated with it. New technologies such as mobile polling stations fitted in vans and electronic voting machines that enable the better carrying out of the electoral exercise also figure in this issue. Annual accounts of political parties being submitted regularly to the income tax authorities, showing details of receipts and expenditure are yet another recent feature.

As a special write-up, we also carry excerpts from the lecture on “A New India In A New World” by Dr. Fareed Zakaria reflecting on the challenges and opportunities before India in the contemporary global scenario.

Good governance is a major pillar in the development of every nation. Governments must be accountable, transparent, participatory and inclusive. Their necessary counterpart is a vigilant citizenry, aware of democratic processes and the custodian of democratic virtues.

Wishing our readers a very happy New Year.



All men dream but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, as they may act their dream with open eyes to make it possible.

T. E. Lawrence

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A Monumental Exercise

Satbir Silas Bedi
K N Kumar



One thing that emerges as the real winner every time an election is held in India is the concept of democracy itself- which has taken deep roots in the country

WITHOUT THE Cricket and the Elections, India would be a dull country. Their grip on the collective consciousness of the Indian society is something that has to be seen to be believed! Mercifully for the billion-strong Indians, cricket matches and elections keep happening periodically, oxygenating and energizing the Indian society from time to time. While the most absorbing cricket match may last a day, elections can hold the attention of the society for almost two months. If one were to name any one characteristic of elections in India, it would be 'intensity' with a capital 'I'. Hype, hope, passion, anger, anxiety, noise and happiness - all are inseparable emotions of any election in India. The complexity of managing such a wide range of human emotions and action often poses tremendous challenges to the election managers. Experience of conducting elections is indeed transformational for an

official who has worked in the election process in India.

In India's electoral system, "the first one to pass the post" is declared the winner, leaving behind a lot of time (normal tenure of a legislative body being five years) for the scores of losers to ponder over reasons for their defeat. In a little less than two months from the date of issuance of notification of elections by the Election Commission of India (ECI), the process of electing people's representatives for the parliament or the state assemblies is completed. During this time, the candidates present their credentials to the electors, the electors make up their mind as to who to choose from the countless candidates, and the election managers chart out their strategies for conducting the polls smoothly and peacefully.

Democracy in India is a continual participative operation and not a sudden exercise. The little man in the multitude, casting his vote at

The authors are Chief Electoral Officer Delhi and Deputy Director General, NIRD, Hyderabad respectively.



In the mammoth process of managing the elections, about five million staff and officers of the government are involved

the polls, does a social audit of not just the Parliament but of various democratic institutions that acquire their legitimacy through his vote. Village level *panchayats*, municipal corporations, state assemblies and parliament, all depend upon his vote for their legitimacy. It will not be euphemistic to suggest that democracy as a concept has taken such deep roots in India that debates whenever they take place, are only about creating or strengthening democratic institutions, never about replacing them. Even if a theoretical alternative to democracy may exist, it is beyond an average Indian even to consider such a possibility. It has been that way for him for far too

long. People's participation in the governing processes in India is not a modern phenomenon. Collective decision-making at the community level has been in vogue since time immemorial. By providing for universal adult suffrage in the Constitution, consummation of the electoral aspirations on a national basis was achieved by the framers of the Constitution in 1950.

In the Indian system of universal adult suffrage, every citizen above the age of 18 years has the right to vote irrespective of sex, caste, community, region, or religion. No discrimination of any kind is exercised and the election process ensures that all willing citizens

cast their vote fearlessly and independently. There is no legal compulsion to cast the vote in India, as is the case in some other democracies; therefore it remains a right to vote and not a duty.

Since India got her Independence in 1947, there have been as many as 14 general elections and over 350 state contests. India has 543 constituencies for Lok Sabha and 4061 Legislative Assemblies at the state level. In the 2004 general elections there were 671.5 million registered electors, of whom 295.7 million were women. The maximum number of voters were registered in the Outer Delhi constituency, which had 321.9

million electors. The smallest number was 37 thousand voters in Lakshadweep.

Such a staggering number of the electors could overwhelm the best of election managers. Though the total number of voters in India far exceeds the populations of several nations put together, the process of conducting an election is always carried out as per the law and procedure, and is largely peaceful. This is achieved through painstaking processes that have evolved and stabilized over decades of electoral experience, rigorous documentation of the procedures, systematic training of personnel and scrupulous monitoring by the Election Commission of India, (ECI) - the constitutional body with a mandate to conduct free and fair polls.

It is amazing as to how in a country as large as India, covering 4% of the land mass and 16% of the world's population and relief features like mountains, deserts, remote islands, plains, coastal areas and thick forests, elections are simultaneously held as per the schedule fixed by the Election Commission of India in Delhi. The process is followed in a time-bound manner, across the country. The poll schedule for the General Elections to Lok Sabha is decided by the ECI keeping in mind variables like the harvesting season, the festival season, examination schedules of schools and colleges, weather conditions and the prevailing peace situation; such a fine-tuning being essential to ensure maximum turnout of voters during polls.

To enable the voters to cast their vote without having to travel or walk long distances, care is taken to provide polling stations as closely as possible. It is ascertained that a manageable number of electors is assigned to each polling station, to keep the waiting time short. In the 2004 general elections the total number of polling stations was 6,87,402. Establishing a polling station calls for mustering resources, both human and material, and ensuring that all logistical support is firmly in place. There is an average of five personnel deputed for each polling station on the day of the poll. The ballot papers, ballot boxes, electronic voting machines, indelible ink and other stationery items form part of the kit supplies to each polling station. In 2004 General Elections 10.75 lakh EVMs were used.

The average number of voters in each polling station is between 1000-1200. But this number does not rule out provision of polling stations for far lesser number of electors in sparsely populated areas. In one case, a polling station had been provided for just one family of three electors at Chako in Thirizino-Buragaon assembly constituency in Arunachal Pradesh. Two polling stations have been provided for electors of Anlay Phoo in Ladakh at an altitude of 5000 meters. Though the polling stations are normally common for men and women, there are areas where exclusive polling stations are provided for women electors keeping in mind the social practices and local customs.

Sometimes mobile polling stations are established on basket boats to help voters in the outlying islands to cast their votes. For some polling stations in Rajasthan the

polling parties and material are carried on camels. In the interiors of Assam, where forests are inaccessible, elephants are used to carry people and equipment to the polling stations. In the tribal areas of Chhattisgarh in Central India, helicopters are used to reach the polling parties.

The choice before the Indian voter is also not easy. In the 1999 elections, there were seven National Parties, 40 State Level Parties, 122 Registered (unrecognized) Parties, besides a host of independent candidates (with no party backing) to choose from. A total of 4648 candidates were in the fray in 543 Parliamentary constituencies with a maximum of 32 in one constituency in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The scenario has changed after some recent electoral reforms in this regard. In the 1996 General Elections, there was an instance of 480 candidates for a single constituency of Nalgonda in Andhra Pradesh! There have been ballot papers as big as newspapers, sometimes printed like booklets. In the 1996 General Elections, 8000 metric tons of paper was used during the elections, for printing the ballot papers along!

Another notable feature of the Indian election is the allotment of symbols to political parties and candidates. Though the standards of literacy have vastly improved in India, the symbol system has become a permanent feature of elections in the country. The need for having a symbol to denote the candidates initially arose because the illiterate voters had to be facilitated to cast their votes in secrecy with the help of the symbol printed against the candidates names. As time



Every citizen above the age of 18 years has the right to vote in the Indian system of universal adult suffrage

passed, political parties have come to be identified with their symbols. Election symbols are commonly known objects that are identifiable by general mass of electors and easily distinguishable from each other. In 1991, the ECI had decided that no birds or animals would be specified as election symbols, in order to prevent cruelty to animals and birds at the time of public meetings by the political parties. Only two animals, the lion and the elephant still remain as election symbols on the logic that it would be difficult to be cruel to these two!

Campaigning is the most fascinating period of Indian elections. Flags, posters, banners, tractors, trucks and buses, bullock-carts, helicopters, audio tapes, badges, caps, sunshades, tattoos, all dot the election landscape in myriad colours in an attempt to attract the attention of the voter ceaselessly. There are election rallies of various parties to prove their strength in numbers.

There is a recent trend of roping in filmstars to campaign for various candidates. Attempts such as these do pull the crowds to the public meetings and perhaps even provide some entertainment, if not enlightenment. During the campaigning period the atmosphere largely remains festive and colourful.

The polling day is the D-day. It is on this day that the fate of the candidates is decided by the ultimate masters, the people. To enable the electors to exercise their franchise free from worries about their employment, occupation, or business, the polling day for any election in the parliamentary or assembly constituency is observed as a closed holiday. Law provides that every person employed in any business, trade or industry and entitled to vote should get a paid holiday. Except a few categories of electors who are notified and entitled to vote by post, all other electors have to vote in person at

the polling assigned stations. Proxy voting has recently been permitted only for the defence personnel.

Polling is followed by an open and transparent counting system where each candidate is allowed to have his agent at each counting table in his constituency. Ballot boxes, (and now, electronic voting machines), are unsealed and opened after the agents of the political parties present are satisfied that the paper-seals on the boxes are intact and have not been tampered with in any manner. Each ballot paper is opened and shown to all the agents present and then tallied and counted.

Results are announced after all the votes are counted, disputed ballots dealt with, and complaints and claims of various candidates and their agents have been satisfactorily disposed of and clearnace of ECI obtained. Declarations of the results are followed by another round of victory rallies and celebrations.

In this mammoth process of managing the elections, about five million staff and officers of the government departments are deployed. Even when they are drawn from different ministries and organizations for the purpose of election duty, they remain under the administrative control of the ECI during the period of their deployment. An official estimate of government expenditure on the 2004 general elections was Rs 1300 crores.

At the end of the election process, one thing that emerges as the real winner every time an election is held in India is the concept of democracy itself- which has taken deep roots in the country. □

Election Campaigning

Abhay Kumar Dubey



Due to this very emergence of political communities, Indian voters have become more committed for different parties over the years

IN THE year of 1952 democratic India had begun its ongoing tryst with election campaigns and ever since that first episode campaigning process in India has remained a creative amalgam of formal propaganda and informal social networking. Since social networking happens on typical Indian terrain, formal method of electioneering and their tone is bound to develop at variance of what one could call the ideals of democratic election campaigning. The story of the Indian experience of election campaign is clearly marked by its huge drift from the democratic ideal that was handed over to us by the theoreticians of democracy.

In order to mark the difference between the electioneering of our first general election and about the ways in which election campaigns are being conducted today, it would be instructive to narrate the true story of a non-Congress candidate

who fought for a parliamentary seat in early fifties. The characteristics of the candidate, his constituency and his political idealism are worth mentioning here. Coming from a semi-urban background, he spent his entire youth in anti-colonial movement during which he developed the fantastic skills of mass oration and other ways of contacting the people. He also knew a bit about organisational work. Since he professed strong socialistic views, he couldn't have gone for any big donation from local or regional money-bags, neither was he comfortable soliciting any help from the traditionally dominant social forces of the rural area. Asset wise he was almost a pauper and was absolutely dependent upon sundry donations from the general public for financing his political activism. The moment he got the party ticket from his mentor Dr. Lohia, this candidate decided to launch a kind of campaign, which was quite different in style

The author is a former journalist and now Editor, Indian Languages Programme, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi

and substance from his immediate opponent who was a Congress candidate, also an eminent freedom fighter and highly respected leader of that area.

The candidate, whose story is being discussed here, had painted his ideals about the election campaign with broad strokes. First of all, he issued instructions to his campaign workers that no appeal based on caste and community should be issued to garner the voter's support. He particularly disfavoured the door-to-door campaigning. The area, where he was fighting from, was almost triple in size compared to today's size of a parliamentary constituency. And, he got only one jeep-car at his disposal and a few thousand rupees as election fund. Workers chanda were told that they have to arrange their daily expenditure on their own by collecting from local populace.

At the end of the day our idealistic candidate was defeated but successfully avoided the electoral humiliation. He creditably fared among those exceptional 40 odd opposition candidates who did not lost their deposit. Mind you, his opponent had five jeep-cars and loads of other resources to cover the large constituency. But, the margin of Congress victory was not more than 10,000 votes.

According to one scholar, who has done some pioneering work on the aspects of the electioneering, election campaign must play an important role in educating the electorate about various issues concerning politics and political affairs of the country in general and about the elections in particular through the propagation of policies and programmes of various parties and candidates. This observer must

have formulated his views as per the now famous paradigm developed by Professor Rajni Kothari, according to which modernization of a traditional society takes the route of politicisation. He says that maximum political communication takes place during the campaign period, which provides occasions for listening to different leaders and parties to a vast citizenry, which, in a country like India, is constituted largely of illiterate persons residing in far-flung rural areas devoid of infra-structural facilities like transport and communication. It is through campaign that they come in touch with leaders and parties and get first hand information about various aspects of politics in the country. Ideally speaking the campaigns during elections must break physical as well as psychological barriers between leaders and the led and create situations where ordinary people can interact freely and frankly with their leaders who are otherwise inaccessible to most of them. They provide opportunities to leaders and their parties to put before the people their programmes and policies; show how they are different from others and also how they can improve the situation more effectively than others. The electors, on the other hand, should express their viewpoints in respect of parties and bargain for advancing their individual and/or collective interest. In bargaining with the leaders, voters must lay down the condition under which they would extend their support to the candidates who in turn would make promises to fulfil them.

As the ideals of campaigning go, competing parties and candidates are burdened with great responsibility to sustain rather than weaken

the body politic. According to another theorist, a special burden of responsibility for the maintenance of the system rests on the shoulders of the political elites. As these elites compete for the support of the voters, they perform functions of vigil and criticism vis-à-vis their opponents that moderately interested and active citizens might not perform for themselves.

One critic of electioneering warns that while the process of politicisation generates a good deal of political efficacy among the masses, it also tend to create political apathy in turn since tall promises made during campaigns are seldom fulfilled. In brief, election campaign is the life-sustaining element of politics if carried out correctly according to democratic norms and conditions. With gradual erosion of party organizations, elections in India are, of late, being fought around trivial issues and campaigns have taken very ugly turns. Paying no regard to the norms and values of democratic electioneering, actors participating in the election game have learned only one thing: nothing succeeds like success. Therefore, they have no hesitation in using methods and tactics that help them to win. Other issues are shelved and have to be tackled, if ever, only by the power they are gambling for. Self-aggrandizement by individual leaders and their whimsical actions in forcing an election which could easily be avoided, on the one hand, and socio-political conditions prevailing before the polls, on the other, set the tone of the election campaign and different contending parties and leaders adopt different strategies. Ideological discussions, which earlier formed an essential part of campaign, are already in the process of extinction. Similar

has been the fate of policies and programmes. Though the political parties have not discarded the practice of preparing 'election manifestos' for each election separately, these have lost their meaning. It is primarily due to the fact that the principal actors (candidates) responsible for conducting election campaign are either illiterate as far as the understanding of the significance of these documents is concerned or these documents do not fit, at least in their eyes, in any manner in their campaign strategy insofar as the means used by most of them in soliciting popular support are completely non-political. While selecting absolutely inexperienced persons as their candidates the political parties themselves are to be solely blamed for this as well. Larger issues concerning general interests of the people and nation are also not getting due importance and prominence accordingly. Either they are sidelined or steam-rolled by the non-political forces running the campaigns in manners they specialize. As a result, election campaigns, as they are run today, have lost their educative value and are organized only to divide the people and the society by attacking them only on trivial issues in order to serve the narrow ends of the selected few that claim to represent the people.

New Aspects of the Indian Scenario

Before attending the issues that the critics of Indian electioneering have raised, I would like to highlight the new aspects of Indian politics that have emerged in recent past and contributed largely to the drift mentioned above. Without taking into account these new developments, perhaps we can't

judge that which way the alleged drift is happening or have already happened. Is it really that much negative as analysed, or it has some positive features also? It seems that criticism cited above has been constructed on the basis of the experience gained in the elections of eighties and nineties. It was a period when political system was going through a flux. Not only economy was changing, the party system also trying to search for new moorings after the final decline of the Congress 'system'. Today we have a richer hindsight based on the election experience of more than fifty years. The three major differences between the scenario of 1952 and 2007 can be outlined below:

Firstly, the advent of the big media, regional and national as well as electronic and print. It has added a new dimension in the formal part of the campaigning. There is shift from personal door-to-door campaign to campaign through media, in which newspapers and television are being extensively used. One often sees, various advertisements both in newspapers and television appealing to the people, to vote in favour of a party. Press conferences are being used as a platform for campaigning for the political party. More than that, leaders of various political parties appear on different television channels for discussions on various political issues. These discussions are being viewed by leaders of political parties as opportunities of campaigning. All these changes had meant, a shift from personal campaign to a more hi-tech campaign run with the help of media, both print and electronic. What favours such changes is the reduction in the time available for campaign from three weeks to two

weeks. Since the candidates want to reach out to as many voters as they can in this short time, their dependence on electronic media has increased in recent times.

The positive aspects of high-tech campaign seem to me are two-fold. Firstly, there is a possibility of impersonal approach coming back again into the fray. As the critics rightly pointed out that in the decades of eighties and nineties campaign used to be more candidate oriented and was subjected to the local conditions, as a result of which discussion on policies, programmes and general well being of society and nation suffered. But, the political function of media has created the conditions for the emergence of a certain kind of political spokesmen. This political being, not exactly akin to the mass orator of fifties and sixties, commands a different style of political articulation that can cater to the need of a political age India is gradually ushering in. One more thing should also be noted here that the expenditure of this media intervention is mostly taken care by state party or central high command. Secondly, another gain we can envisage from the high-tech campaign may be the increased reach of propaganda to the vast hinterland of Indian society that can obliterate the distances and conditions of under-development.

I am sure the rural India may not remain untouched with this for too long and many more people will have access to television. Under such changing scenario, one can imagine that the style of election campaign would change further, from personal campaign to more impersonal and techno-centric and will have greater impact on the

voters choice compared to what it is at present.

But, it would be too early to conclude that the traditional style of campaign has been totally taken over by the hi-tech election campaign in which television, radio and newspaper are playing a big role. There are evidences, which indicate personal campaign is still one of the dominant styles. Four national surveys indicate that the candidates, party workers or their supporters at home contacted 50 percent of voters during the election campaign. In a country like India, where an average Lok Sabha constituency has about 12.5 lakh voters, during the election campaign, about 6 lakh voters have been contacted by the candidate or his campaign workers. This gives an indication that in spite of the hi-tech campaign; candidates and political parties have still not abandoned the traditional style of door-to-door campaign. Nearly one fourth of the voters also confirmed that they did attend election meetings organised by the candidates or political parties. Though majority of the voters attend only one or two election meetings, but the facts indicate that at least till the 2004 Lok Sabha elections voters have shown some great degree of interest in election campaign activity.

In a socio-political setting, where nearly 75 percent parliamentary constituencies are either predominantly rural, some of which are completely rural, the traditional style of election campaign may not be replaced by the hi-tech television driven, media campaign so soon. No doubt the media plays an important role in mobilizing people's opinion, but at the same time one must

realize that there are other tools for mobilizing people's opinion which could be more effective than the new hi-tech methods. Results of the 2004 Lok Sabha have shown that parties which relied more on the hi-tech, media driven campaign like Telugu Desham Party (TDP) lost the elections badly, while parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) or Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) which hardly depended on television for election campaign managed to register impressive victories.

Secondly, due to the considerably much higher level of the politicisation gradually attained over the years by the Indian populace, a phenomenon of political community has taken roots. Right now it is happening on state level only. To illustrate this phenomenon one can sight the voting behaviour of dalits, muslims, yadavas, reddyas, cammas, patels, kolis etc. These political communities cut across the caste divisions. The commensurate regional leadership have made them politically more coherent. These modern political communities are being increasingly organised around the certain democratic agenda, which might take the crude form of demanding their pie in the resources of the state. Here, it is necessary to distinguish them from the vote banks of the old type, because their conditions decide the form of their leadership and not the other way around. What happened to the Lodhi and Kurmi leadership in the recent UP election is the case in point.

As a result this new phenomenon, the informal network patterns of electioneering have changed altogether. There is always a danger that a certain political community who is marked for its political preference can be totally ignored

by the other political interests. In practice it happens regularly, because these communities use to strategise their electoral preference before the commencement of campaign. Few positive indicators are also available. In the last UP election BSP could enforce a more potent social alliance and launched its formal propaganda firmly on that. Without the emergence of political communities it was unthinkable. On the basis of the solid strength of dalit political community, BSP could wean away the more forward-looking elements from the other social groupings. Its campaign was far less visible and perhaps run on less resources compared to the hi-tech and media savvy campaigns of Samajwadi Party including two national parties. For BSP social networking had taken a radical hue that healed social cleavages rather than keeping them apart. It also gives the message that more social networking can result in less expenditure in the elections. But, BSP's success is not the sufficient indicator of the future of informal networking. It remains a largely unscripted aspect of electioneering. It seems that the phenomenon of political communities will be on work in the forthcoming Gujarat assembly election. If Patels and Kolies can work in tandem, they can influence the election result.

Due to this very emergence of political communities, Indian voters have become more committed for different parties over the years. There has been a sharp increase in the number of voters who take their voting decision much before the campaign starts. The percentage of such voters has increased from 28 percent in 1996 to 54 percent in 2004. This indicates that the commitment of the voters for different political

parties has increased over the years. There has been a decline in the number of floating voters who decide about their political choice on the election-day or just a day before elections. While during the 1996 Lok Sabha elections nearly 72 percent voters, took the decision about their political preferences after the campaign, in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the number of people who seemed influenced by the election campaign went down to only 46 percent. One would say, that the number of voters who take their voting decision during the campaign is still significant since nearly 50 percent voters decide about the political preferences during the campaign. And, this is the chunk of voter that actually decides the outcome of the election.

Lastly, the issue of financing of Indian elections. Election commission had commissioned the study of the aspects of election expenditure for thirteen Lok Sabha. Findings of this study firmly establish that our idealist candidate of the era of 1952 has passed into history and he will never return. There is a clear relationship exist between expenditure and votes secured. More one spends, better would be the results. Average winner spends Rs. 82.87 lakhs and average runner up spends Rs. 68.09 lakhs. If one wants to retain the deposit, an expenditure of around 73 lakhs is must. Election Commission fixes limits of expenditure time to time to be ultimately proved unrealistic. Unless the expenditure by party and supporters are specifically

included in the total expenditure of candidate, these efforts will not bear any intended fruit. The suggestion of corporate funding is still a non-starter, because corporate houses don't want their donation pattern transparent. Trends in terms of rural-urban constituencies show that fighting election in urban areas is more resource guzzling. The findings of this study should be qualified by the fact that these expenses relates to the normal elections, where as wave elections are a different proposition altogether. Surfing with the wave a candidate can score the win without spending much. But, wave elections can't be and shouldn't be the regular occurrence in a democratic political culture. □

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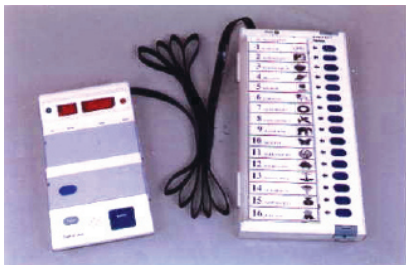
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Electronic Voting Machine

P V Indiresan



***Any one
still has fears
about EVMs,
should feel
reassured by the
fact that the
system has now
been adopted by
most states of the
United States***

ELECTRONIC VOTING Machine (EVM) have now become a symbol of efficient organised elections. There was a time when objections and fears used to be raised about the validity of the EVM. Behind this acceptance there lies an interesting story.

