



Vivek

Issues & Options

July - 2012

Issue: I No: VII



Asian Theatre: A Key Concern

Ideological Polities: Values Of Past

Pak Policies: Completely Unrealistic

Cultural Symbols Threatened

and many more

Published By: Vivekananda International Foundation

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi – 110021, info@vifindia.org, www.vifindia.org

Contents

ARTICLES

US Offer Calls For Finesse

3

- *Kanwal Sibal*

Why Non-Alignment 2.0 Does Us A Disservice

8

- *Satish Chandra*

Dealing With The Neighbour From Hell

14

- *PP Shukla*

India's Myanmar Policy Gains Momentum

20

- *Brig Vinod Anand*

What After CA Dissolution In Nepal?

26

- *Hari Bansh Jha*

Critical Appraisal Of Kashmir Interlocutors Report

47

- *Sushant Sareen*

Indian Navy On A High - Growth Trajectory

53

- *Nitin Gokhale*

Costs Of Policy Convolution

61

- *V. Anantha Nageswaran*

Governance And The Prime Minister

65

- *Dr. M.N. Buch*

Ideology And Political Parties

76

- *RNP Singh*

Official Apathy Towards Culture In India

86

- *Aniriban Ganguly*

EVENTS

An Interaction On "Indo-US Relations: Global Partnership"

94

Vimarsha : Scientific Dating Of Ancient Events From 7000 BC To 2000 BC

97

US Offer Calls For Finesse

- *Kanwal Sibal*

US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta's recent visit to India brings to the fore again the question of the depth India should impart to India-US defence ties. Panetta has been explicit about US interest in deepening them.

The itinerary that took him to the US Pacific Command Headquarters in Hawaii, Singapore, Cam Ranh Bay and Hanoi in Vietnam, New Delhi and Kabul illustrates the new US defence priorities in Asia, a counter "string of pearls" strategy of sorts that includes India.

Strategy

This new defence strategy, Panetta acknowledged, consists of "rebalancing" toward the Asia-Pacific region, with an expansion of US military partnerships and presence in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia. The US will shift the bulk of its naval fleet including as many as six aircraft carriers to the Pacific Ocean by 2020.

Panetta said candidly in Delhi that defence cooperation with India is a lynchpin in this US strategy. General Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has underlined

* *Kanwal Sibal - Member Advisory Board, VIF*

subsequently India's enormously important geostrategic location on the sea lanes of communication from the Mid-east to the Pacific. The Pentagon says it sees India as a net provider of security from the Indian Ocean to Afghanistan and beyond.

In Delhi Panetta spoke publicly of India-US defence relationship becoming more strategic, practical and collaborative through regular defence policy exchanges, military

exercises covering all functional areas of naval warfare, prospects for advanced R&D, sharing of new technologies and joint production of defence equipment, besides

defence sales and intelligence sharing.

Noting that India will soon have the world's second largest fleet with an expanded reach and

ability to rapidly deploy, Panetta visualizes a peaceful Indian Ocean region supported by growing Indian capabilities with America making military deployments in the region including rotating marines in Australia and

Littoral Combat Ships through Singapore.

These statements and plans make clear that the US pivot towards Asia envisages a buttressing

Indian role in it. This pivot aims at re-asserting the American role in the Asia-Pacific region with a view to balancing and countering the rising power of China, as circumstances demand.

US overtures put India in a delicate and difficult situation. The US is changing its geopolitical calculus towards India. Panetta equated US difficulties in dealing with Pakistan with those India faced, disregarding Pakistani sensitivities about western leaders criticising it from Indian soil. He welcomed a more active political and economic Indian role in Afghanistan, including training of the Afghan security forces.

India cannot easily spurn defence advances by the world's foremost military power in a changing global context. India has its own

concerns about China's adversarial policies. It cannot unreservedly grasp the US hand either, as it is independently engaging China and has convergence of interests with it on issues of global governance where India has differences with the West.

We have to factor in our response our relations with Russia, our principal defence partner, the growing strategic understanding between Russia and China, and our dialogue with both countries in the Russia-India-China (RIC) format and that of BRICS. Any perception that just as Russia is moving closer to China because of US/NATO pressure we are moving closer to the US would be politically undesirable.