EVM was initially used during 1982-83 in rural, hilly, remote areas and in a few urban centres as well. First used in Parur, Kerala, the defeated candidate. A.C. Jose, went to Supreme Court which ruled out the election. In the verdict given in 1984, among other reasons, the major drawback mentioned was that there was no constitutional amendment to the law relating to the manner of voting by the voting machine. It took five years – on 15th March 1989 – for the required amendment to be made.

On June 23rd 1989, Election Commission of India announced the use of Voting Machine in 150 parliamentary constituencies. However, on October 14, 1989, Sri

V.P. Singh, Sri George Fernandes and a computer expert Arun Mehta, demonstrated to the public that computer programs could be manipulated. It was complained that Government had not consulted the all-party panel of technical experts and further they alleged Govt's camouflaged attempt to manipulate the poll results in favour of the ruling party and that the earmarked 150 constituencies for EVM use were in the Opposition stronghold.

Deterred by this strong opposition, even while manufacturing of 150,000 machines were on, the proposal to have EVM was dropped. In November 1989, elections were announced using ballot papers only.

On the 9th January 1990, after forming the Government, Sri V.P. Singh set up an Electoral Reforms Committee under the Chairmanship of Sri Dinesh Goswami with members from various political parties. The Committee reported in March 1990 that “after obtaining the report of the high powered

technological experts (Professor P.V. Indiresan, Dr. C. Rao Kasarabada and Professor S. Sampath), the committee is satisfied that the electronic voting machine is free from any prospect of manipulation or interference: These machines should be used at all future bye—elections and general elections and intensive training, for polling personnel should be arranged.”

A Comparison between Ballot Paper and EVM given below would elaborate the objective advantages of the Electronic Voting Machines.

Ballot System and EVM System

Counting takes long time, some times 24 hours or more. In EVM Counting done in a few minutes.

Enormous expenditure on paper. In EVM Expenditure on paper reduced a thousand times.

About 9 lakhs of ballot papers per Parliamentary Constituency; transport requirements are enormous. In EVM Cost of printing almost nil as only one sheet of ballot paper required for each polling station

Possibility of existence of large number of invalid votes. In EVM No invalid votes at all.

Very difficult to detect impersonation or silent booth capturing. In EVM Impersonation detected easily.

The EVM

Not everyone appreciates that the EVM is not like a personal computer. It is a closed and dedicated machine in which the program is burnt in to a ROM. Once the program is burnt into the chip, there is no way to alter, manipulate or tamper the program other than by damaging the chip in the process.

It is important to repeat that there is no way the program on

the EVM can be changed – unless the whole micro-controller is changed with a different software program fused into it. Even in that case, the technical committee set up by the all-party panel before elections would put every EVM to the closest scrutiny by checking its functioning.

The Voting Machine follows the one-voter one-vote principle of recording the votes electronically. Even in the case of the presiding officer colluding in the act of rigging, the vote polled can be verified through the beep sound that can be heard by all inside the booth. With agents looking on, the officer cannot give the ballot again for the voter to poll again.

As the actual serialised alphabetical list of candidates in the Ballot Sheet would be known just 2 to 3 weeks before the day of polling, even if a specific doctored program could be written to favour a particular candidate, that would not help since this program would have been written at least three months before elections – without knowing which candidate is allotted to which serial order.

EVM can prevent the possibility of booth-capturing. In the Ballot paper system, a group of booth-capturers would cast votes with all of them ‘casting’ votes fast. A few thousands of votes could be ‘polled’ within an hour. But in the EVM system only one person can poll at a time. Also, only a maximum of 5 or 6 votes per minute can be polled per minute. Further, on the sight of the booth-capturers, the Presiding Officer can stop the polling by pressing the ‘Close’ button in the Control Unit.

These days, most people are familiar with Personal Computers (PCs). In a PC, programs are made user-friendly in the sense, program could be written down in

any available language (like dBase, Basic). It is easy to manipulate such programs. These types of general purpose PCs have got no relevance to the fused/embedded software program written on the micro-controller of the Electronic Voting Machine.

Features of the EVM

Can the EVM be rigged? No! EVM is so designed that immediately after the voter has pressed any candidate’s button, the Ballot Unit gets “de-energised” and no signal would be passed onto the Control Unit until the presiding officer presses the “Ballot” button in the Control Unit. To rig, several buttons in the Ballot Unit have to be pressed for the rigging sequence to be attained through a colluding presiding officer under the glare of all party agents and officials in a very short time. This is a virtual impossibility.

There are two aspects to EVM-polling in our elections which may give tools to some politicians. One is the rule which provides for the reluctant Indian elector deciding not to vote at the last moment. Some politicians could ask their henchmen to sign at the booth, go into the confidential chamber of polling where the Ballot Unit is kept, and return back just deciding not to vote.

The other is that the maximum number of candidates in the EVM is sixty-four. Politicians can always introduce more than sixty-four candidates. However, the fact that it has not been done for over ten years indicates there is no such risk.

Any one still has fears about EVMs, should feel reassured by the fact that the system has now been adopted by most states of the United States. □

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Economic Reforms in Indian Elections

Sanjay Kumar



With such changes in Indian electoral scenario and voting preferences of voters, it is hard to believe that economic reforms had played an important role in mobilizing voters for or against any political party

REGULAR ELECTIONS are the lifeline of any democracy. Elections provides a window through which voter's express their views, opinions and anger towards the government. Like any other democracy this is true of Indian democracy as well. Regular elections have helped in sustaining Indian Democracy with small interruptions. Ever since India got independence, the country had witnessed successful completion of fourteen national elections besides several assembly elections held in different states. The Panchayat elections have been added to the list of national and state assembly elections after the 73rd constitutional amendment. A relatively high turnout of voters in different national elections provides ample proof of voter's interest and participation in the political process. From 46 per

cent turnout during the first Lok Sabha elections in 1952, the turnout had crossed the mark of 60 percent in few national elections. The turnout during the last Lok Sabha elections held in year 2004 was 58 percent.

Increasing turnout of people in election is a result of intense mobilization of the voters by different political parties during elections. On one had election provide a window for the voters to express their opinions, views and preferences, at the same time it also provides an opportunity for the political parties to test their political strength and political support. Politics is all about capturing political power, and election is the mechanism through which the political parties try and capture political power. Elections provide an equal playing field for all the political party for testing their strength. The political party which is stronger than other parties

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manages to win elections, which is the ultimate aim of political leaders and political parties.

This may seem simple in theory, but in practice, this is not so easy. Political Parties need to work hard to win elections. They need to come up with program and policies and try and attract the voters in their favour. While parties need to do continuous work among the people in order to attract the voter's, but in order to win elections the parties need to mobilize the voters during the period of election campaign. During election campaign, parties try and mobilize the voters with their program and policies. Political party's issues manifesto before every election in which they try and highlight the achievements of the party in the past and also try and make promises about what they are likely to do for the welfare of the people if they are voted to power. Manifestos are considered an important tool for sending party's message to the common voters.

Parties have different views on issues, policies and possible suggestions. One such issue of great contestation is the issue of economic reforms in India. Political parties have slightly different opinions on the issues of economic reforms. While some political parties are opposed to the policy of economic reforms, the parties which support the policy of economic reforms try to highlight this achievement of the party and try and mobilize the voters in party's support by taking credit of initiating and taking ahead the policy of economic reforms.

The first experiment with economic reforms dates back to 1980's but that was limited only to liberalizing some aspects of the control system without making any radical change in the policy. Due to this slow start, in early 1980, hardly any political party tried to raise the issue of economic reforms to win the hearts of the voters on India. The 1980 national election was contested on the issue of stability and the Congress party succeeded in mobilizing large section of voters in their favor on the issues. The vote share of the Congress and the party coming back to power is a testimony to that.

The second experiment of economic reform began in 1990, when Manmohan Singh as the finance minister initiated the policy of economic reforms. The reforms were aimed at liberalizing the government control by imparting a greater role for the private sector, downsizing the government sector and finally greater integration with the world economy. In the first five years (1991-96), the Congress government accelerated the process of economic reforms and during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, the party after grappling with the crucial dilemma of whether economic reforms as an issue was likely to affect negatively or positively finally decided to ink boldly on party's manifesto. The party coined the slogan of "every rupee earned from reforms is a rupee gained for development". The Congress launched the election campaign in Amethi Parliamentary constituency and

P.V Narasimha Rao made issue of economic reforms a focal point of his election speech. The Congress lost the 1996 election. Many believed, Congress lost the election because people rejected the policy of economic reforms. Others stated, the party lost the election not because people rejected the policy of economic reforms, but because the party could not popularize the issues of economic reforms adequately.

Similarly the BJP led its election campaign during the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, by highlighting the great economic strides India had made under the BJP led NDA rule. The party aimed at conveying to the people, the message that immense progress was taking place in the country and things have improved a lot. It made the issue of "India shining" its central issue during election campaign thinking that this strategy would bring votes for the party. But the party lost leading to a debate if the party lost due to the slogan of "India shining". Like what happened with Congress after its defeat during the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, some within the BJP believed that the party lost due to its slogan of India shining while others believed that the party failed in conveying to the voters the real message of benefits of economic reforms? With these two experiences, it is difficult to say if economic reforms has helped the party in the past or had adversely affected the party? But the real question is how far Economic Reforms as an issue in Indian election have influenced voter's political choices?

While people are concerned about their economic prosperity, but over last few elections, economic reforms had hardly been an important concern for an average Indian voter. While party try to raise the issue of economic reform in their party's manifesto, but there is still very little awareness about economic reforms among average Indian voter. Only a little over one quarter of Indian voters are aware of the issue of economic reforms. At the time of 1996 Lok Sabha elections, only 18 percent of Indian voters had heard about economic reforms. With party popularizing the issues of economic reforms, the awareness level of the people about economic reforms went up to 26 percent during 1998 Lok Sabha elections, but after that there had been very little increase in the level of awareness of Indian voters about economic reforms. At present one can estimate that nearly 28 percent of Indian voters are aware of the issue of economic reforms. It is true that the aware about economic reforms have increased among Indian voters over last one decade, but it is still not reached to a point where it can truly become a popular issue for mobilizing the voters.

While the level of awareness about economic reforms is still very low but there are different patterns in level of awareness on this issues. The urban voters are more aware of this issues compared to the rural voters. But even amongst the urban voters, only 40 percent voters seem to be aware of the issue of economic reforms. Similarly, the young voters are more aware of economic reforms

compared to the older generation of voters. At present amongst the young voters, 35 percent are aware of economic reforms, while amongst the old, only 23 percent are aware of economic reforms. The rich voters are more aware of economic reforms, compared to the poor. Amongst the rich voters 48 percent voters are aware of economic reforms, while amongst the poor voters only 21 percent are aware of this issue. Over last one decade the level of awareness on this issue has increased amongst voters from all sections, but it is still not reached a point where this could be used as an effective tool of voter's mobilization for electoral gains.

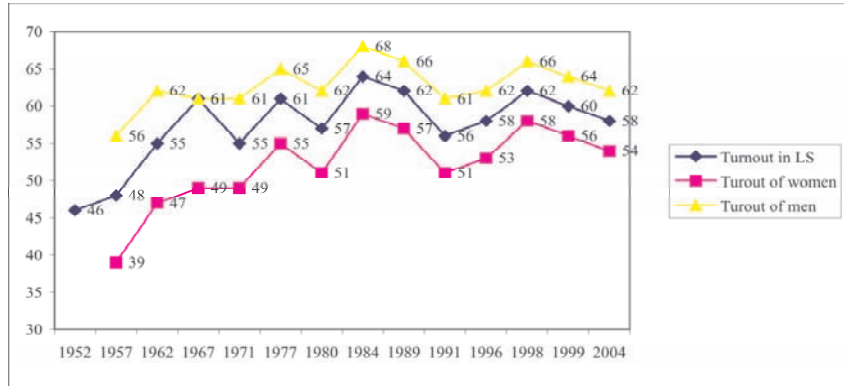
The low level of awareness amongst majority of the voters may not be the only reason of why economic reforms had not been an effective tool of voter's mobilization in Indian elections. It is interesting to note that, though the parties may try sending the message to the voters that economic reforms has helped in reducing poverty among the people, but this is not what the common voter's believe. There is widespread believe that whatever had been done in the name of economic reforms it had largely benefited the rich and the common people have been largely left out from the benefits of the economic reforms. About 48 percent per cent people believe that economic reform had benefited only the rich people and only 19 percent believed that it had benefited all the people on this country. There are also 9 percent people who believe that no one in

this country had benefited from the economic reforms. The opinion is shared among voters belonging to all classes with varying degrees. The poor are more inclined to share believe that economic reforms had only benefited the rich.

If economic reforms cannot be an issue before the Indian voters during elections which issues help in mobilizing the voters? What issues are important before the India voters during national and state assembly elections? Earlier, elections were contested more on national and state level of issues depending upon the nature of election. During national elections, there used to some national issues which used to dominate the mind of an average Indian voters. We still remember that the Lok Sabha elections of 1971 was contested on the issue of "Garibi Hatao" the 1977 Lok Sabha was contested on the issue of "Indira Hatao" 1980 Lok Sabha was contested on the issue of stability, 1984 Lok Sabha election on the sympathy wave after assassination of Indira Gandhi, 1989 on the issue of corruption in general and "Bofors" in particular. All these issues had pan Indian appeal among Indian voters. The same applied during the state assembly elections, when the state issues dominated the mind of an average voter's in the state.

But over last few decades, patterns of election have changed. Now there are hardly issues which have pan Indian appeal among Indian voters. Elections especially after the 1990's are hardly contested on national issues. Emergence of large number of regional parties

Figure 1: Increasing participation of the people: Higher Turnout



Source: Election Commission of India

Table 1: Low level of awareness about Economic Reforms is very low

Year of election	Aware of Economic Reform (%)
1996	19
1998	26
2007	28

Source: National Election Study 1996 and 1998, State of the Nation Survey January 2007 conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)

Table 2: Urban voters more aware of economic reforms compared to rural voters

Year of Election	Urban Voters (%)	Rural Voters (%)
1996	31	14
1998	38	22
2007	40	24

Source: National Election Study 1996 and 1998, State of the Nation Survey January 2007 conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)

Table 3: Young voters more aware of economic reforms compared to Old

Year of Election	Young voters (below 25 years) %	Old voters (56 years or more) %
1996	18	14
1998	27	19
2007	35	23

Source: National Election Study 1996 and 1998, State of the Nation Survey January 2007 conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)

Table 4: Rich voters more aware of economic reforms compared to poor

Year of Election	Rich Voters	Middle Class voters	Poor class voters
1996	41	26	14
2007	48	41	21

Source: National Election Study 1996 and 1998, State of the Nation Survey January 2007 conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)

has made a difference in voter's political preferences and choices. Regional parties which generally take up the regional issues are extremely popular in different states. Till few years back, voters used make a distinction between the National election and state assembly elections, when they used to cast their vote. Even when regional parties were contesting elections, voters in a particular state preferred voting for National party during the national elections. Their preference use to shift from national to regional parties normally at the time of state elections. This distinction seems to have got blurred over the years. Political preferences of the voters have become more rigid. Now they hardly make distinction in their political preferences while voting for national or state assembly election. Their voting preferences are guided more by their political preferences than type of election. Now national elections are no more national elections but an aggregation of various state assembly elections. While aggregation of results at the state level or the national level may indicate the proportion of people voting for one party or the other, but in practice, voters, choose candidate more than the party. The preference for candidates over the party has increased over last few years.

There is another change which can be witnessed among Indian voters over last few years. With increasing identification of voters with political parties, proportion of voters being committed to one party or the other has increased. Large number of voters make up their mind whom to vote much

Table 5: General believe, only rich benefited from economic reforms

Year of Election	All benefited %	Only rich benefited %	No one benefited %	No Opinion %
2004	27	44	14	15
2007	19	46	9	26

Source: National Election Study 2004, State of the Nation Survey January 2007, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi.

Table 6: Increasing inclination of choosing candidates over party

Year of Election	Party %	Candidate %
1999	56	25
2004	45	31

Source: National Election Study 1999 and 2004, conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi

Table 7: Voters are more committed now than before

Timing of voting decision	Lok Sabha Elections			
	1996 %	1998 %	1999 %	2004 %
Election day	24	18	17	15
Few days before election	36	39	26	15
During campaign	12	12	19	16
Before Campaign started	28	31	38	54

Source: National Election Study 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004, conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi

before campaign starts. Hardly any issues whether economic reforms or any other helps in mobilizing voter's who seemed to be committed for one party or the other.

With such changes in Indian electoral scenario and voting preferences of voters, it is hard to believe that economic reforms had played an important role in mobilizing voters for or against any political party. To add, with such low level of awareness about economic reforms among Indian voters, can we imagine economic reforms to be turning into an issue of successful voter's mobilization? The answer should be no as the situation stand now. □

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DO YOU KNOW ?

Facts about Election Machinery

Which authority conducts elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India ?

Election Commission of India (ECI) conducts elections to the offices of the President and Vice President of India.

Under Article 324(1) of the Constitution of India, the Election Commission of India, inter alia, is vested with the power of superintendence, direction and control of conducting the elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India. Detailed provisions are made under the Presidential and Vice Presidential Elections Act, 1952 and the rules made thereunder.

Which authority conducts elections to Parliament?

Election Commission of India (ECI). The same Article 324 also vests in the Commission the powers of superintendence, Direction and control of the elections to both Houses of Parliament. Detailed provisions are made under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the rules made thereunder.

Which authority conducts elections to the State Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils?

Election Commission of India (ECI). Article 324 (1) also vests in the Commission the powers of superintendence, direction and

control of the elections to both Houses of the State Legislature. Detailed provisions are made under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and the rules made thereunder.

Which authority conducts elections to Corporations, Municipalities and other Local Bodies ?

The State Election Commissions (SECs). The State Election Commissions constituted under the Constitution (Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth) Amendments Act, 1992 for each State / Union Territory are vested with the powers of conduct of elections to the Corporations, Municipalities, Zilla Parishads, District Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, Gram Panchayats and other local bodies. They are independent of the Election Commission of India.

What is the present composition of the Election Commission?

It is a Three - Member Body. At present, the Election Commission of India is a three-member body, with one Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.

Has the Election Commission been a multi-member body from the beginning?

No.

It was not a multi member body from the beginning. It was a single - member body when it was first set up in 1950 and up to 15th

October, 1989 with only the Chief Election Commissioner. From 16th October, 1989 upto the 1st January, 1990, it became a three-member body with R.V.S.Peri Sastri (C.E.C) and S.S.Dhanoa and V.S.Seigell as Election Commissioners. From 2nd January, 1990 to 30th September, 1993, it was a single-member Commission and again from 1st October, 1993 it has become a three-member Commission.

What is the term of office of the Chief Election Commissioner? Is it different from the Election Commissioners? What is their status in terms of salaries and allowances etc.?

The Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner holds office for a term of six years from the date on which he assumes his office. However, where the Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner attains the age of sixty-five years before the expiry of the said term of six years, he shall vacate his office on the the date on which he attains sixty-five years of age. Their status is equivalent to Supreme Court Judges. The Chief Election Commissioner and the two Election Commissioners draw salaries and allowances at par with those of the Judges of the Supreme Court of India as provided for by the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1992.

When the Commissioner becomes a multi-member Commission, how are the decisions taken, whether by majority or by consensus?

Section 10 of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Conditions of Service) Amendment Act, 1993 is reproduced below:-

- (1) The Election Commission may be by unanimous decision, regulate the procedure for transaction of to business as also allocation of its business amongst the Chief Election Commissioner and their Election Commissioners.
- (2) Save as provided in sub section (i) all business of the Election Commission shall, as far as possible, be transacted unanimously.
- (3) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (ii), if the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners differ in opinion on any matter, such matter shall be decided by according to the opinion of the majority.

Who appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners and who fixes their number ?

The President.

Under Article 324(2) of the Constitution of India, the President of India is empowered to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners.

Article 324(2) also empowers the President of India to fix from time to time the number of Election

Commissioners other than the Chief Election Commissioner.

Who supervises the election work in a State ?

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

As per section 13A of the Representation of the People Act 1950, read with section 20 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Chief Electoral Officer of a State/ Union Territory is authorised to supervise the election work in the State/Union Territory subject to the overall superintendence, direction and control of the Election Commission.

Who appoints the Chief Electoral Officer?

Election Commission of India (ECI)

The Election Commission of India nominates or designates an Officer of the Government of the State/Union Territory as the Chief Electoral Officer in consultation with that State Government/Union Territory Administration.

Who supervises the election work in a District?

Ans. The District Election Officer (DEO)

As per section 13AA of the Representation of the People Act 1950, subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the Chief Electoral Officer, the District Election Officer supervises the election work of a district.

Who appoints the District Election Officer?

Election Commission of India (ECI).

The Election Commission of India nominates or designates an Officer of the State Government as the District Election Officer in consultation with the State Government.

Who is responsible for the conduct of elections in any Parliamentary or Assembly constituency ?

Returning Officer (RO) The Returning Officer of a parliamentary or assembly constituency is responsible for the conduct of elections in the parliamentary or assembly constituency concerned as per section 21 of the Representation of the People Act 1951.

Who appoints the Returning Officer?

Election Commission of India (ECI)

The Election Commission of India nominates or designates an officer of the Government or a local authority as the Returning Officer for each of the assembly and parliamentary constituencies in consultation with the State Government/Union Territory Administration. In addition, the Election Commission of India also appoints one or more Assistant Returning Officers for each of the assembly and parliamentary constituencies to assist the Returning Officer in the performance of his functions in connection with the conduct of elections.

Who is responsible for the preparation of electoral rolls for a Parliamentary or Assembly Constituency?

Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)

The Electoral Registration officer is responsible for the preparation of electoral rolls for a parliamentary / assembly constituency.

Who conducts the poll at a polling station?

Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer with the assistance of polling officers conducts the poll at a polling station.

Who appoints the Electoral Registration officer?

Under section 13B of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, the Election Commission of India, in consultation with the State / UT Government, appoints an Officer of the Government or the Local Authorities as the

Electoral Registration Officer. In addition, the Election Commission of India also appoints one or more Assistant Electoral Registration Officers to assist the Electoral Registration Officer in the performance of his functions in the matter of preparation / revision of electoral rolls.

Who appoints Presiding Officers and Polling Officers?

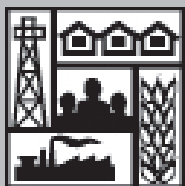
District Election Officer (DEO)

Under section 26 of the Representation of the People Act 1951, the District Election Officer appoints the Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers. In the case of Union Territories, such appointments are made by the Returning Officers.