This calls for a very sophisticated handling of the strategic

advantage of strengthening defence ties with the US and the strategic disadvantage of being dragged into US interventionist policies across the globe. The challenge is how to separate Indian interests from those of the US while deepening the strategic partnership between the two countries.

China

Understanding the dynamics of the US-China relationship is extremely important. This relationship is multi-dimensional, with twin tracks of cooperation and competition. Economically and financially cooperation

predominates, despite periodic US complaints about China's trade and exchange rate policies; politically and strategically competition is dominant, even if elements in the US, recognizing

US-China economic interdependence may raise doubts among US allies about the constraints this imposes on US political choices in dealing with China-provoked regional tensions, but the allies also gain freedom to expand economic ties with China as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have done. All sides thus see shared gains in expanding trade exchanges.

the inevitability of China's rise, talk of joint US-China management of global affairs.

US-China economic interdependence may raise doubts among US allies about the constraints this imposes on US

political choices in dealing with China-provoked regional tensions, but the allies also gain freedom to expand economic ties with China as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have done. All sides thus

see shared gains in expanding trade exchanges.

Response

On the political and strategic front, the situation is more complex. The US has an established military presence in the region, with several alliance relationships. The US may tolerate losing economic power to China in relative terms as part of win-win arrangements, but not political power as there are no win-win arrangements there and no shared gains for US allies in security terms. The US pivot towards Asia seems therefore a defensive move, to prevent China from materially changing the political and strategic status quo in the region in its favour in the way the economic one has shifted to China's advantage.

Panetta noted in Delhi that as the US and India deepen their defense partnership, both will also seek to strengthen their relations with China. He welcomed the rise of a strong and prosperous China that “respects and enforces the international norms that have governed this region for six decades”- a phrase encapsulating the core aim of the Asia pivot.

The US-India-China trilateral dialogue proposed by the US State Department is a subtle way to attenuate Indian concerns about the US incorporating India into its check-China strategy more than it would want. It would, by balancing the RIC dialogue, dilute its unique importance.

A pragmatic Indian response to US defence overtures is required- cautious and measured, but not negative.

[Back to contents](#)

Why Non-alignment 2.0 Does Us A Disservice

- *Satish Chandra*

The document, prepared by an eminent 8-member group, has attracted both criticism and praise. The latter is mainly for drawing attention to India's innumerable foreign policy challenges and for generating debate thereon.

On the negative side, a major shortcoming in the document is the failure to clearly spell out a vision for what India should aspire to be and how precisely should these aspirations be realised, says Satish Chandra.

Non-alignment 2.0 -- unveiled in January -- is a 60-page document which purportedly outlines the

principles that should guide India's foreign and domestic policy over the next decade.

Over a year in the making the document is the handiwork of an eight-member group comprising some well known Indian intellectuals like Shyam Saran, Sunil Khilnani, Nandan Nilekani, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta.

The authors are at pains to claim that the document represents only their views and that it is, therefore, an independent product. This is open to question because Shyam Saran, a former foreign secretary, heads a government-funded think tank

**Satish Chandra - Distinguished Fellow, VIF*

and another author, General Prakash Menon is military advisor with the rank of secretary in the National Security Council Secretariat. Moreover, the National Security Advisor and his deputy actively participated in some of the deliberations of the group to which administrative support was provided inter alia by the National Defence College.

Nonalignment 2.0 has attracted both criticism and praise. The latter is mainly for drawing attention to India's innumerable foreign policy challenges and for generating debate thereon. The document is, of course, also studded with several nuggets of wisdom some of which may be enumerated as follows:

India must retain maximum strategic autonomy in order to

enable it to pursue its developmental goals;

Since its economic growth requires deepened economic engagement with the world, India must strive to maintain an open global order. It is unlikely that there will be enduring coalitions: these would require artful management;

India's great advantage is that, barring in its immediate neighbourhood, it is not seen as a threatening power;

Engaging with the Asian theatre will be a key concern for India with South Asia being the most vital;

India must put in place operational concepts and capabilities to deter China since the latter will be a significant

foreign policy and security challenge for it;

Progress in India-Pakistan ties can only be incremental;

While seriously pursuing the complete elimination of nuclear weapons on a non discriminatory basis, India must beef up its nuclear weapon capability in particular the maritime leg.