Who appoints Observers?

Election Commission of India (ECI)

Under section 20B of the Representation of the People Act 1951, the Election Commission of India nominates officers of Government as Observers (General Observers and Election Expenditure Observers) for parliamentary and assembly constituencies. They perform such functions as are entrusted to them by the Commission. Earlier, the appointment of Observers was made under the plenary powers of the Commission. But with the amendments made to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 in 1996, these are now statutory appointments. They report directly to the Commission. □



YOJANA

February '09

Next Issue on Consumer Rights

The need for empowerment of consumers as a class cannot be overemphasized and is already well recognized all over the world. The level of awareness of the consumer can be taken as an indicator of the progress of a country. The advancement of technology and advent of sophisticated gadgets in the market and aggressive marketing strategy in the era of globalization has not only thrown open a wide choice for the consumers but at the same time also rendered the consumer vulnerable to a plethora of problems as a consequence of such rapid changes.

The topics covered in the February 2009 issue include :

Awareness and Protection of Consumer Rights, Legal and Ethical Aspects of Advertising, Consumer Redressal System and others.

Election Auditing

Jagdeep S Chhokar



The real interest of the nation, and the people can only be served if the audit of elections takes a broader view of the entire electoral process

AUDIT, ACCORDING to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, means (a) a formal examination of an organization's or individual's accounts or financial situation, and (b) a methodical examination and review. 'Election Auditing', therefore, means performing a methodical examination and review of the election process.

A standard, straightforward description of the audit of an election might mean assessing if all eligible voters have been allowed to cast their votes in a free and fair manner. At the first glance, it might mean observing the process of polling that goes on every, or a sample of, polling booths, and then forming inferences based on those observations. However, as usual, first glances often hide more than they reveal.

The real and comprehensive view of the election process will

show that it is embedded in and is reflective of the entire political process in a society. In a way, it is the outcome of how the entire political activity in the society as a whole operates, functions, and is organized—if it is organized at all! While the concrete election process may be considered to start with drawing up of voter lists or electoral rolls and nominations of candidates to contest the election, the real process of elections is an on-going broader social process in which individuals continually work to make themselves eligible or preferable for getting elected, and political parties and other groups keep working to ensure their success in the forthcoming elections. Looked at in this way, elections are very much a competitive activity, with individuals and groups working continually to improve their 'competitive' situation.

So, if one wants to a comprehensive auditing of

the election, one will need to continually monitor the political processes in the country. However, even considering the concrete election process, the first step in an election audit should be to check the accuracy, authentic, and comprehensiveness of the electoral rolls. It is widely known and acknowledged that despite the most sincere efforts of the Election Commission of India and the respective State Election Commissions, the electoral rolls in India are not really accurate or even current. The matter of ensuring error-free electoral rolls is not a simple one and involves a large number of complex issues. That is possibly why even a technologically and economically advanced society such as the US is not able to fully satisfactorily deal with its electoral rolls as the controversy regarding registration of voters for the Obama campaign by a community group called ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) shows. The complications in India, as in any other society, are peculiar to itself.

There is a very large floating population of migratory workers who cannot fulfill all the requirements stipulated by the Election Commissions for registering someone as a voter, since they are often not able to produce a 'proof of residence' at their place of work where they have migrated to. Even if they are registered at their original, 'native' place, they often cannot afford to go 'home' just to vote. The process

of absentee voting is complicated and even expensive, particularly for low-income voters which is the basic reason why they migrate in the first place.

Then there is the issue of revision and updating of the existing electoral rolls. The first and a very important concern here is the system of launching drives or campaigns for updating and revising electoral rolls, in anticipation of forthcoming elections. While the Election Commissions, on their part, attempt to do the best they can, in terms of giving such drives as wide publicity as they can, a lot of citizens still tend to miss out the dates of such drives. Though the Election Commissions do claim, and justifiably, that there is a regular system of getting oneself registered as a voter and getting corrections to the electoral roll made which is available all the time, this system is neither well known nor is it voter friendly. What is needed, and needed very urgently, is an on-going system of voter registration which is accessible to citizens at convenient locations and which is not cumbersome and harassment-inducing. Such a system will also be able to account for a lot of movements of working people from place to place, and if it not troublesome, people can get themselves registered at the new place just as they get a telephone connection or a cooking gas connection.

Another major issue which causes much confusion at the time of actual voting in almost every election is people finding

their names missing from the electoral rolls even after they had got themselves enrolled and had checked and re-checked several times. Very often this is caused by the Central Election Commission and the State Election Commissions maintaining separate and independent electoral rolls, the former for the Parliament and State Assembly elections and the latter for panchayats and other local body elections. This is because that is how the responsibilities of the Central and State Election Commissions are divided. The suggestion of these two sets of bodies, involved in somewhat similar activities, maintaining a common electoral roll has been made repeatedly, and at various levels and forums but has not been put into effect so far for reasons unknown.

One way of auditing elections to check the accuracy of electoral rolls is to conduct a sample of house-to-house surveys after the polling but soon after it, to re-confirm if the people who are supposed to have voted on the polling day, have indeed voted. Such surveys done in the past by several agencies, including the Association for Democratic Reforms, have shown around 30-35 per cent errors in electoral rolls, both of omission and commission. The former being when an eligible voter is left out of the electoral roll and the latter when an ineligible person such as one who has died or has moved away from that address, is retained in the electoral roll. While such surveys do bring out the extent of inaccuracies in

the electoral rolls, the corrections need to be done by the respective Election Commissions.

Another aspect of auditing of elections that is given almost no attention at all is the quality of candidates. Over the years, a system has developed of almost all political parties giving their nominations/tickets to candidates purely on the basis of what has come to be called 'winnability', and with no regard whatsoever to the record, personal, professional, and of social and public service. This is what has resulted in a situation that as many as 122 of the sitting members in the current Lok Sabha have significant criminal records, background, and cases pending against them. The charges include several heinous crimes such as murder, kidnapping, robbery, and some of the members even serving jail sentences. The situation in the State Assemblies is no different and the proportion of MLAs with criminal cases pending against them is around 20-25 per cent, on an average. This data has become available as a result of the affidavits filed by that candidates have had to file in pursuance of the landmark judgment by the Supreme Court on March 13, 2003, (in the case initiated by the Association for Democratic Reforms in 1999) which made disclosure of pending criminal cases by candidates contesting election contesting elections to Parliament and State Assemblies mandatory, in the face of stiff opposition by the entire political establishment.

This judgment provides a very effective way of auditing the election by all interested groups such as the citizens/voters and the media. Some positive effects of this are already visible by way of announcements by some political parties that they will not give nominations to persons with criminal cases pending against them.

The above are not the usual activities that come up in discussions of auditing of elections. There are some, usual malpractices associated with elections in India which were referred to by the current Chief Election Commissioner of India, N. Gopalaswami, as follows: "there are many things of which we cannot be proud of-- money, muscle power, manipulation, stuffing electoral rolls, bogus voting, booth capturing, pre-poll and poll day violence, intimidation... We cannot be proud of abusing authority, using Government servants, especially the police, criminals in fray, exceeding expenditure limit mostly observed in breach, bribing with freebies, liquor. So you start wondering at some point of time whether it is democracy or demo(no)cracy?"

Most of these malpractices are associated with the actual, physical conduct of election either on the polling day or a few days before the polling day. Therefore, the auditing of the actual conduct of elections, on the day of polling and a few days before that, remains equally critical, to prevent actions by interested and unscrupulous individuals and groups to

manipulate and vitiate the outcome of the democratic process. Given the wide spectrum of groups that have a vested interest in the outcome of the election, possibly only non-partisan and apolitical citizens' groups can perform the job of genuinely auditing the elections.

Another extremely critical aspect of the elections in the country and therefore, for election auditing pertains to the functioning of political parties. The reason the functioning of political parties is critical to election is very simple and straightforward--political parties are the key and the major actors in the electoral arena. It is the political parties who decide whom can the voters vote for. They do this when they choose which aspirant will get the nomination of a particular party. Even after a candidate gets elected, s/he is not free to vote in the legislature according to her/his wishes because it is the party which decides, actually controls the voting behaviour of their elected representatives, if necessary by way of the issue of the whip, and the operation of the anti-defection law. The irony of the situation is that while all political parties loudly claim that they are the defenders of democracy in the country, actually none of the political parties in the country is democratic in its internal functioning.

This anomalous situation has attracted the attention of the Law Commission of India which in its 170th report on Electoral Reforms has devoted one full chapter to the "Necessity for providing

law relating to internal democracy within political parties.” Some of the observations and recommendations of the Law Commission are worth reproducing in full.

Para 3.1.2 says, “With a view to introduce and ensure internal democracy in the functioning of political parties, to make their working transparent and open and to ensure that the political parties become effective instruments of achieving the constitutional goals set out in the Preamble and Parts III and IV of the Constitution of India, it is necessary to regulate by law their formation and functioning.”

Continuing, para 3.1.2.1, says, “On the parity of the above reasoning, it must be said that if democracy and accountability constitute the core of our constitutional system, the same concepts must also apply to and bind the political parties which are integral to parliamentary democracy. It is the political parties that form the government, man the Parliament and run the governance of the country. It is therefore, necessary to introduce internal democracy, financial transparency and accountability in the working of the political parties. A political party which does not respect democratic principles in its internal working cannot be expected to respect those principles in the governance of the country. It cannot be dictatorship internally and democratic in its functioning outside” (italics added).

Given that elections are only a periodic and possibly the most visible manifestation of democracy and the functioning of political parties is an integral part and one of the most critical fundamentals of a representative democracy such as ours, it is clear that confining the audit of elections only to the actual conduct of elections, on election day, will be a very limiting exercise as far as its contribution to strengthening democracy is concerned. The real interest of the nation, and the people can only be served if the audit of elections takes a broader view of the entire electoral process. □

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YE-1/09/4

Indelible Ink

M Devendra

THE INDELIBLE Ink, which is used in general elections plays an important role in controlling fake voting.

It is not an ordinary ink, once it is applied on the finger it remains for few months. The ink consisting the non-erase substances makes it remain for months, is its speciality.

The credibility of producing the special ink goes to the Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MPVL) the Govt. of Karnataka undertaking, which is supplying this ink to India and various foreign countries.

This ink plays an important role in the process of conducting fair and impartial elections to control fake voting.

In India it has been a great challenge for the government and the election commission to hold and complete the process of general elections. Which is paving the way for selecting the suitable candidate through sacred voting.

Under the constitutional provision it is a challenge for

Election Commission to ensure each voter exercising only one vote to avoid fake voting .In achieving this and to eliminate the fake voting, the election commission has introduced a measure, i.e. using Indelible Ink which is put on the left hand finger nail of the voter. The Indelible Ink cannot be removed by any chemical, detergents or oil, it remains for few months.

The Mysore Paints and varnish Limited (MPVL) ,which is located in the Palace city of Mysore in Karnataka has been manufacturing Indelible Ink and supplying for all general elections. The company earns credibility of supplying the Indelible Ink, which is helping the process of general elections in India and abroad.

The Maharaja of Mysore late Nalwadi Krishnaraje Wodeyar and the eminent engineer Bharat Ratna late Sir.M.Visweshwaraya had a vision to establish the company in 1937 to utilise the forest wealth, which is available in and around Mysore i.e. also called as the land of Sandal wood.

The king of Mysore signed a memorandum of understanding with

National Research & Development Corporation(NRDC) to establish the company. Now this company had made a name and profit also by exporting the ink to other foreign countries for general elections.

In 1962, the Election Commission in collaboration with Union Law Ministry, The National Physical Laboratory(NPL) and National Research Development Corporation(NRDC) made an agreement with Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd.,for supplying this ink for the Parliament, Assembly and other general elections to all the states in India .

The Ink has been exported to about 25 countries like South-Africa, Canada, U.K., Pakistan, Afghanistan, Denmark, Nigeria, Singapore, Nepal, Turkey, Ghana, Barundi, Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Mongolia, Ivory Coast etc.,

Also, the company is earning foreign exchange by supplying the Indelible Ink by exporting it to foreign countries for general elections. It has brought a name and fame to the country in the world, because it's special quality. □

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Electoral Corruption

T S Krishna Murthy



One of the important steps to be taken in this regard relates to electoral reforms especially in regard to finances of political parties

CORRUPTION IS not just a fact of life; it occurs in bewildering forms and affect the quality of life of not only the parties to the transaction but also the common man in different ways. It is a phenomenon that is found in almost all societies whether developed or developing. It has existed in almost all eras ever since trade and commerce took place.

Corruption in public life occurs in few key areas such as public procurement and contracting, licensing activities, collection of revenue and regulation of economic activities. Public office affords immense opportunities as a result of which corruption thrives in the appointment or election of public officials of every rank. In some cases, corrupt politicians tend to sell favours to their benefactors. Corruption also finds expression in the form of nepotism especially in developing countries by the politicians in power to appoint

family members, relatives and friends to public offices.

The detrimental and corrosive consequences of corruption know no bounds especially in developing countries. Thus, corruption exacts heavy economic cost by distorting the operation of free markets, slowing down economic growth and destroying political and administrative institutions in delivering public service. There are non economic costs as well as corruption corrodes values in the minds of people thereby causing permanent damage to the quality of human life from generation to generation.

The definition of corruption varies from country to country, partly dependent upon the economic condition of the country and the perception of the people. The World Bank and other multilateral institutions have defined it as “the abuse of public office for private gain”.

The author is former Chief Election Commissioner of India.

Electoral corruption in many developing countries is said to be the starting point for all political corruption. In these countries, one finds a nexus between political corruption and bureaucratic corruption although each one of them can be and on many occasions exists independent of the other. Bureaucratic corruption is bound to thrive when political leaders themselves indulge in large scale corruption. The availability of large scale developmental funds in emerging democracies provides a happy hunting ground for both politicians and civil servants to amass personal wealth at the cost of economic development and social progress. In fact, in many emerging democracies the presence of large scale discretionary authority in the exercise of power (both administrative and political) drives many people to take to political life or civil service in view of the scope for amassing wealth by misuse of discretionary authority. As a result of such tendency people are deprived of economic development, rule of law, protection of fundamental rights and social equality thereby negating noble goals of a good democracy.

Although Indian democracy has been carefully crafted through an unique and longest written Constitution providing for rule of law, protection of human rights, good governance and social equality, corruption in high places is widely prevalent. The starting point of corruption in public offices seems to be in the political arena beginning with electoral corruption. As early as 1996, the Supreme Court in Writ Petition (Civil) No.24 of 1995 commented on the financial

profligacy of political parties as under:

The General Elections- to decide who rules over 850 million Indians – are staged every 5/6 years since independence. It is an enormous exercise and a mammoth venture in terms of money spent. Hundreds and thousands of vehicles of various kinds are pressed on to the roads in the 543 parliamentary constituencies on behalf of thousands of aspirants to power, many days before the general elections are actually held. Millions of leaflets and many millions of posters are printed and distributed or pasted all over the country. Banners by the lakhs are hoisted. Flags go up, walls are painted, and hundreds of thousands of loud speakers play-out the loud exhortations and extravagant promises. VIPs and VVIPs come and go, some of them in helicopters and air-taxis. The political parties in their quest for power spend more than one thousand crores of rupees on the General Election (Parliament alone), yet nobody accounts for the bulk of the money so spent and there is no accountability anywhere. Nobody discloses the source of the money. There are no proper accounts and no audit. From where does the money come nobody knows. In a democracy where rule of law prevails this type of naked display of black money, by violating the mandatory provisions of law, cannot be permitted.

Electoral corruption in India seems to have increased in recent years primarily because of high cost of campaigning and questionable practices indulged in by the political parties and/or by the contesting candidates. Though ceilings have been prescribed by the

Election Commission in respect of expenditure to be incurred by the candidates, there appears to be no ceiling or even adequate regulation in respect of expenses incurred by the political parties. At present there is a rule requiring the filing of expenses by the candidate and the political party in respect of an election. The absence of proper regulation or monitoring of the expenses both by candidates and the parties has given rise to a widespread criticism that electoral corruption has been increasing over the years without any effective monitoring. It is very well known that many transactions relating to election expenditure are done in cash without any adequate monitoring notwithstanding the Election Commission's attempt to regulate them through the Expenditure Observers. The cost of election expenditure has gone up because of the competitive and aggressive modes of campaigning by the competing political parties. The widespread use of media – electronic and print – in political campaigns especially during the election times has also increased the need for funds to the parties and candidates.

It is also known to be a fact that in the case of many political parties, the candidates applying for nomination are compelled to deposit certain minimum amount as a pre-condition for nomination. As a result, the parties and the candidates indulge in campaigns which are funded by tainted money. The need for substantial sums of money for election expenditure has resulted in criminal elements seeking party nomination as candidates for election. As a

result, honest and straightforward persons do not stand a chance of getting any party nomination. The consequences of the current trend have indeed damaged the prospects of good candidates entering the election arena.

The damage is not confined to selection of proper candidates by political parties for contesting election. It goes beyond the electoral process. The candidates who have incurred huge election expenditure naturally look forward to make adequate incomes by misusing their offices after they become legislators. As a result, the accountability and the responsiveness of the government are affected. Rule of law is often violated. Business lobbies try to reap advantages by distorting government decisions in their favour. When the legislators are themselves law-breakers, there is no culture of integrity in governance. General public lose faith in democracy itself. Such a problem exists in many emerging democracies especially in Asia, Africa and South American countries. Even though a number

of suggestions have been made to arrest if not eradicate this menace for proper regulation of political parties both before and after the election especially in India no government seems to be serious in curbing this menace. Dr. Radhakrishnan, the first vice-president of India sounded an apt warning to the nation in his address to the constituent assembly on the midnight of August 14/15th, 1947:

“Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and black marketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the necessary goods of life.”

Yet this warning does not seem to have had much of an impact on our leaders of the present.

It is therefore necessary that the menace of electoral corruption in India is addressed on a war-footing so that democracy is safe

for future generations. One of the important steps to be taken in this regard relates to electoral reforms especially in regard to finances of political parties. Although there is a system of providing assistance in kind to political parties such as availability of broadcasting and telecasting time in public radio and television channels, suggestions have been made for extending assistance to political parties in kind especially in matters like paper, fuel etc. One is not sure whether state funding of political parties in kind or cash will ultimately solve the problem of electoral corruption. What is more important is to provide a system by which criminal elements are kept away from the electoral arena and honest leaders are encouraged to contest elections. Number of suggestions have been made in this regard by both the Election Commission of India and Constitution Review Committee headed by Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah. The sooner we act on these recommendations, the better it is for Indian democracy. □

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HISTORY

In ancient Greece, citizens used pieces of broken pottery to scratch in the name of the candidate in the procedures of ostracism. This was done because while parchment was expensive and had to be imported from Egypt, broken pottery was abundant and virtually free.

The first use of paper ballots to conduct an election appears to have been in Rome in 139 BC, and the first use of paper ballots in North America was in 1629 within the Massachusetts Bay Colony to select a pastor for the Salem Church.

In the United States initially paper ballots were pieces of paper marked and supplied by voters. Later on, political parties and candidates provided preprinted ballots for voters to cast.

The secret ballot was first introduced in Australia in the 1850s.

Criminalisation of Politics

S K Mendiratta



The real remedy lies in changing the law, which permits such criminal and anti-social elements to come into the electoral fray and sully the purity of the electoral process

IT IS undisputed fact that India is the largest democracy on the earth. It is also regarded as one of the stablest democracies among the comity of democratic nations. In the words of the Supreme Court in *Lakshmi Charan Sen and Others Vs. AKM Hassan Uzzaman and Others* (AIR 1985 SC 1233) “India is an oasis of democracy, a fact of contemporary history” if we look around at the neighboring countries who got freedom more or less during the same period as India did. But can we claim that ours is the ideal democracy, free from all ills? Perhaps not. In fact, no system, electoral or otherwise, can ever claim perfection in any field. So is our electoral system.

Our electoral system suffers mainly from three ‘Ms’ – Money Power, Muscle Power and Ministerial Power (misuse of official machinery) – or, what may also be called as three ‘Cs’ – cash, criminals and corruption. While

the misuse of official machinery is now greatly curbed by the strict and effective enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct by the Election Commission which keeps a tab on the misuse or abuse of the governmental power by the ruling party or ruling coalitions during elections, some constructive measures taken by the Commission have also made an impact on the use of money power. The Observers appointed by the Election Commission who are senior officers drawn from the All India Services, including Indian Revenue Service, keep a close watch on the expenditure being incurred or authorised by the political parties and contesting candidates during elections. Under the Commission’s directions and instructions, several restrictions have been placed on the ostentatious expenditure by political parties and contesting candidates, like, ban on erection of arches and gates, prevention of defacement of public and private property by writing slogans, pasting of posters, etc.

The author is legal advisor, Election Commission of India.

But the misuse of muscle power to rig elections is the growing concern not only of the Election Commission but also of the whole nation. Public and electors at large are seriously concerned with the growing criminalisation of politics. Upto the late 1970s, active politicians used to take the help of criminals and local 'dadas' for winning elections by resorting to intimidation and terrorisation of voters, forcible booth capturing, etc. Once, such criminal and anti-social elements realised that the politicians were winning because of their help, they themselves started entering the electoral fray, considering it to be the best 'profession' which would not only endow them with the State power but also with State patronage and protection for their other 'activities'.

Who is a criminal is not easy to define. Under Indian jurisprudence, largely borrowed from the West, a person is presumed to be innocent, unless convicted by a court of law. But a common man perceived otherwise. In his eyes, even a person who has been charged with an offence and is under trial is also a criminal. He looks down upon a mafia don, history sheeter or a notorious bad character, involved in various nefarious activities, as a criminal. He cannot digest the fact that a person charged with heinous crimes, like, murder, rape, dacoity, extortion, blackmailing, or misappropriation of public funds, seeks to represent him in Parliament or State Legislature or in any other elective office, merely because the trial is taking its own course and time, before formally convicting him.

The existing law is wholly inadequate to meet the expectations

of the people to keep away such bad elements from electoral arena. The existing law (contained in section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951) provides that a person shall be disqualified for contesting an election to Parliament or a State Legislature only if he stands 'convicted'. In most of the cases under that section 8, even conviction alone is not sufficient to attract disqualification and the convicted person must have been sentenced to imprisonment for not less than the period prescribed. General clause in the said section 8 prescribes disqualification on conviction and sentence of imprisonment for not less than two years.

Paradoxically, even the existing law, with all its weaknesses and fragilities, was not being implemented faithfully until 1997. Quite strangely, a view was being entertained that the 'conviction' within the meaning of the said section 8 meant only final conviction by the appellate court, and not the conviction by the trial court. Thus, even the convicts for heinous crimes, like, murder, dacoities, extremist acts, were merrily contesting elections, while on bail during the pendency of their appeals. Nobody had cared to check the exact legal position, until the Election Commission made an exhaustive examination of the law on the subject, as pronounced by the Courts. The Election Commission found that at least three High Courts of Allahabad, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh had categorically and unambiguously held that the grant of bail would not remove the disqualification incurred on conviction under section 8 of the Representation

of the People Act, 1951 and such convict would continue to suffer from that disqualification. It was later observed that the Bombay High Court had also taken the same view. The Commission then declared on 28.8.1997 that the disqualification for contesting elections to Parliament and State Legislatures on conviction for offences under the said section 8 would take effect from the date of conviction by the trial court, irrespective of whether the convicted person stood released on bail during the pendency of his appeal/application for revision.