On the negative side, a major shortcoming in the document is the failure to clearly spell out a vision for what India should aspire to be and how precisely should these aspirations be realised. In the absence of such on overarching unity of purpose Nonalignment 2.0 flounders and lacks coherency.

Many have also found fault with the title of the document on the grounds that it is backward looking rather than forward looking. The argument that the title was selected as 'strategic autonomy' was a core element of non-alignment as earlier practiced by India, cuts no ice as such autonomy is something which any self respecting country would like to exercise and as the non-alignment of yester year had many shortcomings.

Given the standing of the authors, one would have expected a much more tautly conceived and constructed document. It, however, disappoints. It is flabby, marred by inaccuracies, and on

On the negative side, a major shortcoming in the document is the failure to clearly spell out a vision for what India should aspire to be and how precisely should these aspirations be realised. In the absence of such on overarching unity of purpose Nonalignment 2.0 flounders and lacks coherency.

occasion displays a disquieting naivete. In this context, consider the following propositions contained in it:

India's internal development will depend on how well we manage our global opportunities. Comment: is not the converse truer? In the ultimate analysis progress is dependent more on management of internals than of foreign policy;

The fundamental source of India's power is its example. Comment: comprehensive national power rather than example is what counts for in the real world;

The main thing that can hold India back is India itself. Comment: This is a cliché applicable to all countries;

South Asia is holding India back at many levels and places fetters

on its ambitions. Comment: While a fractious neighbourhood is a cause of concern it cannot subvert Indian ambitions as long as India is strong;

India has been granted Most Favoured Nation treatment by Pakistan. Comment: This is incorrect. Pakistan has only moved from a positive to a negative list in respect of its imports from India.

India should engage in cooperation with Pakistan on energy and water, leverage its economic relationship with China for political concessions and persuade the latter to seek reconciliation with the Dalai Lama. Comment: Even a nodding acquaintance with the dynamics of the polity of Pakistan and of China and their relationship with

India would indicate that these propositions are non-starters.

Finally, perhaps the most serious flaw in Nonalignment 2.0 is that it reeks of pusillanimity. For instance, it suggests that India should continue to remain engaged with Pakistan even if there are further Mumbai like attacks. All that it contemplates in such eventualities is stand-off punitive operations and goes so far as to argue against deep thrusts into Pakistani territory for fear of nuclear attack missing the point that we have a nuclear deterrent.

Similarly, while suggesting that there can be no proportionate

response to a Chinese attack on India it makes a case for an asymmetric response inter alia based upon the creation of insurgencies in areas occupied by China thereby acknowledging defeat even before battle has been

Even in respect of our South Asian neighbours the document would have India make unilateral concessions to them. The learned authors appear to have learnt no lessons from the fact that the countless unilateral concessions made by India to China, Pakistan and even Sri Lanka, have not earned it any positive results in terms of improved ties with those countries and only encouraged recalcitrant behaviour.

joined. It also argues that India should focus more on accretion of its military capability at sea rather than on land. Indeed, the paragraphs relating to China are permeated by an unseemly fear and the thought

that India should do nothing which may increase its anxieties, to the extent that we maintain equidistance between China and the US.

Even in respect of our South Asian neighbours the document would have India make unilateral concessions to them. The learned authors appear to have learnt no lessons from the fact that the countless unilateral concessions made by India to China, Pakistan and even Sri Lanka, have not earned it any positive results in terms of improved ties with those countries and only encouraged recalcitrant behaviour. Ironically, while the document is mindful to a fault of Chinese sensitivities all such caution is thrown to the winds when addressing India. Indeed, it goes so far as to suggest that we need

to build a credible state, promote inclusive governance and a political culture attuned to defusing conflict.

These homilies are not only quite out of place in a foreign policy related document but much more applicable to China and Pakistan than to India. Indeed our record on this count is better than that of many countries. The fact that they have found place in such a document is, therefore, not only unwarranted but also a singular disservice to the nation.