To give teeth to its above declaration, the Commission also directed that all candidates shall henceforth make a declaration, in a form prescribed by the Commission, supported by an affidavit, about their convictions, if any. The Commission also made it clear to all Returning Officers that they would be justified in rejecting the nomination papers of those candidates who fail to furnish such declaration and affidavit. Though certain doubts were expressed in some quarters about the correctness of the view taken by the Commission that the disqualification under section 8 was attracted right from the date of conviction by the Trial Court, those doubts were dispelled by the Supreme Court in the case of B.R. Kapur Vs. State of Tamil Nadu and Another (AIR 2001 SC 3435) [popularly known as the case of disqualification of Km. J. Jayalalithaa] and K. Prabhakaran Vs. T. Jayarajan (AIR 2002 SC 3393), wherein the apex court categorically held that the disqualification on conviction arises right from the date from conviction by the trial court.

However, the Supreme Court has in a later case of *Navjot Singh Sidhu Vs. State of Punjab* [2007 (TLS) 43432] that the disqualification on conviction would get stayed if the appellate court stays not merely the execution of sentence and grants bail, but also stays conviction too during the pendency of appeal.

There is another provision in the law which too has raised many an eyebrow. The law [section 8(4)] provides that if, on the date of conviction, the convict happens to be a sitting MP or MLA/MLC, the disqualification in his case would not become operative immediately, but would be postponed for at least three months. And if within that period of three months, the convicted person merely files an appeal or application for revision, he would not suffer from any disqualification till the disposal of the appeal or application for revision. Such 'benevolent' view in the case of sitting legislators is also not understood. In fact, the law should be more strict and stringent towards such persons, who are the lawmakers and whom the community expects to be of exemplary and unimpeachable character. Mercifully, the Supreme Court in the case of *K. Prabhakaran Vs. T. Jayarajan* (Supra) has somewhat diluted the 'benevolent' effect of the above provision by holding that the protection against disqualification conferred by section 8(4) on the sitting Members of Parliament and the State Legislatures would be available to them only during the currency of their membership of the existing House, and not for contesting future elections which previously was taken by them to be a lifelong gift by the law.

Another highly laudable contribution made by the Supreme Court in the matter of reforming the electoral contests is the direction given by that apex court to the Election Commission to obtain from all candidates the information with regard to their criminal antecedents, if any, in addition to their assets, liabilities, and educational qualifications. The Supreme Court held in *Union of India Vs. Association for Democratic Reforms* and *Another* (AIR 2002 SC 2112) and *People's Union for Civil Liberties Vs. Union of India and Others* (AIR 2003 SC 2363) that the "right to get information in democracy is recognized all throughout and it is natural right flowing from the concept of democracy" and that "Voters (little man-citizen's) right to know antecedents including criminal past of his candidate contesting election for MP or MLA is much more fundamental and basic for survival of democracy. The little-man may think over before making his choice of electing lawbreakers as lawmakers." Pursuant to the above direction of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission has issued orders requiring all candidates to give details of criminal cases in which they have either been convicted in the past or are facing trial where the courts have taken cognisance or framed charges. This information is to be furnished by each candidate in a prescribed format supported by an affidavit at the time of filing his nomination as a candidate. Failure to file the affidavit may even result in the rejection of his nomination. The information so furnished by the candidates is widely disseminated through all

media of mass communication and election watch groups and is even put on the Commission's website.

Continuing its efforts to keep the criminal elements out of electoral contests within the framework of the given law, the Commission gave instructions in 2005 that the names of persons against whom non-bailable warrants issued by the courts had remained un-served on them for six months or more may be removed from the electoral rolls on the presumption that they had ceased to be ordinarily resident at the address given in the electoral rolls. As this would have meant that such persons could not contest elections and vote (registration as an elector in the electoral roll being one of the primary qualifications for candidature and voting), many such absconding accused surrendered before the courts.

Realising that it could not do anything more, unless the law was amended, the Commission repeatedly made appeals to the good sense of the political parties to set up good candidates with clean public image and record. Unfortunately, in most of the cases, such appeals went unheeded and persons notorious for their misdeeds were set up as candidates by several parties, even recognized National and State parties.

As mentioned above, the real remedy lies in changing the law, which permits such criminal and anti-social elements to come into the electoral fray and sully the purity of the electoral process. All those who are standing trial for cases involving moral turpitude and heinous offence, murder, dacoity, rioting, and in whose case

the courts have taken cognisance and framed charges, should be debarred from contesting elections till they are acquitted of the charges, if criminalisation in politics is to be tackled effectively, if not eradicated altogether. In fact, a positive recommendation to this effect was made by the Election Commission in 1998 that persons who are accused of serious criminal offences punishable with imprisonment for five years or more and in whose cases the courts had framed charges should not be permitted to contest elections during the pendency of their trial. In the Commission's view, it was a reasonable restriction, in public interest, on the right to contest which has been held

by the Hon'ble Supreme Court to be a statutory right. Needless to say that even the fundamental rights can be abridged by placing reasonable restrictions in public interest. A more or less similar recommendation was also made by the Law Commission of India in its 170th Report submitted in May, 1999. These recommendations of the Election Commission and the Law Commission were placed before the Standing Committee of Parliament on Home Affairs. The Standing Committee in its report submitted to the Parliament in March, 2007 has, however, not favoured the above recommendations on the specious plea that the person should be presumed to be innocent unless

convicted. Is it not paradoxical that an under-trial prisoner is deprived of his most fundamental human rights of his liberty to move freely, live with his family, follow the avocation of his choice, etc., when he is accused of even minor offences, and even his right to vote is taken away and suspended under section 62(5) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, yet he cannot be asked not to contest elections? What is so sacrosanct about his right to contest elections and seeking to be a representative of millions of electors in the august Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures! □

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THE DELIMITATION COMMISSION

Delimitation Literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body. The job of delimitation is assigned to a high power body. Such a body is known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission.

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Electoral, Democratic and Governance reforms

Trilochan Sastry



Some of these deeper reforms cannot be done by citizens alone. But they will have to play a very important part

RECENT TERROR attacks have focused attention on political accountability. But that only highlights in a tragic way the need for much wider reforms. There are two crucial questions facing us regarding our democracy: what kind of changes do we need, and how do we bring it about? It is widely accepted we face serious problems. We have a nexus between crime and money in politics. Political parties and their campaigns are exaggerating differences between religions, castes, regions and languages. Election spending is spiraling and big business is entering politics openly. The Chief Election Commissioner said that candidates spend ten times the prescribed limit and recover ten times that investment after winning. A Planning Commission member said “earlier, money was chasing power. Today, power is chasing money” – meaning that the business lobby is openly wooed by politicians

resulting in a perversion of citizen interest into business interests.

Recent data from the November 2008 Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Delhi, MP and Chattisgarh show some interesting trends. First, the level of criminalization is coming down, from about 25% to about 12%. However, spending in elections is going up sharply, with distribution of money, liquor, clothes and so on. There are lots of election promises for higher levels of subsidy in a blatant attempt to sue the public exchequer to buy votes. Candidates also show a huge rise in wealth – well over 200% in all these states. Politics has surely become a very remunerative business.

We therefore need clean elections and politics. We also need inclusive politics – the country cannot afford internal divisions any longer. We need politics that is open and transparent, and that is accountable to the people. The current system

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of casting votes once in five years is not a sufficient guarantee of political accountability. We need politics that reflects the concerns of people and not that of any one lobby. Before we get to specific suggestions, we need to examine who will bring about this change?

There are four major agents of possible change. First, the political parties themselves. They are focused on winning elections at any cost. They will not initiate change unless they are forced to. Second, the Election Commission. It has been doing a wonderful job over the years, and is a truly Independent Constitutional Authority, both in letter and spirit. However, its powers are limited to “superintendence and direction” of elections under laws framed by Parliament and rules made by the Government. The Courts can only uphold the Constitution and the fundamental rights, and interpret laws. They can fill in gaps in laws pending legislation, but cannot legislate. Last, but not the least, the media can play an important role in bringing about change. But the media also has limitations. Many are more interested in the business or revenue side of their work than the news. They are focused on circulation figures and highlight glamour, celebrities, sports, and sensation. Others, may be more serious, but are always competing for advertising revenues, and cannot go beyond a point. There is also a clutter, and one viewpoint is balanced by a completely opposite one in another paper, magazine or TV news channel. In short, we cannot expect major changes having a long term impact from the media.

If the political parties, the EC, the Courts and the media all have their own mandates and limitations, where do we go for change? The only option left is for ordinary citizens to bring about much needed changes. This is not as hopeless as it seems. It was ordinary citizens that give us Independence. It is ordinary citizens who moved the political system to bring in the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Civil society in India today is much better organized. Cynics say NGOs are either corrupt or incompetent. That may be true of a majority of them, but there are still many who are both honest and competent. Again, it is citizens who have led a series of changes in electoral reforms in recent times. It started with a PIL asking candidates to disclose their financial and criminal records (if any). In two landmark judgments dated May 2, 2002 and March 13, 2003, the Supreme Court twice upheld this PIL. Since then, over 1200 NGOs joined together all over India and set up Citizen Election Watches in all the major states. Candidate information is now being widely publicized. An analysis of over 25,000 candidate records collected since 2002 shows that the level of criminalization in politics is actually coming down.

Though there is now a new Supreme Court judgment in place for candidate disclosure, and Election Watch has resulted in decrease in criminalization, we still have a long way to go. An RTI application has forced political parties to make public their Income Tax Returns. Even a casual glance at this information shows that there is a lot of under reporting of donations, and some

provisions of the IT Act are being violated.

There are laws governing companies, cooperatives, charities, societies, educational institutions, hospitals and religious institutions, but not a single law governing political parties. There is an urgent need for this in line with best democratic practices in other countries. Civil society pressure is required to bring this about. There are many useful lessons we can learn from International experience. For instance, in Germany, political parties have to be ‘democratic’ to be entitled to rule in a democracy. All party office bearers are elected by secret ballot. In India, political parties are largely undemocratic in their internal functioning. Political party funding has to be made transparent to voters. There should be severe penalty for the giver and receiver of black money. Campaign funding reforms are needed to prevent a few wealthy individuals or corporate houses from buying up candidates or parties – much like in the United States, where there are caps on donations from any one source. Our election system needs to change so that divisive politics is no longer possible. One alternative is to move to the French system where a candidate has to get more than 50% of votes cast to be a people’s representative. Today, most winners get less than 20% of the votes from registered voters, and much less than 50% of votes cast. In a three way contest as is the case in many states, the ruling party gets about 35% of the votes cast. This allows divisive politics and campaigns – by appealing to some core constituency based on religion, or caste or language, a party can

come to power. But if they have to get 50% votes – perhaps in a second round run-off elections between the top two candidates - they will have to be more inclusive in their politics. Another alternative is the German proportional representation or list system. In India, with a two or three percent vote swing, a party can sweep to power and get two thirds majority. In the recent Karnataka elections, the BJP got less than 34% votes – in fact less than the Congress – but got nearly 50% of the seats. The Congress got less than 15% seats with more votes than the

BJP. In the list system, seats would reflect the number of votes obtained in a much more fair manner. We also have the American system where the President and the Governors are directly elected, unlike India where a PM or a CM is indirectly elected through the MPs or MLAs.

Some of these deeper reforms cannot be done by citizens alone. But they will have to play a very important part. The work involves two fronts – wider citizen involvement through campaigns as is being done by NEW, and

lobbying and advocacy work. Both require different skills, but citizen groups alone can do this. It is no doubt challenging. That is why it is worth doing. The struggle for Independence was difficult, but the struggle for better democracy is even more difficult. There is no external enemy to blame now. If we are in a mess, we alone are responsible for it. But it is not hopeless – as the recent enactment of the RTI and NREGA Acts show, active citizen engagement can lead to far reaching changes. □

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2004 - SOME INTERESTING FACTS

1. Parliamentary Constituency with largest number of electors - 3368399 (Outer Delhi)
2. Parliamentary Constituency with lowest number of electors - 39033 (Lakshadweep)
3. Parliamentary Constituency with largest Area - Ladakh (J&K)- 173266.37 sq. km
4. Parliamentary Constituency with smallest Area - Chandni Chowk (Delhi)- 10.59 sq. km
5. Maximum contestants in a parliamentary constituency - 35 (Madras south)
6. Polling station with least no of electors: Only ONE voter in Polling station No. - 29;(Dharampur) in Miao Assembly segment of Arunachal East parliamentary constituency
7. Maximum Women contestants in a state - 61 (UP)
8. Minimum women contestants in a state -1 (Goa)
9. Maximum women winners - 7 (UP)
10. Out of 543 elected MPs, 45 are women.
11. Maximum age of the candidate-94 years (Ramchandra Veerappa in Bidar, Karnataka)
12. Minimum age of the candidate - 25 years (Many).
13. Maximum age of the winning candidate-94 years (Ramchandra Veerappa in Bidar, Karnataka)
14. Minimum age of the winning candidate-26 years Sachin Pilot in Dausa (Rajasthan)
15. Maximum votes secured - Sajjan Kumar outer Delhi - 855543
16. Minimum votes secured - Ashok Kumar chandni chowk- 45
17. Minimum votes secured by a winner - Dr. P. Pookunhikoya - 15597 votes (Lakshadweep).
18. Maximum margin, Arambagh PC of West Bengal 592502 votes. Here, the runner -up lost his deposit.
19. Minimum margin, Lakshadweep, 71 Votes
20. Average age of the elected MPs is 52.63 Years.
21. Number of EVMs used in the Election 10.75 lacs.
22. In Karnataka Assembly elections, in 119-Santhemarahalli Assembly, the winning margin is ONLY ONE VOTE.

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Electoral Reforms

Naresh Gupta



It is necessary to have a tighter control over the election expenditure of the candidates and the political parties and stricter audit of company donations and accounts of political parties

IN INDIA, the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice-President are vested in an independent body called the Election Commission. The appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners is made by the President.

The independence of the Election Commission and its insulation from executive interference is secured not only by the fact that the appointment of the Election Commissioners is made by the President but also by Article 324 (5) of the Constitution which provides that the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court and any other Election Commissioner shall not be removed except on

the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

The Model Code of Conduct formulated by the Election Commission of India in 1968 in consultation with political parties was intended to regulate the conduct of the political parties so as to maintain election campaign on healthy lines and to ensure peace and order during the campaign period. The Model Code also prescribes guidelines for the ruling party at the Centre and in the States to ensure that a level field is maintained and that no cause is given for any complaint that the ruling party has used its official position for the purposes of its election campaign. According to the said code of conduct, certain norms are to be followed by the political parties and the party in power which faces election. On the eve of election, no action is to be taken to influence the electorate. The party in power is not to make use of government machinery for the betterment of its prospects in

The author is the Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu.

the elections. It is also provided that Ministers and other authorities shall not sanction grant or payment out of discretionary funds from the time the elections are announced by the Election Commission.

Ministers and other government authorities should not announce or promise any financial grants to the people; they should not promise public facilities like roads; and they should not make any ad hoc government appointments.

The one constant feature that seems to continue from election to election is that of the freebies promised. Now the Supreme Court will decide the right of the political parties to promise populist freebies in their manifestoes in the run-up to elections and then finance the programme through the public exchequer after they are elected to power. A SLP has been filed in the Apex Court against the order of the Madras High Court in June 2007 holding that the action of the Government of Tamil Nadu in distributing free colour TVs, 'the information tool to the public' cannot be branded as a 'waste of exchequer'.

Electoral Reforms

Electoral reforms have been considered to be a continuous process and the election law was amended from time to time to correct the flaws in the electoral process. However, the attempts in the earlier years did not touch even the fringe of the problem. In the meeting of the representatives of political parties in Parliament on the 9th of January 1990 at New Delhi under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, various aspects electoral reforms were discussed and on the basis

of the conclusions of the meeting, the Government constituted a Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Dinesh Goswami to go into the various aspects of the electoral reforms. The Committee concluded its work on the 4th May 1990.

A meeting of leaders of various political parties was held on 23rd July, 1996 and on the basis of consensus reached among political parties on certain proposals on electoral reforms, some important amendments were made to the Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951 with effect from 1st August 1996.

While some recommendations of Dinesh Goswami Committee were implemented and amendments made to the electoral laws, much still needs to be done so that the Parliament and other Legislative bodies serve as balanced and effective instruments of democracy and further that political life and processes are freed of the adverse impact of governance of undesirable extraneous factors, including criminalization. The important issues of electoral reforms posed by the Election Commission which need attention are outlined below.

Compulsory maintenance of accounts by political parties and audit thereof by agencies specified by Election Commission – There is a need for transparency in the matter of collection of funds by the political parties and also the manner in which the funds are expended by them. The political parties must be required to publish their accounts annually for information and scrutiny of all concerned for which purpose the maintenance of such accounts and audit thereof to ensure their accuracy is a prerequisite. The audit of accounts

of political parties should be made compulsory and the audit of accounts should be done by a firm of auditors approved by the Auditor General. The audited accounts should be available for information of public.

Criminalisation of politics

The argument for debarring criminals serving prison sentences is that those found guilty of serious offences against the law have forfeited the right to any say in framing it. Weeding out of criminals is a major issue – "law breakers" cannot be "law makers". It has been suggested by the Election Commission that any person who is accused of an offence punishable with imprisonment for 5 years or more should be disqualified from contesting election even when trial is pending, provided charges have been framed by the competent court.

Negative Voting

The voting public needs the option of the negative vote. Say you don't like any one who is on the ballot, currently you have no choice but to either vote for someone you disagree with least, or not vote at all.

Election years are filled to overflowing with political pitches beseeching voters to cast ballots for a particular candidate. And many people do, although often with scant enthusiasm. "Choosing between the lesser of two evils" is a commonly heard complaint among voters.

The trouble is that the current voting rules, where a voter can only vote for a candidate, do not allow people to most accurately register their feelings about candidates.

Voters should be allowed to cast either positive or negative votes. A negative vote subtracts from a candidate's positive vote total. For each office, the voter could choose to either vote for a candidate or against a candidate. For each candidate, a net support total would be calculated by subtracting the "Against" votes from the "For" votes. The winner would be the candidate with the highest amount of net support.

What would be the implications of adopting a negative voting system? When a voter says, through his vote, that he will not vote for X,Y,Z or A,B,C, he is saying that better people are needed in politics.

One way would be for people who are dissatisfied to get into politics. But not everyone has the time/ money/ stamina or inclination for politics to do this. Does that mean that they should reconcile themselves to being ruled by people whom they do not like? A negative vote may not be the best option but is the only one available now.

In a writ filed in the Supreme Court in 2004 by the Peoples Union for Civil liberties (PUCL) under Article 32 of the Constitution, it has been contended that the Rules 41(2) & (3) and 49-O of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, though recognising the right of a voter not to vote, which is necessary for a healthy democracy, nullify it, in implementation, by violating the provision of secrecy and thus the impugned Rules, to the extent of such violation are not only ultravires but also violative of Articles 19(1)(a) & 21 of the Constitution besides International Covenants. It has

been suggested that the Election Commission could make provision in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) in exercise of its plenary powers under Article 324 of the Constitution (e.g., by earmarking a button in the EVM for 'none of the above candidates'). [Rule 49-O provides broadly that for an elector who decides not to record his vote, a remark to that effect shall be made by the Presiding Officer in a Register in Form 17A in the polling station.]

It is not enough to record and count the number of electors who do not favour any candidate but also to provide in the law for a re-poll if the number of such negative votes is 50% or more.

Change of present electoral system to Majoritan system/List system/Mixed system/any other system. The present electoral system known as 'first past the post' declares a candidate who secures the highest number of votes as elected. The system has been criticized as the candidate elected in a multi-cornered contest may not necessarily be the one securing the majority of votes polled. There have been suggestions for change to majoritan/list/mixed system.

In majoritan system, the person to be elected has to get more than 50% of the votes polled and, in case no person gets more than 50% of the votes polled in the first round, a second round is held between the first two candidates securing the largest number of votes.

In list system, the contest is between political parties and the parties are allocated seats on the basis of percentage of votes polled by each of them. The parties declare the list of their candidates

before the elections. The Law Commission in its working paper on 'Reform of the electoral laws' had proposed (January 1999) a package of electoral reforms including introduction of the 'list system' in addition to the existing 'first past the post' system. The Commission had pointed out that the deficiencies in the 'first past the post' system have become too evident in the recent years, particularly on account of the increase in the number of political parties contesting elections. The returned candidate often succeeds on the basis of 40 to 35 votes. This means wastage of the remaining 65 to 70 of the votes and the will of the majority of the voters going unrepresented. The Law Commission has said that the ideal solution would have been to provide for election of the members of the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies exclusively on the basis of the 'list system'. However as this might not be feasible or acceptable to the political parties, the practical solution would be to retain the existing solution and add 25% of the seats to the strength of the Lok Sabha and each Assembly.

The system of proportional representation for election to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies was not favoured while framing the Constitution as it was considered that with the prevalent standard of literacy, the country was not ready for proportional representation might bring about a multiplicity of parties and a chronic instability in government

Legislators' qualifications

There is a view that educational qualification should be prescribed for membership of the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies and a contestant should

have the minimum qualification of being a graduate. It is argued that it is important for a member to understand the legal and budget provisions and that the prescription of educational qualification will definitely improve qualitatively the functioning of the members within the Parliament and the Assemblies. A counter argument is that a formal educational qualification is not a sine qua non for having knowledge of the Constitution and even an unlettered person may have knowledge of it. The Constituent Assembly did not prescribe any minimum educational qualification for members of the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies.

State Funding of Elections

Pros – It is well recognized in all modern democracies that political parties play essential roles in any form of democratic governance and their existence is a sine qua non for sustaining a representative democracy. They act as channels for participation of citizens in the governance of their country. Political parties, though voluntary associations of individual citizens, are performing the vital public function of sustaining democracy. And for performing such public function of great importance, they need to be financed from public funds. Contributions to such funds of political parties from State coffers would make them less dependent on private contributions, which mostly come from big industrial houses and industrial houses on quid pro quo basis, and this would serve a great public cause and interest of removing corruption.

Cons- The long standing democracies of Germany, Austria, France, Denmark, Israel, Norway, Netherlands, Italy, Canada, USA

(for Presidential elections only), Japan, Spain, Australia and South Korea had introduced and operated systems of comprehensive or partial State funding of Elections over the past 3 decades. The principal point against the State subvention to political parties was that a political party was a free association of citizens for political purposes and should be able to demonstrate its independent viability including its financial viability. The experience over a period of time in some of the countries like Italy, Finland, Spain, Austria and Israel did not show that the public funding had reduced the election expenditure of political parties. It is also argued that the State funds should be utilized for the welfare and common good of the people and not for the benefit of a few following political pursuits. Further, State funding would result in increased capacity of the political parties to spend on election campaigns making the elections even costlier. It would encourage mushroom growth of parties as such grants would be a great incentive for even non-serious and frivolous organizations to call themselves as political outfits. The State funding has neither rid the political parties of their financial burden nor cleaned public life. The Central and State Governments were facing a severe financial crunch and State funding would be an additional financial burden on them.