[Back to contents](#)

Dealing With The Neighbour From Hell

- *PP Shukla*

The recent round of talks between the Indian and Pakistan bureaucratic establishments has come to another uneasy pause with the Foreign Secretary level talks in early July. As expected, nothing has come out of any of the hard interfaces – Home, Defence and External Affairs. This may be a good time to ask two questions: why are we holding these talks, and is the process working, is it delivering any results?

To address these questions, it is time to take a slightly longer look than is our wont, and see what has been happening and then assess the outcome of our efforts. The reality is that, since the

current dialogue process began under PV Narasimha Rao, we have made significant concessions in order to achieve some stability in relations with Pakistan. We agreed to include Jammu & Kashmir as an issue in our dialogue; we unilaterally extended MFN treatment to Pakistani goods as required under the WTO rules; under the Gujral Doctrine, we stopped confronting Pakistan on the PR front; we held out a lifeline to Gen Musharraf when he was isolated; and, most recently, we agreed to resume the dialogue – without saying so – even though the Government was committed not to do so until there was forward movement from the

* *PP Shukla – Joint Director, VIF*

Pakistani side on the 26/11 terror attack.

It must be clear beyond peradventure that Pakistan's response has been to pocket all these concessions, and give nothing in return. In fact, their conduct has gone from bad to worse – support for terror in J&K [denied initially, then admitted by Musharraf], refusal to grant Indian goods MFN treatment, the Kandahar hijack, the attack on Parliament, and finally, the attack on Mumbai in November 2008.

Alongside all this, there has been wanton provocation from Pakistani officials such as the recent meeting with the Hurriyat leaders by the visiting Pakistani Foreign Secretary. Our response combined the worst of all elements – we made it clear that we did not like it, but showed that

we were helpless in stopping it in our own country: in a word, impotence. Why, if we believe that such meetings cannot or should not be prevented, does our representative not meet the Baluch or the POK representatives in Pakistan?

So, back to the basic questions. Why are we doing all this? And what are we getting out of it, are we even moving towards the goal? To the first, the answer is that we began the process of engaging at a time when we were isolated and weak. The early 1990's were probably the most dangerous times as far as J&K is concerned since the early 1960's, after the Chinese had defeated us in the war. It was imperative for us to show that some process of a peaceful settlement was under way, because otherwise, there was the danger of UN involvement in

the issue. But all that has changed now. India is in a much stronger position, and it is Pakistan that is isolated and in disarray. The kinds of pressure that we were up against are gone, hopefully never to return.

Is it working? The answer is a categorical “No”. We have been at it now for close to two decades, and that too was not the beginning. We should know each other’s positions well enough by now

to be able to write each other’s briefing books. The simple truth is that the maximum we can give on J&K is well short of the minimum that Pakistan can accept. There has been much talk about the dialogue with

Musharraf that allegedly was going to settle this issue. Only, it did not – and it will not be settled as long as the Army and the Mullah-Jihadi complex remain opposed. We may be quite sure that their positions will only harden in the years ahead. It is a

The simple truth is that the maximum we can give on J&K is well short of the minimum that Pakistan can accept. There has been much talk about the dialogue with Musharraf that allegedly was going to settle this issue. Only, it did not – and it will not be settled as long as the Army and the Mullah-Jihadi complex remain opposed.

bit like the Simla Agreement. There was some understanding, but it has been firmly repudiated by the Pakistani side, and is a dead letter.

On terror, the position is equally clear: the unstated Pakistani position is that they are going to stonewall, and keep denying any involvement, particularly by state agencies, in the 26/11 attack. The unspoken in-your-face challenge to India is to do what it can.

Decades of inaction have convinced them that we may talk tough, but when it comes to action, there will be none.

The stark reality is that our hope of any change in Pakistani policies is completely unrealistic.

We have imposed no cost on the country for its decades of hostility, for using every opportunity it can to inflict harm on India. From their perspective, enmity with India carries no cost. They have

been caught repeatedly in the act, whether it was Kargil, or the Kandahar hijack. And each time, after some token steps, we have gone back to business as usual. Why would Pakistan change its

policies in such an environment of indulgence and appeasement?