In pursuance of the decision taken in the all party meeting on electoral reforms held on the 22nd of May, 1998 under the chairmanship of the then Union Home Minister, the Government of India constituted a high-powered Committee on State Funding of Elections under the chairmanship of Mr. Indrajit Gupta, M.P. The main

recommendations of the Committee are outlined below.

State funding of Elections, i.e. for grant of State subvention to political parties, is fully justified in order to establish such conditions where even the parties with modest financial resources may be able to compete with those having higher resources, on a level playing field and with a fair chance of success at the hustings.

State funding should be confined to only the parties recognized as National or State parties by the Election Commission of India, and to the candidates set up by such parties.

Given the budgetary constraints and the present financial stringency only part of the financial burden of political parties may be shifted to the State, for the present. Gradually, more and more of their expenses' burden can be progressively shifted to the State so that ultimately all their legitimate expenses become a charge on the State.

Any State funding should be in kind, and not in cash.

It is necessary to have a tighter control over the election expenditure of the candidates and the political parties and stricter audit of company donations and accounts of political parties. Explanations 1 and 3 in section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 should be deleted to restore it to the pre-1974 position. The State funding is not the panacea to the corrupting influence of money in the electoral process and it is necessary to adopt other measures, irrespective of whether State funding is provided or not. □

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Economics of Elections

R C Rajamani



There should be a serious attempt to curb spending on elections. A long planned legislation to enable state funding of elections is yet to see the light of the day

The country will be soon witnessing the world's biggest democratic exercise – the Lok Sabha elections 2009. India can be legitimately proud of its history of parliamentary democracy. The framers of the nation's Constitution gave the Indian people, more than half of them illiterate at the time of the first elections in free India – 1952, the unfettered right to vote. This was unique in history as no nation, not even the United States and Britain, gave universal franchise to its citizens from day one. It took a long time for both the countries to do that.

Holding general elections in India, the world's largest democracy, is a mind-boggling exercise involving colossal expenditure. It is estimated that conducting a Lok Sabha election virtually amounts to conducting polls in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia

put together! Such is the sheer scale of the exercise in the world's largest democracy of one billion plus people.

Conduct of Lok Sabha poll has gradually become more expensive since the first general election in 1952. In the first election after independence, the national ballot cost Rs 10.4 crore. The cost subsequently dropped in the later elections. From 1977 however, the cost started increasing substantially. Elections started costing upwards of Rs 100 crore after 1989. (See Table)

The 2004 Lok Sabha elections cost Rs.1330 crore, Rs.450 crore more than the previous one, giving some idea of the rising cost of holding elections. The government had estimated that the 1999 Lok Sabha polls would cost Rs 818 crore. But it actually cost Rs. 880 crore, Rs.62 crore more than what

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was estimated and provided for in the interim central budget.

In 1967, the exercise cost the exchequer only Rs 1.79 crore. This figure rose steadily to Rs 11 crore in 1971, Rs 23 crore in 1977, Rs 54 crore in 1980, Rs 81 crore in 1984 and Rs 154 crore in 1989. The election expenses shot up enormously in the 1990s, to Rs 359 crore in 1991, Rs 597 crore in 1995, Rs 666 crore in 1998, and Rs 880 crore in 1999.

Budget and Expenditure

The Secretariat of the Election Commission has an independent budget, which is finalised directly in consultation between the Commission and the

Finance Ministry of the Union Government. The latter generally accepts the recommendations of the Commission for its budgets. The major expenditure on actual conduct of elections is, however, reflected in the budgets of the concerned constituent units of the Union - States and Union Territories. If elections are being held only for the Parliament, the expenditure is borne entirely by the Union Government while for the elections being held only for the State Legislature, the expenditure is borne entirely by the concerned State. In case of simultaneous elections to the Parliament and State Legislature, the expenditure is shared equally between the Union and the State Governments. For

Capital equipment, expenditure related to preparation for electoral rolls and the scheme for Electors' Identity Cards too, the expenditure is shared equally.

The biggest costs are incurred on deployment of security personnel and polling staff, setting up polling stations (some 800,000 throughout the country), purchase of electronic voting machines, and issuance of photo identification cards. The election budget covers only the government's expenses on conducting the polls.

Political parties spend much more than what the government has earmarked for the actual conduct of the polls. The campaign expenditure of political parties has also been growing over the years. But no accurate figures of this spending are available. There are strict legal limits on the amount of money a candidate can spend on an election campaign. According to the Election Commission's rules, in bigger constituencies a candidate can spend up to Rs 25 lakh. In other constituencies, it varies between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 25 lakh.

While parties are allowed to spend as much money on campaigns as they want, recent Supreme Court judgments have said that unless a political party can specifically account for the money thus spent, it will be added to the election expenses of the candidates concerned. The accountability thus imposed on candidates and parties has curtailed some of the more extravagant campaigning

Table	
Lok Sabha Election Expenditure	
YEAR OF ELECTION EXPENDITURE INCURRED (Provisional)	(in Rs.)
1952	10, 45, 00,000
1957	5,90,00,000
1962	7,32,00,000
1967	10,79,69,000
1971	11,60,87,450
1977	23,03,68,000
1980	54,77,39,000
1984	81,51,34,000
1989	154,22,00,000
1991	359,10,24,679
1996	597,34,41,000
1998	666,22,16,000*
1999	880,00,00,000 **
2004	1300,00,00,000***
* Including the demand of election expenditure incurred on Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra (Maharashtra had asked for Rs. 84 crores and Andhra Pradesh for 57 crores. Ministry of Law has already released 60 percent (approx.) of the amount and balance would be released after the audit is over. ** Approximately. The final figure is known only after the accounts are reconciled/adjusted between the Center and all the States. *** Provisional Source: Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs Legislative Department), New Delhi	

that used to be a feature of Indian elections.

However, experience shows that candidates often overspend on their campaign, taking advantage of some loopholes. For example, under section 77(1) of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951, money spent by people other than the candidate and his agent are not added to his/her election expenses. This means a candidate can spend as much as he likes without violating the ceiling on poll expenses.

Political parties as well as individual candidates are subject to a proper statutory audit of the monies spent by them. After the election process is complete,

each candidate has to submit an audited statement of expenses, head-wise. The audit is enforced by the Election Commission which appoints a council of at least two auditors for every 10 constituencies. Any violation or misreporting of expenses can result in disqualification of the candidate concerned.

Various independent studies and surveys have spoken of astronomical spending on election campaigns by various political parties and individual candidates in their private capacities. Big industrialists are also known to fund parties. This may not be strictly illegal, but it gives rise to allegations later of quid

pro quo by the government that would come to power. Since it is not possible to account for and audit all the money actually spent, there is no knowing of the exact figure. Suffice it to say that crores of rupees of black money inevitably got released. This is a serious concern for the country's economy, especially now that India is preparing itself to fight the consequences.

A national commission that reviewed electoral laws has said that there should be a serious attempt to curb spending on elections. A long planned legislation to enable state funding of elections is yet to see the light of the day. □

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Area wise top 5 parliament constituencies

STATE/UT NAME	PC NAME	AREA (sq. km)
JAMMU & KASHMIR	Ladakh	173266.37
RAJASTHAN	Barmer	71601.24
GUJARAT	Kutch	41644.55
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	Arunachal (West)	40572.29
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	Anunachal (East)	39749.64

Area wise bottom 5 parliament constituencies

STATE/UT NAME	PC NAME	AREA (sq.km)
NCT OF DELHI	Delhi Sadar	28.09
MAHARASHTRA	Mumbai (South Central)	18.31
MAHARASHTRA	Mumbai (South)	13.73
WEST BENGAL	Calcutta (North West)	13.23
NCT OF DELHI	Chandni Chowk	10.59

Films and Politics in Tamil Nadu

M S S Pandian



Films did play an important role in the politics of Tamil Nadu. Yet it will be a mistake to homogenise its impact

THE FACT that all the five Chief Ministers produced by the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu – C.N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), Janaki Ramachandran and J. Jayalalitha – were associated with the world of cinema has given rise to the general understanding that it is films that decide political outcomes in the state. Such an understanding is often misplaced. The Dravidian parties used an array of instruments such as public meetings, conferences, plays, songs, and the print media to propagate their ideology. Cinema was just one among them.

With this necessary caution when one takes a look at the way cinema was used in Tamil Nadu for political mobilisation, one finds more than one trajectory. It was used

by some to propagate an ideology which did benefit the party (as in the case of C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi) and others to build a political image for themselves (as in the case of MGR). In other cases, association with cinema worked as a burden to build a political career (as in the case of J. Jayalalitha).

First, there have been DMK-genre films which have indulged in overt political propaganda. One can cite Nalla Thambi (1949), Velaikkari (1949), Manthiri Kumari (1950), Parasakthi (1952), Sorga Vasal (1954), and Nadodi Mannan (1959) as instances of overtly propagandist films inspired by the Dravidian ideology. These films propagated atheism, Tamil linguistic and regional identity, and anti-Brahminism. Secondly, references to party symbols and colours and the anagrammatic usages of party leaders' names in

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the course of songs and dialogues have been common features of such films. For example, in Nadodi Mannan (1958), both the DMK's black and red flag and its party symbol, the rising sun, appear on the screen. To cite another instance, an early film of M.G. Ramachandran was titled KanchiThalaivan ('Leader of Kanchi', 1963), an obvious reference to C.N. Annadurai who hailed from the small but historically important temple town of Kancheepuram in northern Tamil Nadu. Finally, some of the DMK-inspired films have been mixing documentary footages of party functions with the shots of the actual films in question. In Panam (1952) and Thangaratnam (1960), during the course of a dialogue, as an answer to a query, the scene shifts to reveal documentary shots of DMK party conferences.

Not only did the DMK have a set of script-writers in C.N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, A.K. Velan and Murasoli Maran, and prolific film lyricists in Udumalai Narayankavi and Kannadasan, but it also had a battery of film actors. K.R. Ramasamy, S.S. Rajendran and M.G. Ramachandran are some of the important ones. Moreover, several DMK leaders floated film companies such as Mekala Pictures, Murasoli Films, Kannadasan Films and Emgeeyar Films. It is this intimate link between the DMK and the film world which provoked the Congress leader K. Kamaraj to derisively characterise the DMK

politicians as Koothadigal or mountebanks.

As I have mentioned earlier, the script-writers of the Dravidian movement used the medium of cinema to advance their ideology. Parasakthi (1952) which was scripted by M. Karunanidhi, the present Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, is a significant case in point. The film, through a simple story of family reunion, develops a scathing critique of the then Congress government, miserable plight of the poor, the putative exploitation of the south by the north and religion. Laced with political sarcasm and highly emotive, the long-winding dialogues of the film caught the subaltern imagination like never before. Roadside entertainers recited passages from the film's soundtrack in the crowded Moore Market area of Chennai. Bystanders paid them in return.

The panic that the film created among the elite in Tamil Nadu is a measure of its success in ideological terms. For instance, S. Chinnasamy, a salt and oil merchant, wrote to the Premier of the Madras State, C. Rajagopalachari, thus: 'At present, a film named Parasakthi is being screened in Salem. The mental attitude and culture of women are degradingly portrayed in it. Moreover, [the film] denies theism completely and is full of angry alliterative atheistic propaganda. [It] also contains communist slogans. [The film is used as] the propaganda instrument

of a particular political party.' He was surprised that the Censor Board had allowed the film for public screening. Another trader, P.S. Subbaraman, wrote to the Premier, 'Suffice it to say that the venomous propaganda that is directly made through this film against religion, idol worship, government and society in general is too powerful to be mistaken for mere entertainment. I, as a patriotic citizen, consider your government would be failing in its fundamental duty if the exhibition of the above film is allowed for a day more.' He continued, 'Rajaji, I dare say, you are not fully posted with the details of the content of a particular movement which is recently masquerading in TamilNadu as purporting to be social and reformist. You belong to a generation, which knew not the deeper hatreds that this 'movement' has nurtured in the minds and hearts of young Tamilians. I knew it fully... This film Parasakthi is a product of that movement!' K.R. Doraisamy was equally worried. His worry was about the possible impact of the film on the unlettered common-folk. In his petition to Rajagopalachari, he claimed, 'Watching this film will guarantee a place for atheism in the minds of the common-folk who cannot read and comprehend newspapers.'

All these letters show us that the film did immense ideological work for the DMK. The beneficiary of films like Parasakthi was the party itself

and not the individual script-writers. In contrast, film actors belonging to the movement used the films to fashion a specific political image for themselves. The most successful case in this regard is M.G. Ramachandran.

A characteristic MGR film represents him as a subaltern combating everyday oppression of various kinds. He had thus donned on the screen the roles of peasant, fisherman, rickshaw puller, gardener, taxi driver, quarry worker, shoe-shine boy, etc. Foregrounding his role as an ordinary working man, many of his films are named after different subaltern vocations: *Thozhilali* (Worker, 1964), *Vivasayee* (Peasant, 1967), *Padakotti* (Boatman, 1964), *Mattukara Velan* (Cowherd Velan, 1970), *Rickshawkaran* (Rickshaw Puller, 1971), and *Meenava Nanban* (Fisherman Friend, 1977). In films where he assumes dual roles – one as an elite and the other as a subaltern -- it is the subaltern MGR, who is given the cinematic prominence. A telling example is *Mattukara Velan* (1970) in which he acts both as a cowherd and as a lawyer. The cowherd outsmarts the lawyer throughout the film to the glee of his subaltern audience. Aptly enough the film was named after the cowherd. Likewise, in *Yenga Veetu Pillai* (The Son of Our Home, 1965), prominence is given to MGR, the worker, rather than to MGR, the heir of a landlord. While the former

fights oppression and becomes the *Yenga Veetu Pillai* of the audience, the latter is represented as inadequately masculine, bullied and browbeaten by the villain.

The social universe of MGR films is one of asymmetrical power. At one end of the power spectrum are grouped the upper caste men/women, the landlords/wealthy industrialists, the educated elites and, of course, the ubiquitous male—all of whom exercise limitless authority and indulge in oppressive acts of power. At the other end of spectrum are the hapless victims— the lower caste men, the landless poor, the exploited workers, the illiterate simpletons, and the helpless women. Power is seen as all-pervasive, omnipotent and undifferentiated, while its victims are always already meek, beaten, and homogeneous in their suffering. Thus we have landlords who try to grab peasants' land (*Vivasayee*, 1967); rural rich who whips their farmhands (*Yenga Veetu Pillai*, 1965); moneylenders who fleece the unlettered (*Padakotti*, 1964); industrialists who dismiss factory workers (*Thozhilali*, 1964); greedy men who covet others property (*Mukarasi*, 1966; *Madapura*, 1962; and *Ayirathil Oruvan*, 1965); and casteists who do not allow subordinated caste servants to enter their houses (*Nadodi*, 1966).

The conflict between these power-wielding elite and MGR,

the subaltern, and its resolution form the core of these films. In the course of the conflict, MGR appropriates several signs of authority of those who oppress. In a semi-feudal social formation where a wide spectrum of everyday practices like speech, dress, body language and food are semiologically differentiated into signs of authority and deference, such appropriation by a subaltern hero becomes specially significant.

MGR's role as an individual dispenser of justice unfolds with a particular emphasis on fight sequences. These sequences give his films the flavour of 'action films'. For instance, in *Maadapura* (1962), MGR with a fractured arm in sling fights the chief of a criminal gang, and in *Panathottam* (1963), he takes on a knife-wielding adversary with bare hands. He bends crowbars (*Padakotti*, 1964) and mauls ferocious tigers (*Gul-E-Bakaavali*, 1955) on the screen. MGR, by constituting himself as one among the oppressed, simultaneously marks himself off from them by dispensing justice and employing physical violence, which, in real life, are monopolies of the elite. For the subaltern audience, he is, thus, one among them, yet chosen defiance.

It is this particular form of screen image which yielded him a huge fan following from among

the subaltern sections of Tamil Nadu. The All World MGR Fans' Association had about 10,000 branches in Tamil Nadu and served as the political backbone of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) which he founded in 1972 after breaking away from the DMK. MGR openly admitted this connection between his film image and political popularity. According to him, 'Fans Association and party are not different.' The efficacy

of his screen image in delivering political power rests in the fact that he ruled Tamil Nadu as its Chief Minister for thirteen years.

If screen image could be an advantage for certain actors, it was not so for actresses. Most often, they have to disassociate themselves from their screen image to enter politics.

In short, films did play an important role in the politics of Tamil Nadu. Yet it will be a

mistake to homogenise its impact. It produced different sets of political outcomes. In some cases, it did help in strengthening certain political ideology. In other cases, it produced personality-centred political cult. In yet other cases, it worked as a burden for politicians. To understand the connection between cinema and politics in Tamil Nadu, one needs to take all these trajectories into account. □

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STARRY POLITICS

Down South, where film stars are put on a pedestal equal to gods, ties between politics and cinema run deep. After their attempts to make it big at the box office, many an actor has turned politician with eyes on the ballot box. While many have joined parties, others have launched their own. Like their movies, some have proved hits, others dismal flops. A brief round-up.

MG RAMACHANDRAN: The first film actor to be chief minister, he launched the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK), after developing differences with the DMK. He came to power in 1977 and remained in office until 1987.

N T RAMA RAO: Considered one of the greatest actors of Telugu cinema, he launched the Telugu Desam Party in 1982 after being asked by a fan, "Sir, we have treated you like god, but what have you done for us?" NTR became CM of Andhra thrice.

SIVAJI GANESAN: One of India's most versatile actors, he was at first a supporter of the DMK and later joined the Congress. In 1987 he left the Congress and in 1988 launched his own political party, the Tamizhaga Munnetra Munnani. After an unsuccessful stint, the party wound up in 1999.

BHAGYARAJ: The actor Director floated the MGR Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam in 1989 which turned out to be a flop. He soon joined AIADMK.

R SARATH KUMAR: After quitting the DMK and AIADMK, the actor launched his own party, Akila Indiya Samathuva Makkal Katchi or the All India Socialist People's Party, in September 2007.

OTHERS: T Rajendhar (Thangachi Munnetra Kazhagam), SS Rajendran (MGR-SSR Latchiya DMK), M Karthik (All India Parliamentary People's Party), Vijayashanti (Talli Telengana Party), Devan (Kerala People's Party),

VIJAYKANTH: Launched the Deliya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam in 2005, but he is the only candidate from his party to hold an Assembly seat. Has refused alliances with other parties.

(Courtesy : Newspapers)

Us and US

Ravi Shanker Kapoor



What is needed today is a passion for enlightened self-interest. People, especially from the middle class, need to shed their indifference and take interest in public life and politics

THE RECENT presidential elections in the United States have underlined the high quality of debate and discussion that underline political debate. What impressed the entire world was not just the fact that the US voted the first black to White House, but also the President-elect Barack Obama's mellifluous oratory.

The nature and quality of canvassing by Obama and his rival, Republican John McCain, sharply contrast with the cacophony and sloganeering which pass off as campaigning and political dialogue. Obama impressed the people of America by, among other things, his style and expression. The inspiring speeches could not have come at a more apt time. In the backdrop of failure in Pakistan and Afghanistan to vanquish Al

Qaeda and Taliban, a messy war in Iraq, and a messier financial system at home, Obama's speeches came as a soothing balm to the Americans. In an address he made in January 2008, he said:

Make no mistake about what we're up against. We're up against the belief that it's all right for lobbyists to dominate our government, that they are just part of the system in Washington.

But we know that the undue influence of lobbyists is part of the problem...

The change we seek has always required great struggle and great sacrifice...

This election is about the past vs. the future. It's about whether we settle for the same divisions and distractions and drama that passes for politics today or whether we reach for a politics of common

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sense and innovation, a politics of shared sacrifice and shared prosperity.

There are those who will continue to tell us that we can't do this, that we can't have what we're looking for, that we can't have what we want, that we're peddling false hopes. But here is what I know: I know that when people say we can't overcome all the big money and influence in Washington, I think of that elderly woman who sent me a contribution the other day, an envelope that had a money order for \$3.01 along with a verse of scripture tucked inside the envelope. So don't tell us change isn't possible. That woman knows change is possible...

Don't tell me we can't change.

Yes, we can. Yes, we can change. Yes, we can.

Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can seize our future... while we breathe, we will hope.

Impressive speech indeed. We, the people of India, wonder if we would ever have leaders who speak with such passion, whose cadences sound convincing, and who could inspire hope among ordinary people in so cynical an age. The good news is that such people do exist in our country. But the bad news is that they have to face an excruciatingly straitjacketed system in which such democratic virtues as oration, scholarship, and often propriety are of little value. Today, the recipe of success has ingredients like

gimmickry, sloganeering, and a propensity to indulge in political correctness. It would, however, be wrong to heap all blame on politicians; all of us are responsible for the debasing of the perquisite virtues. Because contemporary politics involves us all; after all, democracy means—even literally (demos in Greek is people and kratos is rule)—the rule by people. And the blame apportioned to the media would not be of a mean quantum.

In order to expose the public transport system and the nexus between operators and the local authorities in Delhi, a local leader drives a BlueLine bus without a valid licence and then courts arrest amid big drama. The feat attracted the entire media. Consider a hypothetical scenario: The same leader commissions a study on the transport system in Delhi. Then he organizes a seminar in which the top experts on the subject participate and come up with a good, feasible set of recommendations. It is doubtful if the seminar would be covered by the press and news channels as widely as the driving-without-licence was.

In the era of 24x7 news and direct telecasts, politics is no more an activity in which substance, the genuineness of causes, the cogency of arguments, and the eloquence of orators matter. These days the things which matter are an obeisance to the canons of political correctness, the chanting of smart slogans and fashionable

catchwords, sophistry, and of course spin-doctoring. And all these things are done loudly; substance, genuine causes, cogency, and eloquence are smothered in the tyranny of decibels.

The results are for all to see: meaningful debate has all but seized to exist in Parliament—and outside it. Once upon a time, we had a Parliament in which debates were held, where honorable members would blast ministers and the treasury benches would listen with patience. Those were the days, the days when the important issues of the day were discussed, when eloquence did matter in Parliament of the world's biggest democracy, even though vested interests and party line influenced decision-making. Till the late 1980s, there was debate in the greatest forum of our republic. There was deterioration in quality, as there was deterioration in other spheres of public life, but it was there.

Gradually, however, the culture of stalling houses came into being. Unsurprisingly, lung power became more important than argumentative skills. Not that all politicians approved of this unhealthy development. In March 2008, Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Hamid Ansari referred a complaint to the Committee of Privileges raising the question whether those disrupting the House breach the privilege of those MPs scheduled to ask questions during that period.

Ansari's counterpart in the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, was no less irked by the petulance of shouting brigades of various parties. But, unfortunately, not much has come out of the move to resurrect debate in Parliament.

The demise of meaningful debate is dangerous in any democracy; for it is symptomatic of intolerance. In a letter to an adversary, the great Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire wrote what has become a cornerstone of liberalism: "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." Not allowing an opponent to even state his position militates against the basic tenets of modern democracy; it could well be the first step towards mobocracy, if not to fascism or dictatorship; it certainly strangles debate and strengthens vested interests.

And when debate is strangled, argumentation assumes a grotesque form: accusation becomes the argument. In our country where public discourse is carried out in a politically correct idiom, anything even vaguely construed as politically incorrect is immediately dubbed as bad and unjust. Anybody who opposes any idea or policy of the holders of conventional wisdom—be it affirmative action or welfarism—immediately gets maligned and denounced as a reactionary, a status-quoist, and worse.

The downtrodden are being neglected and pauperized in the liberalized economy, cry the self-proclaimed champions of the poor. If you dare to challenge this, or ask for any evidence to substantiate such an assertion, you would be immediately branded as a stooge of the World Bank, or a lackey of the diabolical multinational corporations (MNCs), or both. If you say that reservations should be reviewed so that the creamy layer does not grab all benefits, you are likely to be accused of being an opponent of reservations and, therefore, against the poor. The accusations will be loud.

Now that sloganeering is confused with eloquence and platitudes with wisdom, it is hardly surprising that shouting passes off as the cry of the long-suffering, silent majority. Needless to say, nobody bothers to examine the authenticity of any cry: a cry, by virtue of being a cry, is always authentic. Or, so it is believed.

Shouting having become the best mode of protest, decibels often perform the function what in saner times cogency of argument used to do. If you dare to challenge the tyranny of decibels, you will be... well, shouted down.

In this milieu, real issues rarely come up to the fore. Often, public discourse revolves around phony affairs like 'the poor becoming poorer' (all data suggest

to the contrary), the 'growing marginalization of the downtrodden' (which is again not supported by any evidence), matters related to the pride of some community or region, and the 'hurting of sentiments' of some tetchy group. Vested interests and tendentious opinion-makers mold public discourse in such a fashion that the real issues get buried in the clamor.

The biggest factor responsible for this sorry state of affairs, and the sorry affairs of state, is the apathy of the middle class. Middle India has almost withdrawn from the matters related to not just politics but also public life. Comfortably ensconced in their drawing rooms, they just dismiss politics as a 'dirty game' played by dirty people. Their completely uninterested approach ensures that politics becomes a game of professional politicians, cynical party managers, and media manipulators.

It needs to be recalled that it was the middle class which liberated India from British rule. And one reason that the Revolt of 1857 failed was the middle class, small though it was at that time, showed absolutely no enthusiasm for it. The same middle class is now so apathetic that many of them do not even bother to vote in any election.

The middle class people also shun public activities. I, my family, my home—this is my world; I do not go beyond its



Important issues of the day are discussed in Parliament of the world's biggest democracy.

confines. Bad roads? Well, I pay taxes; so, the local authorities should make them. Yeah, there is RTI, but I don't want to get involved in the exercise of finding the people who made substandard roads. Anyway, all of them are corrupt; they are like that only.

In recent times, resident welfare associations did play some role in Delhi and other cities, and this is a good sign, but generally there is not much keenness to become joiners. Anybody who has lived in a group housing society knows this fact; nobody is willing to contribute some of their time and effort for general good.

It has been rightly said that eternal vigilance is the cost of liberty. August 15, 1947, was just a day in calendar; it should not be seen as the day of redemption which made us free forever. Nor did it conquer evil in its multifarious manifestations for all the time. As Edmund Burke wrote, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

I am not making a case for altruism; doing something should not be construed as donating some money for, say, flood victims in some remote part of the country. As Thomas Paine said, "The greatest tyrannies are always

perpetrated in the name of the noblest causes." In India, this is particularly true, as the so-called 'civil society' organizations pursue their retrograde agenda.

What is needed today is a passion for enlightened self-interest. People, especially from the middle class, need to shed their indifference and take interest in public life and politics. This will help resuscitate public debate. This will also bring the real issues to the centre-stage of public discourse. And this will force politicians to concentrate on the real problems. Can we say, 'we can'? □

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The Saga of Elections

C P Bhambhri



The Indian voter has shown great faith in his vote for democracy, however, the election system has to be cleansed of distortions which have been identified by commentators

REGULAR, PERIODIC, and highly competitive elections to the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and Panchayati Raj institutions have become an integral part of way of life of Indians and unlike many European and North American democratic countries, the phenomenon of voters' fatigue has not set in our country. Electoral participation by the Indian Voter has never been less than 50 to 60 percent and in many elections and also at various levels from Parliament to Panchayats, voters' turnout has been over 60 to 70 percent of the participants. The Election day in India is observed as 'secular festival' by millions of voters and participants in this 'secular festival' are as enthusiastic as they are in multiple 'religious festivals' of various religious-cultural groups in society. The mobilization of voters by different political parties during the festival season of elections also has a special Indian flavor

and competing parties and their candidates come face to face with the voters. Political parties take their electoral campaigns very seriously because results of elections have become quite unpredictable because of the proliferation and complete fragmentation of party system. The Indian National Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Communist parties can claim an all-India status and except these three all-Indian parties, a large number of political parties and groups are confined to specific state boundaries and their political reach is limited to only a region or sub-region or a special caste or sub-caste group. Not only this. Every state of India, without any exception, has regional and sub-regional parties and groups which are engaged in State Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The Akali Dal of Punjab, the National Conference of J&K, the Lok Dals of Rajasthan or Haryana or Uttar Pradesh, or Bahujan Samaj Party of Uttar Pradesh-based Mayawati or

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Samajvadi Janata Party of UP-based Mulayam Singh or Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh, or multiple and fragmented Dravidian parties like the DMK, AIADMK, PMK of Tamil Nadu or All Assam Student Union and Assam Gana Parishad of Assam are co-terminus with boundaries of a particular state and it is irrespective of the fact that some regionalists or sub-regionalists make tall claims about their great political significance. The phenomenon of the emergence of regional parties has been applauded because their presence in the electoral process has directly hit at the all-India parties and the result in that neither the Congress nor the BJP, the two all-India parties, can form the government at the Centre without forming a coalition with large number of small regional and sub-regional parties and groups. It has also been claimed that India has entered the era of coalition politics and regionalization of politics has led to the re-federalization and decentralization of power and the focus of power has shifted from a highly centralized federal system to a genuine cooperative federal system.

This is only one part of the story. It was always alleged that the Congress party was following the principle of 'dynasticism in politics', but the regional and sub-regional parties are, without any exception, also practicing in an unabashed manner, the principle of dynastic succession. Sheikh Abdullah's grandson and Mufti's Mohammed Syed's daughter have been projected by their family chiefs as the young face of Kashmiri politics and the media, both at regional and national level, have never questioned their right of inheritance. Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, a self-appointed backward

caste socialist does not see his Uttar Pradesh-based party beyond his brothers and son while Ms. Mayawati not to be left behind, has proclaimed publicly about her chosen inheritor in politics. The vernacular media in the State prominently projects the family inheritors of politics of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav and Ms. Mayawati. Mr. HD Deve Gowda used every trick of the trade to make his son Chief Minister of Karnataka and the media has projected him as a great secular opposition leader against the present BJP government. A great rationalist and atheist, Mr. Karunandhi, and a large section of the media in Tamil Nadu, controlled by his family, are working overtime to distribute his political inheritance to his sons and daughter. Mr. Karunandhi's dilemma is that his children are claimants to the post of Chief Minister which they want to inherit from their father. It may be conceded that a country can have political families like Pratap Singh Kairon, Devi Lal or Govind Vallabh Pant, or Kalyan Singh or Rajendra Singh et al and successful parents have every right to allow their children to be in active politics. But the issue is : Are the offices of Chief Minister or Prime Minister reserved for a family or a dynasty? The voter of India did not repose their confidence in the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress and from 1998 to 2004 the Congress stayed in the Opposition. The story thus far is quite normal but the twist in Congress politics began with the media, out of the blue, portraying Mr. Rahul Gandhi for the highest office in the country without rhyme or reason. The Principle of dynastic politics is not the only distortion in Indian party system, the logic of dynasticism has led to the negation of democracy within parties in India. It

is a very worrisome situation because democratic political system can hardly co-exist with undemocratic party system and parties which are actively participating in elections are not all following the principle of inner democracy based on regular elections within their own party. This contradiction has to be resolved because every party has to be registered with the Election Commission of India and the Election Commission should de-register and de-recognize every party which does not hold elections within its own party. Political parties claim to have a Constitution but scant respect is shown by party leaders to their own Constitution and the result is that a large number of parties have become 'personal fiefdoms of the leaders who transfer their party property to their progeny and children. Any electoral system in a democracy gets completely distorted if party system is 'undemocratic' and serious efforts should be made by the Election Commission to enforce the 'principle of regular elections within a party' which wants to participate in electoral democracy. An unhealthy party system is a great threat to the actual functioning of participatory democracy.

Distorted party system has already led to some serious 'distortion' in electoral process of India. A few alarming features of electoral process may be mentioned with a view to find proper remedies for the cleansing of the system.

Free, Fair and Fearless Elections

The holding of regular and highly competitive free, fair and fearless elections in India has become a very difficult task for

Election Commission. There must be some special reason which has created a situation for the Election Commission to make extraordinary arrangements for the holding of elections. First, politics has become a very profitable business and every contesting candidate is keen to win the elections by adopting fair or foul methods. If a politician cannot win an elections, he cannot reap the fruits of the elected office of MP or MLA or Minister or Chief minister. Second, unlike the Lok Sabha or State Assembly elections of 1952 or 1957 or 1962, the verdict of the voter has become unpredictable. Politicians have either won or lost the elections and the Indian voter has started punishing his elected representatives. Political parties have become unsure about their success or victory in the elections, and they have taken resort to show their raw physical power to the helpless voters especially belonging to the Dalit castes and women. In India, this phenomenon has come to be known as that of 'booth capturing', by the musclemen or mafia leaders or professional criminals who put fake and fraudulent ballot papers in the ballot box in favour of one or the other contesting candidate. Third, it is inherent in the logic of illegality that the mafia groups themselves have now graduated to offer themselves as candidates in electoral contests and instead of terrorizing the voters for others, these professional criminals are winning the elections for themselves by adopting the same methods of 'booth capturing' and spreading terror among the voters. Election Commission is at its toes because it is duty bound to ensure free and fair elections.

Political parties do not volunteer themselves to facilitate the holding of clean elections and this is the reason that the Election Commission is actively involved in enforcing the electoral Code of Conduct. The Supreme court Judgments of May 2, 2002 and March 13, 2002 have made it mandatory for the candidates who decide to contest the elections to (a) mention about pending criminal cases against them; (b) mention past convictions, if any and (c) reveal their financial and educational status. The Right to Information Act has also empowered citizens to compel their elected representatives to make public statements about their assets and criminal background. Hence efforts have been made to cleanse the system of elections by the Election Commission, the Judiciary and Information Commissioners appointed under the provisions of the Information Act of India.

Expensive Elections

It is not only muscle power of professional criminals which has seriously distorted electoral process, the role of money power in elections has assumed a very alarming level and electoral competition has been reduced to the level of competition among parties on the basis of their capacity to spend money to influence the voters. Every political player whether belonging to the all-India or regional political groups is flush with funds. It goes without saying that fund givers expect a quid pro quo from recipients of funds to oblige their patrons after winning the elections.

The upshot of above description is that the Indian

voter has shown great faith in his vote for democracy, however, the election system has to be cleansed of evils and distortions which have been identified by commentators. The country should be worried because even the holding of elections has become an impossible task without the help of paramilitary forces. The deployment of paramilitary forces belonging to the well-armed Central Reserve Police Forces and the Border Security Force may be necessary, even essential, for the security of voters in disturbed regions like J&K or North East India, but it is a worrisome situation that in state after state, without any exceptional situation, elections cannot be held without the assistance of armed forces of the country. The Election Commission, its Observers, functionaries and every one linked with the management of elections is on its tenterhooks during the period of elections. Mr. T N Seshan, a former Chief Election Commissioner, successfully projected himself as the Messiah of 'clean election' and uncritical public applauded him for his so-called heroic efforts to hold elections. It is a normal duty of an Election Commission to organize and supervise the elections.

The upshot of above discussion is that healthy and effective democracy and serious electoral distortions cannot co-exist and every evil found in the electoral process should be immediately rectified. Diagnosis should lead to treatment otherwise the quality of democracy will deteriorate. □

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Election Humour

K K Khullar



A dull speech can ruin the candidate's election prospects while a witty one may change his fortune.

ELECTIONS AND humour go hand in hand. If elections are the essence of democracy, humour is its fragrance. A dull speech can ruin the candidate's election prospects while a witty one may change his fortunes. Telling jokes at an election speech is a great art which very few politicians have mastered. Acharya Narendra Dev, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerji, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia were master orators whose speeches were marked with sparkling wit and scintillating humour. Piloo Mody could hold his audience with his comic reliefs but the samson who defeated a Goliath in recent times is Navjoth Singh who humbled his mighty rival at Amritsar with his sheer brilliance of speech and original jokes. 'If a crow gets to the top of a tree he does not become a Hans (Swan). Both the crow and the swan drink water from the same pool, but while the Hans yields pearls, crow only filth', he reminded his audience and carried away the trophy.

It is generally believed that elections originated in the city states of Athens in ancient Greece and later Rome in Italy. The term 'psephology' in Greek meaning the study of elections and voting behaviour. The practice started with the use of different coloured pebbles to indicate the voting choices. In fact the Greek word 'psephos' means pebbles. However the recent have shown beyond doubt that democracy came to India before it reached Athens. In the ancient Indian republics of Mallas and Licchawis in Bihar there were elected assemblies, the Sabha and the Samiti where equal rights to men and women were given, whereas in Athenin model women and slaves were not allowed to vote.

A Vedic proverb lays down that an un-elected ruler is a usurper. Those were the days when India was a creator of history lays down that an un-elected ruler is a usurper. Those were the days when India was a creator of history, not its creature. The public debates between

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Shakaracharya and Mundan Mishra, although non-political, throw a flood of light on the freedom of speech which is a sine-qua-non of modern elections. It is said when Shankaracharya asked some one the way to reach Mundan Mishra's house, he was told to go straight and look for courtyard where the parrots would joking with each other before reciting the Vedas.

Elections in the ancient Indian republics were educative and were open to all irrespective of caste, colour and creed. The debates of the Sabha and the Samiti were open and the right to information was there. Voters were told that as citizens we are sovereigns as well we subjects in one. As sovereigns they legislated for the nation and as subjects they obeyed that law which they have helped to legislate. This is the privilege we have inherited from ancient India and which is the cardinal principle of our Constitutional obligation today. There was a code of conduct for candidates who spoke like responsible citizens and the voting behaviour was exemplary.

There is hardly any instance of booth-capturing, bogus-voting or kidnapping. The situation completely changed in the 19th century where we get a glimpse of such misadventures in the novel of Charles Dickens's 'Pickwick' Papers where a candidate bribes the coachman to drown the voters of the rival party into the Thames so that they are unable to vote, in the Eatenswill Election.

Such instances are not uncommon in India, the largest functioning democracy with the largest number of voters in the world. The greatest joke during the first General elections when the rate of literacy in India was just 17% when a candidate

went to a Jhuggi-Jhonpari part of a constituency for votes, he was told that they have already cast their votes yesterday while polling was a day after. Asked how because the polling had not yet taken place they replied. 'The other candidate came with lots of gifts and took away our votes'. Today when the rate of literacy is 65% as on 2001 and about to touch 75% by 2010, the situation has drastically changed. People understand the value of their vote. A vote, they say, is the greatest agent of change, of transformation of society. But in a recent election campaign when a candidate was promising all kinds of reforms: 'If you elect me, I will introduce economic reforms, social reforms, educational reforms, electoral reforms and... Just at that moment a young man from the audience said: 'sir, what you need is a chloroform'. That is why John Kenneth Galbraith called India 'the greatest functioning anarchy'. But, alas today the boot is on the other leg.

During the first general elections in the then East Punjab the elections symbol of an independent candidate was a donkey. Those were the days when symbols played a vital role in deciding the fate of the candidates as a large number of electors were illiterate. The candidate rode the donkey backwards like Mulla Nasruddin Hoodja. In his election speech the candidate wanted his voters to remember that Jesus of Nazareth entered the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. Someone from the audience said aloud: 'If a donkey of Jesus goes to Mecca he remains a donkey'. 'What about a parrot?', asked the candidate whose symbol was 'tota' 'Here also the reply was: 'you teach a parrot a million times, he remains an animal'. Yet surprisingly both

the candidates with donkey and parrot as election symbols won the election while the one with the high-sounding symbol of an elephant lost his deposit.

Slogans and catchwords also play an important part in elections. While slogan makers have a heyday, the slogan-breakers have a hey-night as the elections approach. There are demagogues and orators in every nook and cranny of the town. Speech-makers and after-dinner speakers are in great demand. Mark Antony and Kautalya belong to different hemispheres they share a common love for political verse. When Simon Commission came to Lahore there were black flags everywhere to greet him. The slogan outside the Lahore railway station where Lal Lajpat Rai received lathi blows was:

Simon, Simon, go back
With whisky soda and Union Jack

Incidentally Lord Simon was a teetotaler. But the slogan worked. In a recent municipal election where Rishvat (bribery) was the main theme, the slogan was:

'Rishvat lekar phans gaya tha
Rishvat de kar choot gaya'.

(He was caught because he took the bribe)

He was acquitted because he gave the bribe)

In another election Faiz Ahmed Faiz's famous lines were parodied:

"Is tara hath lage mere matai-e-Rishvat

Jaise veeraney mein chupkse bahar aajaye'

(Let the hush-money come to me as invisibly

As spring comes in the Wilderness)

Even during the army rule in Pakistan whenever there was an election, slogans were galore.'Pakistan wick maujan hi maujan/Jidhar dekhon Faujan hi faujan!

Election campaigns have been an important part of our socio-political life. The campaigners say several things to several people in different times and different ways only to get their vote giving rise to a new term called 'Vote Bank politics'. In that context the 1971 general elections are very important, in fact unique when the ruling party asked for a fresh mandate from the electorate. Wall-writings, posters, door-to-door campaigns were the order of the day. New jokes were coined, jokesmiths were highly paid. When a candidate told his rival that he was misleading the electorate by posing as M. Sc while he was merely a matriculate, he was humble and replied; 'Sir , M.Sc means matric with Science. But when Prof. Balraj Madhok told his rival Shashi Bhushan, both candidates from South Delhi that he was a non-matric, Shashi Bhushan replied: (While Mr. Madhok was cramming the text-books of history at DAV College Lahore, I had left the books and the college at the call of the nation and was learning my lessons in the prison house of Lahore Fort'. The slogan then was : 'Is deepak mein tel nahin hai/Sarkar badlana khel nahi hai'. Women's Empowerment is another hot issue these days particularly when the elections are on. Pleading for special quota for women when a candidate wanted the percentage to be increased he said loudly: 'I want my opponent to remember that there is a great difference between men and women'. A voice arose from the back-seaters loudly : 'Long live that difference'.

Lalu Prasad Yadav at present our railway minister is another vote-catcher who sometimes gets into a wrong compartment to make wise remarks on the foolish deeds of wise-men. He is among the few who can laugh at himself with the right side of his mouth.

Jab tak rahe ga samose mein aloo

Tab tak rahe ga Bihar mein laloo

He never laughs at his own remark and never repents the joke, nor explains it. A folk character to the roots he known that listener does not laugh he does not care for that kind of a story. Humour, said Carlyle is sympathy with the seamy side of things, of bizarre, odd and off the cuff aspect of life, Laloo Prasad Yadav's repartee at the election meetings is remarkable. From a cattle-grazer to a star-gazer is the range of his quest. If he was not a politician he would have been a great story teller.

In folk humour he reminds us of Lincoln who said: 'If you vote for me I will be grateful, if not, it will be all the same'. another irresistible name in election history is Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia whose sarcasm was unbeatable. Referring to the vast tracts of land occupied by memorials, Dr. Lohia said : 'The way leaders's memory is being perpetuated in Delhi, it appears one day the whole city would become a graveyard'. Asked by how many votes he had won his parliamentary seat he replied: More than the number of MP's in the Lok Sabha'. When someone called him a Jaichand of Indian politics he replied : 'I have no daughter whom this Prithviraj of Dilli will Kidnap. But I have a mother who is sacred to all, he name is mother India.'

Time was when the two candidates contesting elections in a two-party system spoke from the same platform projecting their point of view, at the same time replying to the opponent's charges. The most vibrating debates of history took place between Lincoln and Stephan Doughlas in america and Disraeli and Gladstone in England. Referring to the low origin of Abe Lincoln Doughlas said: 'I remember Mr. Lincoln was a shop Assistant in Springfield selling ice, candies, bread and wine. I ask the honourable voters: do you want a shop assistant to occupy the White House? Everyone looked to Abe to answer : 'He only vaguely remembers but I distinctly remember that I used to sell ice-candies and wines. and I also remember that Mr. Doughlas was my regular customer. But ladies and gentlemen, the situation is changed today. while I have left my side of the counter he is still standing there'. There was thunderous applause and Lincoln won with a thumping majority. His declaration that : I shall not be a slave because I shall not be a master' has led to Obama's victory. The debates of Disraeli and Gladstone are equally interesting. 'You will end yourself either on the gallows or by some very loathsome disease' told Gladstone to Disraeli. To which Disraeli replied : But that depends on the fact whether I embrace your principles or your mistresses'.

Lincoln's Gattysburg Address, Nehru's tryst with destiny speech and Martin Luther King's I have a dream' although not election speeches in the technical sense have inspired generations and have changed the history of the world. After all elections too are with the greatest agent of change. □

STATE OF ECONOMY

A New India in a New World*

Fareed Zakaria



In the famous speech “Tryst with Destiny” Nehru was speaking of India’s emergence as a new Indian state. Dr Zakaria talks of the rise of a new India in the story of the rise of a new world

When historians write the story of the 20th Century, they might note that it ended – or begun to end – in 1979. That was the year that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and thus dug the grave of its empire, its political system, and the idea of state socialism. The politico-economic spectrum that had existed – with American-style capitalism on one end and Soviet-style socialism on the other – simply collapsed. All of a sudden, there was just one coherent path to organize your political economy, one playing field on which everyone had to play. The end of the Cold War also produced a cessation of civil wars and a decline of hostilities worldwide that has continued despite 9/11 and terrorism.

The second event, which also took place in 1979, was that a relatively unknown young woman became Prime Minister of Great

Britain. Margaret Thatcher, crucially joined by Ronald Reagan a year later – launched a revolution that swept through the Western economies and then the world. A response to the stagflation of the 1970s, it was a Laissez Faire project of lowering taxes, deregulation, and privatization that breathed new life into the old industrial economies of the West. It also changed the nature of global capitalism. The movement of goods, services and capital was freed up in ways that dramatically accelerated and expanded the global economy. We now forget that in the early 1980s, very few currencies around the world were convertible. Capital was trapped in the country of its origin. Today, \$3 Trillion is exchanged every day by currency traders around the world. These capital flows, rewarding some companies and countries, punishing others, has the most powerful disciplining force in international relations over the last two decades, sometimes seeming more powerful than military force.

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Excerpts from the 40th Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture.*

The third event that took place in 1979 was the arrival of a new Chairman of the Federal Reserve in Washington DC, who raised interest rates dramatically and thus broke the back of inflation in the world's largest economy. The end of inflation is one of the great success stories of our times. In the 1970s, dozens of major countries around the world were ruined by inflation, which eats away savings, impoverishes the middle class, and threatens social stability. Rates of inflation ranged from 1,000 to 3000 per cent in countries like Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Turkey. Today inflation is a phenomenon that is largely vanquished.

The forces I have described constituted a political, economic and financial push, moving in the direction of a single worldwide economy, with inflation tamed and countries more politically secure and economically disciplined. It has created the world we now know, with a much broader and deeper form of globalization than has ever existed before.

One result has been economic growth. Three decades ago, if one had counted the number of countries that had robust growth rates – over 4 per cent – it would have totalled under 35. Last year it was 124, as it was in 2006. In the last five years, the average income of a human being on the planet has increased at a faster pace – 3.2 per cent – than in any five year stretch in recorded history. Yes, there are many problems with the world and this growth has been uneven and hides many things. But the undeniable fact remains, more people have moved out of

poverty in the last 20 years than in the previous 200. That is not everything, but it is something.

The loosening of controls and restraints has meant that countries could move up with greater speed, but it also meant that they could move down much faster as well. In the course of the last twenty years, we have seen economic and financial crisis grip the world, from Mexico, East Asia, and Russia in the 1990s, to the United States with its technology bubble in 2000, then a recession exacerbated by 9/11 and now the current and most serious financial crisis.

The problems we face today are largely the problems of success. I realize it seems odd to say that in the midst of panic, credit crunches, slowing growth, and falling stock markets. But consider the conditions that created this state of affairs. For two decades the world has seen political stability, low inflation, and a massive expansion of the global economy. Almost 3 billion people have entered the global system. Countries around the world have been growing at unheard of levels. All this produced two forces. The first was cheap credit and the second, massive new pools of capital. The surplus savings that were piled up by the emerging economies of Asia and then the oil-producing countries of the Middle East were on a scale never seen before in history. Add to these two new forces an old one, greed, and you begin to understand the current crisis.

At one level, the problem is of course that the United States and some other Western economies have

consumed too much, more than they produce, and they have made up the difference by borrowing. But we cannot look at this in isolation from the massive new savings being generated in Asia. If America overspent, Asia over-saved.

Looking around now, many have come to the conclusion that the entire global economic system is collapsing, that capitalism has been crippled, and that globalization is being reversed as we speak. None of these conclusions are warranted by the facts.

What is happening now is a deep, wrenching, painful financial crisis unlike any we've seen since the 1930s. It's contributing to a broad slowdown of the global economy, more painful than any seen in decades. But the history of capitalism is dotted with credit crises, panics, financial meltdowns, bear markets, and economic recessions. They have not meant the end of capitalism in the past and the current crisis is unlikely to kill capitalism for the future.

This current financial crisis will end, I don't know when or how, but the combination of government interventions will eventually work.

Capitalism is now a global phenomenon. It is being powered by the actions of companies and governments and individuals all over the world. And in the search of growth and higher standards of living, countries will continue to use free markets and free trade to power their rise. Governments have not been liberalizing their markets because Robert Rubin or Henry Paulson ordered them to do

so, they were doing so because they could see the benefits of moving in that direction (and the costs of not doing so). This movement will continue to be halting and episodic, depending on political pressures. But I would suspect that over the next twenty years, most countries try to free up their markets (in a controlled fashion) to get more growth rather than nationalize bits of their economies. Certainly the history of past economic crises is that after them, countries have moved toward more aggressive economic reform to bring greater credibility to their systems, attract new capital, and jump-start growth.

The real crisis we face today is not a crisis of capitalism. It is a crisis of governance, perhaps even of democracy.

Let me explain what I mean. The current problems we are experiencing have at root the problems that governments – and they are mostly democratic governments – have lost the ability to inflict short-term pain for long-term gain. This is what has fuelled the over-consumption and use of debit in the Western world.

India faces its own version of this challenge. As the world's largest democracy – and an extremely vibrant one in many ways – it also faces the challenge of what the Prime Minister has called “competitive populism”. It has been possible to go without enacting a major reform programme because the effects of the 1990s reforms were still working their way through the system, India's extraordinarily vibrant private

sector and the benign conditions of the past decade, especially the last six years. But that free-ride is over. Ultimately government policy matters, and good government policy will be rewarded. Countries are likely to be evaluated using more exacting judgments in the future. The rising tide that lifted all boats will not work as strongly in the next decade. Those that have the resources, skill and discipline to enact good policies will navigate the new global economy with great success. But those that cannot get their acts together are likely to muddle along, but not much better. That should not satisfy a country like India, with its extraordinary human capital, large ambitions, and limitless potential.

When compared with other developing economies, India has much to contribute but also much to learn. China's economy is already three times the size of India's and continues to grow at a substantially faster pace. Its investments in infrastructure and higher education might well lay the groundwork for future productivity growth. Brazil has turned itself into an energy powerhouse. Turkey, a country with just 70 million people, now gets more foreign direct investment than India and has a GDP that is only 20 per cent smaller than that of India. Before counting on becoming a superpower, it would be worth doing the hard work that will make India one.

The other problem we face is a crisis of globalization. The new world I have been describing to you is not going to go away. The forces

that have been powering the rise of a single global economy and thus the rise of the rest – the rest of the world – are broad structural forces that have been at work for decades. They are not ephemeral and will not vanish because of a financial crisis or recession. And the effect of these forces is to shift power away from the established centers of power – the West. But will this lead to a more stable world? Today economic activity is global but political power is local. In a world in which economic, social, and political problems spill over borders, the solutions often lie with national governments that jealously guard their sovereignty.

Think of almost any serious problem we face, and it is almost certainly a problem that spills over borders. Terrorism, financial crises, infectious diseases, all of these problems require the coordination of standards across countries, coordination of policy responses, and in some cases institutions that can implement effective solutions.

Sometimes a crisis can provide an opportunity. The initial response of Western governments to the financial crisis was to try to handle it by themselves. But they forgot about globalization; and nothing has been more globalized than capital. Money flows around the world with no barriers. So the money moved from one country to the next, depending on the guarantees being made by governments. Soon, they recognized that policy coordination was essential and now the Group of 20 have just met in Washington. Any serious response, however, should move beyond this episode to a systemic fix.

I could go with examples from counter-terrorism to water use to climate change, but the basic point is the same. Unless we expand and enhance the rules and institutions of global cooperation, the world will experience crisis after crisis and the policy responses will always be hasty and ad hoc and too little. And if we do come together, work together on the common problems of humanity, imagine the extraordinary opportunities this might bring for all of us. Imagine if we could create some rules of the road that

allow this extraordinary process of globalization and growth to persist and spread to every section of society, for standards of living and health to rise for the poorest of the poor, and for the process of human development to allow more and more human beings to develop to their potential.

The people of the world have worked wonders over the last few decades. Now it is time for the governments of the world to match their ingenuity with new forms of cooperation. And in this endeavor,

India can play a central role. It is recognized as a major power. It understands West and East, Asia and beyond, geopolitics and geo-economics. It has an articulate and intelligent elite, at both the societal and governmental level. What is missing is a strategic outlook that sees India as a power and connects its interests and ideals to those of a broader vision of global stability and security. India can help build what should be the great project and monument of the 21st Century, a new architecture of peace for the world. □

Government unveils stimulus package

Unveiling the much-awaited stimulus package to shore up various sectors of the economy from the global downturn, the government effected an across-the-board 4 per cent cut in Cenvat to bring down the prices of cars, cement, textiles and other products, and earmarked an additional Rs. 20,000 crore for infrastructure, industry and export sectors for the current fiscal.

In what may be dubbed as a mini-budget of sorts to lessen the impact of the global slowdown and recession in the West on the Indian economy, the package, while entailing a revenue loss of Rs. 8,700 crore in the remaining four months of 2008-09, seeks to revive various crucial sectors such as housing, exports, automobile, textiles and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

In an all-encompassing measure, the Cenvat on all products – barring non-petroleum goods – barring non-petroleum goods – have been reduced from 14, 12 and 8 per cent to 10, eight and 4 per cent for various categories.

Full exemption from basic customs duty has been effected on naphtha to provide relief to the power sector. While the export duty on iron ore fines has been withdrawn, the levy on export of iron lumps has been cut from 15 to 5 per cent.

Tax-free bonds

The 10-point package, with significant incentives for the sectors affected by the slowdown, has also permitted India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd. to raise Rs. 10,000 crore through tax-free bonds by March as part of the exercise to support the Rs. 1,00,000- crore highways development programme.

Planning Commission Deputy, Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said: "The market forces would compel manufacturers in a competitive environment to bring down prices and pass on tax benefits to customers."

He pointed out that as part of steps to create demand in the economy, which was expected to grow by over 7 per cent, "the total spending programme in the balance four months of the current fiscal year, taking Plan and non-Plan expenditure together is expected to be Rs. 3,00,000 crore."

Close watch

Mr. Ahluwalia stressed that the government was keeping a close watch on the evolving economic situation and "will not hesitate to take additional steps that may be needed to counter recessionary trends and maintain the pace of economic activity."

The government has been concerned about the impact of the global financial crisis on the Indian economy and a number of steps have been taken to deal with this problem.

It also noted that monetary measures effected by the Reserve Bank of India were being "supplemented by fiscal measures designed to stimulate the economy. In recognition of the need for a fiscal stimulus the government has consciously allowed the fiscal deficit to expand beyond the originally targeted level."

"The economy will continue to need stimulus in 2009-2010 also and this can be achieved by ensuring a substantial increase in Plan expenditure as part of the budget for next year," the statement said. □

(Courtesy : Newspapers)

Weaving Uninterrupted

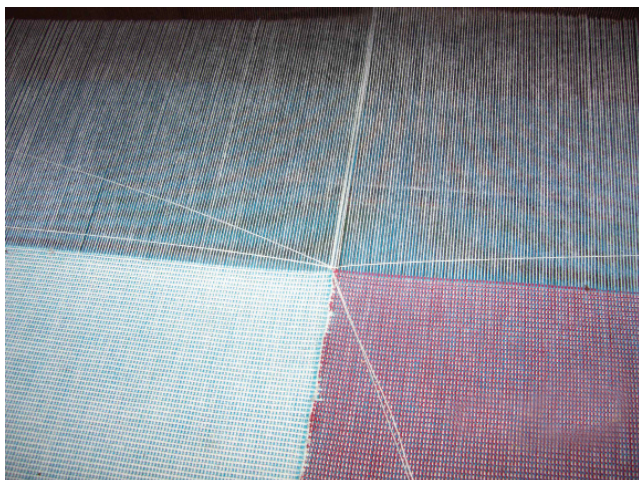


Shanmugam wants to develop many more low cost technologies for traditional weaving community so that they can upgrade their life style

THIS IS an extraordinary story not because Shanmugam solved a small technical problem and generated low cost, high efficiency solution for many weavers. It is extraordinary, also not because a young wage labourer managed to seek admission in Diploma and then Degree Engineering course, because his talents impressed the gate keepers. It is extraordinary because a lab attendant saw the merit of a quest in the eyes of a young boy. The Principal then tested the talents of Shanmugam, a school pass out with very average marks. Impressed by his talents he decided to offer him admission in Diploma Course without fees or donations and that too in Second Year directly. National Innovation Foundation (NIF) awarded him in 2007. As if this was not sufficient, he wrote to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu seeking admission in Degree course of Engineering. And within a few weeks, Chief Minister's office not

only communicated him the news of his admission in one of the best textile engineering colleges without fees but also with fellowship. How many such examples do we have in our educational system, when somebody's talents will let authorities make exception and that too for a labourer having no recommendations (except of an attendant) or connections?

Shanmugam (28 yrs) hails from a weaver's family in Chinnappampatty village of Salem district, Tamil Nadu. Around two hundred families in this village earn their living by weaving and agriculture, growing cotton, sorghum and millets. He has an elder sister who is married and a younger brother, now a Diploma in Textile Engineering, working in the field of Textile Marketing. Since childhood he had an active interest in reading books rather than playing games and spent most of his free time in the village library.



About 15 to 20 per cent productivity has improved in terms of saving of time for weft replenishment

His father owned only one handloom to weave saris. He used to help his father and in the process always think about various ideas by which the loom could be improved. But he could not do much. After passing Higher Secondary, he was put as an apprentice with his uncle on daily wage basis. His uncle had fifteen power looms and it was here where he began his experimental journey. He worked with his uncle for three years. He started experimenting at his uncle's power loom without his knowledge. Though he saw many failures yet he made sure that the productivity was not compromised because of his experiments. He managed to repair whatever problem occurred, either due to his experiments or otherwise.

One of the problems he noticed was the need for an additional person to refill the shuttle with pirn windings of yarn. One pirn would have 1000 meters yarn for lateral movement or weft insert. He not only solved this problem but also got entry in Diploma College, and later degree college, all due to his talent.

Four years ago, SSM Institute of Textile Technology advertised in a

local newsletter, about a training program in yarn dyeing under the Community Polytechnic Scheme. As Shanmugam was interested in learning about new advancements in the textile industry, he applied for this six months long training program.

There was no fee and the Institute bore food and travel expenses. The trainees were expected to stay in the hostel.

During the training, one day, he went to the weaving lab after his lunch and started chatting with the Lab Assistant, V. Chandrasekaran. During their chat Shanmugam shared his thought to modify continued weft insertion system in power looms. Chandrasekaran was impressed with his innovative mind and took him to the Principal the same day. Shanmugam presented his ideas to the Principal and HOD of weaving department. Initially, they were skeptic and did not accept his ideas. Somehow, he convinced the Principal to give him two days to prove his concept. Having got the permission, and the workshop facilities, he started improvement efforts in an old power loom, meant for training in the lab. He successfully proved his technique within one and a half day's time. In ordinary power looms, one has to change the weft yarn frequently, but by adopting the two weft cones with one pirn,

one can weave up to 1000 m fabrics without changing the pirn windings.

Breakthrough

Acknowledging and appreciating his innovative thinking, the Principal offered him direct admission in the Second Year Diploma course in textile technology. Though he had low marks in Higher Secondary, the college offered him the free seat from management quota. He was also allowed to start his work on the innovation as an academic project work, which otherwise is allowed for the final year students only.

Shanmugam passed the Diploma exam with first class marks in 2007. In June 2007, he began his Engineering Degree with direct admission in second year, given normally to all Diploma students. His innovation was forwarded to National Innovation Foundation by the Principal of the college through Mr P Vivekanandan, SEVA, Madurai, a senior collaborator of Honey Bee Network. Accordingly it was documented for NIF's fourth biennial competition under students' category. Shanmugam was awarded with National second prize under general category (not just the students' category), by former President of India, Honorable Dr APJ Abdul Kalam at NIF national award function, 2007.

Later Shanmugam was interviewed by media and also felicitated by the local news papers and TV channels. Soon after, Shanmugam wrote a letter to the Chief Minister requesting admission through a free seat under B Tech program. He received not only an appreciation letter



Manpower and time needed for weaving have been reduced considerably

in such a way that weft can be inserted continuously without frequent pirn change. Yarn from dobby (source of yarn hanging on the top of the loom) through two cones could now be drawn into single pirn without refilling the

shuttle frequently. The weft thus would work up to 1000 meter continuously. Earlier, the pirn had to be refilled every five minutes.

Two weft cones stands are provided on the sides of the loom and they are specially arranged so that they have the capability of controlling yarn tension and electronic weft stop motion. The yarn from the pirn is only used to bind the weft taken from the cones, by doing so the expense on pirn winding is reduced. In this method weaving takes place by two weft threads so that the fabric is dense. Only the cones have to be changed. There is no frequent need to change the pirn up to one thousand meters as in rapier looms. Fifty per cent of the total warp threads are lifted at a time and the remaining fifty per cent are kept down for the first pick. For the next pick the system is reversed. The heald frames are connected to dobby in such a manner that there is no collision between the healds. The dobby mechanism can be used to select the weft colours as

and when required. An additional hole is made in the shuttle to give proper tension of pirn threads, which interlocks the pirn from the cones.

Manpower and time needed for weaving have been reduced considerably because of obviating the need for frequent pirn change. New loom is less expensive and low in maintenance. By keeping two different colour threads on both sides of the cones, half of the fabric can be woven with one colour and the other half with a different colour. By providing more number of cones of different colours at the feeding end (selection of weft colours by dobby), stripped or checked patterns can be woven without drop-box mechanism. For wider looms this method is very much suitable. Small units can increase their fabric production without any additional expenses. One can weave fabrics like cotton, rayon, polyester, and silks using this method in normal plain power looms.

About 15 to 20 per cent productivity has improved in terms of saving of time for weft replenishment. Further, fabric quality obtained from this innovation is very good due to very few stoppages for weft replenishment. Coming from a weaving background Shanmugam wants to develop many more low cost technologies for traditional weaving community so that they can upgrade their life style. It is to be hoped that he will continue with his creative and innovative pursuits. □

(E-mail : campaign@nifindia.org/
www.nifindia.org)

from Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers' Personal Secretary but also an offer from the Tamil Nadu Government to support his further studies. The letter from the Chief Secretary to Director, Technical Education made a special reference to NIF award and included recommendation for his admission in one of the best private colleges, PSG College of Textile technology, Coimbatore. Accordingly, he was offered a loan of Rs. 45,000/- without interest, to be paid after getting job. The government also offered him a job in Tamil Nadu Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society (Co-optex) as R&D Engineer even before completing the degree.

Shanmugam also applied for Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) 2008, a National Fellowship by Department of Science and Technology for students interested in research and got selected for the same. His life has now taken a very positive turn.

Innovation

With Shanmugam's technology, all shuttle looms can be modified

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Significance, Use and Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Aparna Tandon



What value and meaning cultural heritage holds in an area of ethno-religious conflict? Is it just a tool to reinforce cultural and ethnic divides or could it be used for bringing about long lasting peace and development?

Patrimony, inheritance or legacy are some of the most common words that used to denote heritage in terms of property (mostly family owned) 60 years ago. However, now it stands for all that we inherit from the past and create in present for the future. Thus, from terraced rice fields, historic city centres, urban landscapes, monuments, museum collections, cultural artefacts, archaeological sites to languages, traditions, religious ceremonies, arts, creative expression- all can be classified as heritage.

The scope and extent of heritage has expanded primarily because of the rapid pace at which the world is changing. While globalization has made the world smaller in terms of communication, commerce, trade and knowledge exchange, it has also contributed to the massive urbanization, the displacement of communities, the disappearance of sacred groves and reserves, the

death of handmade crafts and has endangered our oral histories.

The displacements of communities, urbanization and ongoing conflicts in the world have in turn contributed to the ever increasing need for roots and relics of the past. A formal recognition of these concerns comes through the two recent UNESCO conventions on conservation of Intangible heritage (2003) and on the protection and promotion of cultural diversity (2005), respectively.

The all pervasive Heritage cause, if utilized properly, is also an important tool for economic and social development. However in order to be utilized as such, one needs to identify the various heritage resources and this is where JK (not unlike rest of India) has a problem.

The material heritage of JK has, so far, been only recognized in form of monuments, archaeological sites, religious shrines (only a few) and collections of cultural

The author is currently project specialist ICCROM (International Centre for the study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). She was also curator at the Amar Mahal Museum and Library at Jammu.

artefacts owned by a handful of museums, archives, libraries and a few recognized art collectors. This limited 'official' recognition of material heritage of course excludes, natural sites including water bodies, sapphire mines, historic city centres, traditional wooden bridges, cultural landscapes, bazaars, historic trade and cultural routes, vernacular architecture, religious collections of artefacts and textiles, etc.

Although a part of the non material heritage of the state e.g., few state languages, performing arts, fine arts etc, have been given some government recognition through the JK Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, a significant part remains outside the officially authorized heritage discourse. Cultural heritage is an under used resource in the state of JK. Many of its art forms, crafts, bazaars, sites that are still popular among people of the state, have yet not been given heritage status. Thus, they cannot be utilized or exploited for planned social and economic development including tourism.

Yours, mine or ours- whose heritage is it?

To care and to protect heritage do we need to own it? In other words do I have to be a Cambodian to care for Angkor Wat? The Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore has rightly said that "whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly become ours, wherever they might have their origin". Yet in JK and in rest of India, heritage is often presented and sold in a sectarian way e.g., the Mughal architecture, the Rajput paintings or the Buddhist art.

In recent years Jammu has been officially marketed as the

'city of temples' and in other words, the land of Dogra Hindus by the Department of Tourism and other government agencies. The notion has taken such a firm root in public perception that even the roof of the city airport was given a temple Shikhar as a decorative architectural element.

However, the older generation of city remembers it as the city of religious shrines. Jammu has a long-standing tradition of Durgahs or shrines associated with Sufi saints that are worshipped by Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. For example, the Durgah of Peer Budhan Ali Shah or Peer Baba as it is known, is the shrine, which according to popular belief protects the people of Jammu city from mishaps and evil spirits. The shrine is located in the outskirts of Jammu city near the airport. A deep concern now is that many of these graves that were simply sheltered by a roof supported by four pillars are being turned into mosques, thereby, fundamentally changing the character of this shared heritage. By presenting Jammu city as land of Dogra Hindus aren't we overlooking the presence of Dogra Muslims and non Dogra inhabitants of the city who migrated from Pakistan during the partition of India in 1947 and have contributed to its rich cultural heritage?

Often the sectarian categorization of the past and its symbols is based on botched abstractions and foggy history. For example, Buddhism came to Kashmir in 3rd century B.C., through Ashoka. Right up to 6th century A.D., Kashmir had a composite culture of Buddhism and Hinduism. It was further enriched by Islam, which came to Kashmir in 13th century. Yet, popular perception, both within the state and in rest of

India, of Kashmiri cultural heritage is invariably associated with the current predominant religion in the valley, Islam. It is not popularly seen as the amalgamation of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. The official discourse on heritage in the state tends to negate this confluence of cultures by typecasting Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist respectively, overlooking minorities in all three regions that have contributed to the overall social and cultural diversity of the state.

Another similar example is that of a group of ten palaces, collectively known as Mandi Mubarak. These surviving buildings are the only standing remains of the walled city of the princely state of Jammu. Its earliest foundations can be dated back to 14th century. Some of the current structures were later additions built between the 18th and 19th centuries.

For a long time Jammu Kashmir was ruled by Dogras, creating a memory of subjugation in the current political climate. Thus, post-Independence, all successive governments were reluctant to allocate resources for the preservation of the palaces/buildings commissioned by Dogra rulers. Demographic changes have also contributed to the loss in significance of Mandi Mubarak. Due to the unrest in other parts of the state, and massive urbanization, migrations have occurred in Jammu city. Consequently, apart from residents living in the neighbourhood of these buildings, most people (i.e. non-Dogras) do not consider Mandi Mubarak as part of their heritage.

By dubbing Mandi Mubarak as essentially Dogra heritage and

by politicizing this issue, we have invariably limited the number of people who could be interested in its restoration and adaptive reuse. We have also done a great injustice to all those faceless artisans and crafts persons who built these palaces and added outstanding features such as exquisite Khatamband ceilings or wall paintings. These artisans could have been followers of any religion but what matters is that together they created something so outstanding that even with all the technological advances that we have made and with all wealth that we have, we cannot recreate Mandi Mubarak.

Endangered Cultural Heritage- what threatens it?

As I have stated earlier, cultural heritage can be a double edged sword. It is for us to decide, how we want to interpret and use it. I would go a bit further and say that by classifying and interpreting heritage in religious or other terms, we end up threatening its very existence. For example, according to a Home Ministry report, 170 religious shrines were gutted in Kashmir in the ten years from 1989 to 1999.

In JK, the politics of militancy and religious separatism has been mainly responsible for the annihilation of the concept of Kashmiriat -an amalgamated cultural ethos, which had an inherent openness for other religious and philosophical beliefs. A fatal blow to this ethos came in May, 1995 when the 15th century shrine of Sheikh Noor-ud-din at Charar-i-Sharif, a symbol of cultural harmony and embodiment of the spirit of Kashmiriat, was set ablaze by a group of foreign mercenaries.

Bhand Pather, i.e. traditional street theater enacted by bhandas, performed satirically, to inform and educate people on the social evils of the time, is another victim of militancy and politics of separatism in Kashmir. This tradition has almost vanished from the Valley. Furthermore, several important buildings and heritage sites in the state have been damaged and vandalized as a consequence of the armed conflict. Another negative impact that has gone unnoticed is the illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts from unprotected sites in the state, which has gained momentum during the past years.

Besides the ongoing conflict, risks to cultural heritage in JK stem from other sources as well. The state lies in between highly active seismic zones. The devastating earthquake of October 2005 caused great damage to built cultural heritage in Jammu, in Poonch and in the Valley. The slow response in the wake of the earthquake proved that the state was in no way prepared to manage a region wide disaster and that it had no capacity on ground to recover cultural heritage. Here, I must say that the only coordinated response to this disaster came from the Indian Army. They even documented the damage caused to historic buildings in Poonch. Some half-hearted attempts were made by the state government to inspect damage caused by the earthquake with the help of UNESCO but nothing much came out of it. Again, the regional biases played a role there added to the fact that UNESCO too has its limitations. As an intergovernmental body it can only guide policy or provide expert advice. Thus, the onus of taking action and building capacity for protection cultural heritage

in the event of a disaster lies squarely on the shoulders of the state government and people of the state.

Increasing population, unplanned tourism development, negligence, infrastructure construction and industrialization (albeit limited in case of JK) are some of the social and economic causes that have resulted in the destruction of historic city centers, displacement of historic settlements, loss of oral histories, extinction of languages, crafts and art forms in general. Unfortunately, in JK, the adverse impacts on cultural heritage have been aggravated by institutional weaknesses, which are fully avoidable.

Thus, in my opinion, one of the primary causes of heritage (both material and non material) destruction is the sheer lack of capacity in the state to ensure its protection and responsible use. The state of JK until recently lacked a separate government Department of Culture. Moreover, the state urgently requires trained professionals in architectural conservation, art conservation, art history, heritage management, museology to systematically, identify, document, interpret and conserve it.

Use of Cultural Heritage- an asset or a liability?

The primary rationale for allocating resources to cultural heritage is embedded in the economic theory of public goods where heritage assets are to be enjoyed by present and future generations, requiring public resources for their upkeep and maintenance. However, countries or regions that face many competing demands

against a limited resource base find it hard to shift resources to heritage conservation and management. It is often argued that alternative investments or uses can bring similar or better results.

Of course in case of JK, fighting terrorism takes precedence over all matters and somehow culture seems to be at the bottom of the priority list. Moreover, conservation and management of cultural heritage is widely perceived as highly resource intensive. This is further compounded by the fact that JK has to outsource conservators and other heritage management professionals, which in the longer run is not sustainable.

While knowledge about capturing economic and non-economic benefits from heritage conservation is only incipient, these can range from poverty reduction, increase in employment levels, and increase in foreign exchange earnings to positive impacts on social cohesion, social capital development and safeguarding of heritage. For example,

individual cultural projects aimed at rehabilitation of historic city centers for adaptive reuse of historic buildings or development of cultural tourism, have consistently proved that heritage can indeed provide a viable means for development.

An innovative example is that of the "Culture bank" a joint initiative of Peace Corps volunteers and international non-government organizations in Northern Mali. The bank offers loans to people who agree to lend objects of historic value to the local community museum as collateral thereby providing opportunities for economic growth and the same time effectively preventing illicit trafficking of national heritage.

Similarly, another potential successful use of heritage could be through niche or segmented cultural tourism. In 2003, Amar Mahal Museum and Library, Jammu, with the support of state government organized a national seminar on cultural tourism. One of the key speakers, Mr. Kapil Kumar who was the then Director of School of Social Science and Tourism

Studies at Indira Gandhi National Open University, underscored the need to develop sustainable cultural tourism options in the state such as wooden bridges which can interest architects from all over the world, tours to lavender farms or apple orchards which may interest nature lovers and so on.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that cultural heritage in J&K is an under recognized and underutilized resource. Furthermore, by classifying and presenting the diverse cultural heritage of the state in a sectarian and parochial way, we are endangering its long term survival. If we want lasting peace and development in J&K, we need to include cultural heritage in the official agenda of the government and the private sector. We also need to work on evolving a broader view of our past and cultural heritage that is inclusive and respects diversity. For this, greater public participation is required. After all, let us not forget that the spirit of Indian democracy is enshrined in its multi-cultural diversity. □

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Sign of hope in Kashmir Valley

The remarkable feature of the first two rounds of the Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir has been the heavy voter turnout in all three regions of the state in spite of the severe winter conditions prevailing. For some time, the test of the interest of the electorate in the poll process has chiefly been the Valley on account of the tortuous politics that has benighted this beautiful region.

The overwhelming voter interest in the Kashmir Valley as well as areas of Muslim concentration in Jammu shows that the electorate has voted in a decisive manner. No matter what spin the secessionists choose to put on this development, voters have indicated unambiguously that they have no aversion to taking part in a poll process conducted by India's Election Commission, which has been a bugbear for separatist elements.

In the last election in 2002, the voter turnout had also been good in the Kashmir Valley, barring the leading urban centres, although about 700 people had been killed by terrorists for showing interest in the poll process. This time around the terrorists have not shown their hand. This has certainly been a factor in the turnout - between 50 and over 60 percent at most polling stations in the Valley - being higher than in 2002.

(Courtesy - *The Asian Age*)

Padavedu – a model Panchayat in TamilNadu

I Vijayan



Shri Sekar, Panchayat President showing away Nirmal Gram Purashkar 2007 award conferred for the Padavedu panchayat for 100% sanitation.

Another feather in the cap of Padavedu is the Government of India's Nirmal Gram Purashkar – 2007 award to the Panchayat for 100% coverage under total sanitation program

PADAVEDU, A village in Polur block of Thiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu sports an entirely different look today from what it was eight years before. Thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Government, SST (an NGO) and the people, Padavedu has got atleast one modern toilet in each home and has “Public Lavatory Complex” for use by public, visitors, and passers - by. Poverty had been totally eradicated, so also illiteracy. Each member of the community earn Rs. 3000/- to Rs. 6000/- per month from collective and individual avocation which they were empowered to follow. As far as women are concerned they have come a long way from idle and unknown home makers to become the empowered, self-confident and contributing forces who ensure sufficient power

berths in the Panchayat Raj setup.

Karpagampal Self Help Group of Padavedu Panchayat who woned the State level Manimegalai award 2007 for their contribution towards 100% repayment of bank loans and other activities.

What made this sea-change possible? Eight years, is not much in the histories of Indian villages which are prone to remain static frescos in the Indian developmental firmament. How has Padavedu been able to present a success story, deviating from the present trend of rural unhygienic conditions, poverty, ill-health and illiteracy?

The answer lies in the co-ordinated efforts of the Government, and the NGO by name SST and the people themselves. Of the three forces, the role of the middle one – the



Karpagambal Self Help Group of Padavedu Panchayat who won the State level Manimegalai award 2007 for their contribution towards 100% repayment of bank loans and other activities.

NGO had been pivotal and vital. It's the NGO which has utilized the funds from the government and channelised them to reach the individual members of the society through small groups, which are very well known by the name Self Help Group (SHGs)

This NGO by name, Srinivasan Services Trust, (SST) is the Social service wing of the TVS group, a popular automobile industrial house of Tamilnadu. The company that had floated SST backs its activities by its financial and management resources. As a result, SST's community service can boast of high standards of

professionalism and result -based performance.

In Padavedu, and can see evidence of the emergence of a self-reliant community that could very well become the model of empowerment and sustainable development. The holistic plan of community development starting from individual and economic development ending with conservation of cultural and natural resources, adopted by SST has resulted in welcome changes within such a short span of time. This change has to be seen to be believed.

The change agent is the SHG for women. If we listen to what

some of its members has to say than we would realise what the SHGs mean for them, and what they mean for rural upliftment and empowerment. There are many SHGs active in Padavedu. Karpagambal women self help group. Om sakthi women SHG, Thendral (breeze) women SHG and Sanga Thamil SHG are a few noteworthy and award winning SHGs.

Karpagambal women SHG has been adjudged one of the best in the state of Tamilnadu and was the recipient of Manimegalai Award. The members are vociferous in asserting that their awareness level have

improved so much that they can fight for their rights. What is significant is that they rank this achievement of their SHG as the most significant; though they thankfully acknowledge their income ranges from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 6000 per month. What do they do for earning this? They undertake floriculture, apiculture and rope making (with locally available banana tree fibers). When they became successful, banks come forward to advance them money to the tune of Rs. 13 lakhs. They were prompt in their repayment and their promptness won the state award afore mentioned.

Srimathi Tamilselvi of Om Sakthi Women SHG has a different story to tell. Their initial attempts at apiculture with Rs. 25000 and mushroom culture with Rs. 60000 were failures and lead them to losses.

Taking a cue from King Bruce and our own Vikramathithya the members of the SHG, made other attempts before they hit on the business of milk farming. Now they have broken even and even are earnings profits at the rate of Rs. 2500 per month per member. They have tied up with Aavin, the Co-op. milk federation of Taminadu and hope to get around Rs. 6000 per head per month as profit. Floriculture, palm leaf products, banana fibre products are other avocation which bring in another Rs. 100 per day per head. As

money pours-in they were forced to learn to count, to operate a bank account and come out of the ruts of illiteracy.

Thendral women SHG of Panchayat level received the District level cash award of Rs. 50000/- for timely repayment of loans. It is noteworthy that award winning SHG's contributed their cash awards of Rs. 15,000 to social and community causes like building roads, renovation of temples etc.

Sangathamil Women SHG member Smt Mythili says that their members prepare incense sticks and earn Rs. 1000 per month. She is very happy that this has liberated members from depending on their husbands/fathers. She proudly introduced another member, chandra who earns about Rs. 3000 per month despite the fact that one of her hands was polio - affected.

One can see a bridge being constructed across a stream. When there is flood or good monsoon, people have to detour 8 km to reach the other bank. Now funding from DRDA (Rs. 4.2 lakh) SST (Rs. 1.5 lakh) and contributions from SHGs (Rs. 30,000) is making the dream project of the people for Padvedu a reality

Javaad Hills is one of the very few Tribal areas in Tamilnadu. SST's attempt to reach the people of this area has borne fruits. Of the 270 hamlets 90% have not even got foot paths to connect them. SST

has constructed foot paths in 30 of them.

Kilsembaga Thoppu is a tribal village 7 km, away from Padavedu. SST has improved the economic and hygiene status of this village through SHG activities. Making use of funds from the Central Government's Tribal Housing Scheme and with its own contribution of Rs. 25000 per house SST has built 20 houses in this area.

Under Government of India's tribal housing scheme along with the financial support of SST series new houses have been constructed in Kil Shanbaga Thoopu village in polur black of Thiruvanamalai district in Tamilnadu.

That she became literate through Adult education readered by SST and was proud to show her handicrafts made of palm leaves which she sells to earn Rs. 2000 per month. She was proud of her cell phone also which she uses both for personal and business communication. Our PM has said that within a span of 5 years there would be telecom facility in all remote areas of India. Here is proof of this. Under 'Greening India' scheme SST has completed tree plantation in areas of Kalpat and Ananthapuram with Rs. 13.3 lakh from Govt. of India. All the trees planted here are economically useful ones like fruit trees and timber



Under Government of India's tribal housing scheme along with the financial support of SST series new houses have been constructed in Kil Shanbaga Thoopu village in polur block of Thiruvananthapuram District in TamilNadu.

trees. Security and fire protection arrangements have been done for these saplings. Following this Kuppam area has attracted a scheme of aforestation under UNDP at Rs.15 Lakh. SST has to pump in another Rs. 10 lakh as at this project is estimated at Rs. 25 lakh.

Under watershed development, Padavedu has attracted financial assistance from Ford Foundation to the tune of Rs. 89.49 lakhs to continue implementation between

2004 and 2007. SST pitched in Rs. 26.12 lakh and as usual the people of this village came out with 10% of the cost of the project that is Rs. 10.77 lakh. Added together the scheme was completed with Rs. 126.36 lakh. Watershed Association president Sri G. Gnanam commenting on the works under the scheme said, of the 107 works, including repair of wells, check dams, farm pools, has resulted in the raising of ground water table to over 3 meters.

He thankfully acknowledged the services of SST, especially their efforts in raising crop production by 10% to 20 %. He proudly shows the truck purchased by them from the cash award of Rs. 5 lakh received from the department of horticulture Government of Tamilnadu in appreciation of their successful marketing of their produce. The truck helps them to transport their produce economically and also in good time.

Another feather in the cap of Padavedu is the Government of India's Nirmal Gram Purashkar – 2007 award to the Panchayat for 100% coverage under total sanitation program. Sri Sekar, the panchayat president, said that with strong awareness creation support of SST they were able to put up 3 873 individual toilets, school toilets for 32 schools, and 19 community toilets.

SST's contribution is recognized and acknowledged by all the villagers. And forest department of TN has recommended SST for the IPVM (Iindra Priyadarshini Virikshamitra Award). As SST definitely deserve more than this, we can wish this NGO good - speed in all its activities and efforts, leading to sustainable development in villages with active involvement of local community and governmental agencies. □

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IN THE NEWS

Arunachal approves State Industrial Policy, 2008

With a beeline of investors showing keen interest to invest in Arunachal Pradesh, the State Government has approved the State Industrial Policy, 2008, to facilitate fund flow to this otherwise industrially backward State.

The new policy would offer a lot of incentives to private players, entrepreneurs and the public to give a new thrust to the State's industrial sector.

Mr. Naveen Jindal, during his recent visit to Tawang, had announced that his company would invest in the hydro power sector in Dibang Valley District to execute projects with capacity to generate 4,500 MW of electricity, besides

tapping the high potential tourism sector.

While Czechoslovakia investors and Russian embassy officials have visited the state recently to explore investment opportunities, the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s country Director Tadashi Khondo concluded his three-day visit to Tawang recently with the same mission.

The Cabinet also took various other important policy and administrative decisions to make the administration effective and accessible to the people in remote areas, while the tenure for transfer of a government employee has been reduced from three to two years.

The Cabinet also approved establishment of three new colleges in the state - a Law College at Itanagar and a degree college each at Seppa in East Kameng and Nyapin in Kurung Kumey districts.

Other decisions of the Cabinet include approval for provision of pay escorts in needy circles of the state which will be determined by respective Deputy commissioners through their proposals and introduction of Nyishi language in Nyishi inhabited areas as a third languages. □

(Courtesy : The Sentinel)

Railways to install IES system in 100 stations

The Indian Railways is considering installing an Integrated Electronic Surveillance (IES) system and modern security, gadgets in over 100 sensitive stations in the country, including the North-east, to prevent terrorist attacks.

Union Minister of State for Railways R Velu, said efforts were on in various railway stations to thwart any offensive from terrorist organisations.

The minister informed that patrolling of vital installations and bridges has been intensified in vulnerable and sensitive

areas and sharing of intelligence between RPF, GRPF and 1B of the concerned states was also being given priority.

He also said that "Although policing is a State subject and prevention and detection of crime on the Railways is the constitutional responsibility of the state government concerned through GRPF, the RPF Act and the Railway Act have been amended to enable the Railways, through RPF, to supplement the efforts of the state governments in controlling crimes on the Railways.

He said steps have also been

taken for maintaining close liaison with state police and GRPF for taking preventive measures in the vulnerable areas to avert terrorist attacks.

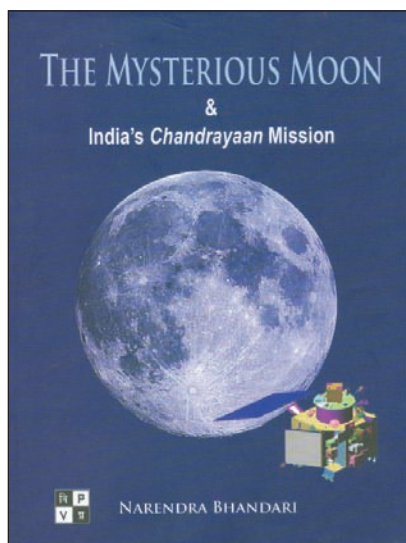
Periodical meetings with the state administration of such states and police authorities were being regularly held by Railway administration to formulate effective joint strategy to combat the threat, the minister said.

The minister also agreed that all trains running to and from the North-east should be given priority for security

(Courtesy : The Sentinel)

BOOK REVIEW

The Moon Mission



TITLE	: THE MYSTERIOUS MOON & INDIA'S CHANDRAYAAN MISSION
Author	: Narendra Bhandari
Pages	: 88
Price	: Rs.195/-
ISBN	: 978-51-7480-177-7
Publisher	: Vigyan Prasar, Noida

THE MOON and Chandrayaan Mission has become synonymous in the contemporary scenario thereby giving India an opportunity to engrave itself on the space scenario effectively and vibrantly. The maiden Indian Chandrayaan Mission is not only a scientific feat but also the culmination of Indian emotions into a fructuous illustrious mission. The unmanned mission of the moon aims at study of the unexplored regions of the moon to prepare a three dimensional atlas of the moon and identify the availability of chemicals, minerals and possible presence of water. It is heart warming to inform that India is one of a few countries of the world wherein Scientific Temperament as duty of its citizens and the same has been enshrined in the Constitution of India and Mission Chandrayaan I is a testimony to this. Juxtaposedly, the mission will inculcate a strong will among the citizens of India to think scientifically, Act and Gain scientifically. The book

under review has been written and published at an opportune time and will fulfill its objective i.e. detailing the various facets of India's Chandrayaan I Mission, background as well as international history and contemporary scenario of Space World. The developing nation like India where she has to struggle and in fact the mixed economy model has brought a total metamorphosis in the thinking process of India citizens due to the Indian Government & its welfare measures taken and effected from time to time. The author who is a pioneer as well and has been with the Indian Moon Mission meticulously has strived to sum up the whole scenario in eight chapters thereby educating, informing and entertaining the readers simultaneously. The first two chapters inform the readers about the background of the moon and other celestial bodies in the space and their interrelationships with our planet Earth. The contribution of Harold Urey has been explained concisely and in fact he can be placed in the category of father

like pioneer in Planetary Science. In fact, information about the origin of the moon is vital for understanding about our own planet-Earth and accordingly, an attempt has been effected by the author in these two chapters. Readers would be thrilled to see the photographs of foot impression of Neil Armstrong, the first man to set foot on the Moon. Here, it is pertinent to mention that foot impression at moon, last for about a million years because the only process which can erase them is Meteorite impacts and the debris thrown by them. The author has painstakingly endeavoured to describe the chemical and mineral composition of moon by giving inputs in detailed manner as well as to keep the interest of readers, the photographs of the near and far side of the moon and other colour dimensions has been incorporated in the chapter.

Readers can very well get an idea about the mysterious environment of Moon from the fact that during the day and night, the moon's surface goes to extreme temperature range from about +120 degree Celsius to -130 degrees C. There are places in polar regions i.e. deep crater which never receives sunlight and remains in shadow permanently and the prevailing temperature is as low as -230 degrees C or just about 40 degrees C absolute zero where most of the chemical compound is condensed and possibilities of water existence in some forms are quiet prospective

here itself. The photographs sent by NASA, Apollo-2 will also add to the knowledge of readers. Author has deliberated, on the possibilities of finding water on the moon, however, in fact tried to consolidate the findings of various space missions only. In the chapters, the history of moon and exploration of moon, a historical perspective, complete background of the moon has been detailed for the curious readers. In fact, there are two types of missions - Orbiting Missions and Landing Missions. The present Indian endeavour is an Orbiting Mission. The orbiting missions have the advantages of covering the entire surface of moon and providing a global view.

The last chapter Chandrayaan I: The Lunar Polar Orbiting Mission can be termed as the most informative and educative part of the book as it focuses on all the pertinent and details not only about the mission but also the various 11 pay loads and most minute of them have been conceptualized, designed, developed and successfully launched and placed on the surface of moon. Readers would be curious to know in-depth about them. Here are these and sample the same. 1. Hyper spectral imager is about mineral mapping. 2. Infrared spectrometer is about mineral mapping. 3. Moon mineral mapper is about mineral mapping and resource identification 4. Terrain Mapping Camera - about topographic mapping. 5. Laser

Ranging - Topography, lunar craft altitude. 6. X-ray fluorescence spectrometer-about chemical mapping. 7. Solar x-ray monitor -about solar x-ray spectrum. 8. High energy x-ray spectrometer -about Thorium, Lead. 9. Synthetic aperture radar -about properties, topography altimetry. 10. Neutral atom analyzer-about atmospheric neutral composition, magnetic anomalies. 11. Radiation Dose Monitor - about radiation dose.

The author has detailed about the various aspects of Chandrayaan mission, like Systems data, searched communication and vehicle mission profile. Author has given a thought provoking concept i.e. Helium -3 a radioactive clean energy source/non-polluting fuel through fusion method. The fusion process takes place in the Sun and if helium can be processed into fuel then the whole world will be free of energy crisis. The author has mentioned practical difficulties to convert the proposition into Reality and has ended the book on optimistic as well as positive note that some day helium will be made a free energy source and we may be entering into an extensive area of global exploration. The book is a laudable effort to attract the persons having scientific temperament as well as youth and students of space science. The book can be really instrumental in creating scientific temperament amongst the readers of rural India; provided sufficient support system is ensured. □

(Surya Kant Sharma)