What is even more perplexing in our position on Pakistan is that we are appeasing a country that is heading towards comprehensive failure. It is a social, political and

economic black hole, and there are no solutions in sight to its problems. This is the real issue we should be focussing on – what happens in the event that Pakistan does implode? Instead

of simply repeating that we have to save that country from itself [which we cannot, in any case], we need to get real and see what the contours of a collapse will be, how they will affect us, and what we must do to protect our interests.

What is even more perplexing in our position on Pakistan is that we are appeasing a country that is heading towards comprehensive failure. It is a social, political and economic black hole, and there are no solutions in sight to its problems. This is the real issue we should be focussing on – what happens in the event that Pakistan does implode?

In the interim, since the dialogue process is not working, we need to examine a course correction. This Government is obviously not going to take any of the tough options necessary, so here are some easier ones, which require no hard decisions. To begin with, recognise publicly that the dialogue process is not delivering results. The failure of the recent round of talks between the Home, Defence, and External Affairs Ministries is as good a time as any. These should be suspended, and the sole interface should be the two Foreign Ministries. The level should also be lowered to nothing higher than the Foreign Secretaries. All discussion on issues like Siachen, to give one example, should cease. Above all, we need to end all talk of a Prime Ministerial visit – it defies logic that Government can even countenance such an idea in the

face of the wanton provocations from the Pakistani side.

Second, we should walk away from all the economic arrangements that we are discussing, including the TAPI pipeline. The reality is that Pakistan needs the gas, but is in no position to pay. The transit fees they earn from us are what will be used to pay for their share of the transit through Afghanistan, and how they will pay for the actual gas imports – if at all they pay – is something nobody knows. There will be some unhappiness among some of the other participants, notably the IFI's, but everyone will understand our anger over the continuing role of Pakistan in fomenting terror.

Let us also remember that Pakistan has always used control over transit for political purposes.

They did so with the Afghans, Pakistan's policies and conduct. right from the 1960's, and they have repeatedly done so with the US and NATO. There should be no doubt that they will use this power against India too – if and when the pipeline comes into existence.

Let us also remember that Pakistan has always used control over transit for political purposes. They did so with the Afghans, right from the 1960's, and they have repeatedly done so with the US and NATO. There should be no doubt that they will use this power against India too – if and when the pipeline comes into existence.

In that case, we should be ready for other courses of action. But at least our policies will be rational. At the moment, we seem to be committed to a policy of open-

ended appeasement, in a situation where it is clear that this is not delivering any results.

There are other forms of economic pressure that we can think about too. Pakistan's economy is in a fragile state, and is unable to withstand pressure.

All of this may not be sufficient to bring about a change in

[Back to contents](#)

India's Myanmar Policy Gains Momentum

- *Brig Vinod Anand*

The Indian Prime Minister's visit to Myanmar after a gap of 25 years was a recognition of the fact that the positive changes occurring on Myanmar's political firmament had created conditions for enabling such a high level visit.

Though India had been engaging Myanmar earlier also for strategic and security reasons, raising the level of political exchanges highlights the fact that Indo-Myanmar relations have reached a turning point and are poised for an exponential expansion. A dozen Memoranda of Understanding signed after the visit and this also indicates the

diverse fields in which India is engaging Myanmar.

Politically, the reestablishment of formal relations with Aung Suu Kyi can be seen as one of the major gains of the visit. While she had close linkages with India in the past including in the active support by the Indian government to the democracy movement in the 1980's, there was a break in this relationship due to the geopolitics of the region. Though there were informal linkages and India had been pressing both sides, the military junta of the past and Suu Kyi led NLD to reconcile their differences, Suu Kyi had maintained a public distance from New Delhi. She was no doubt encouraged by the support that

* *Brig Vinod Anand - Senior Fellow, VIF*

she got from the West including public statements at the highest level, for instance from President Obama who in the Indian parliament had called for support to democratic forces in Myanmar. However, in the end it was India's proposal for reconciliation that possibly led to political rapprochement and transition which is now reasonably well established. This was confirmed during the Prime Minister's visit and his joint statement with Aung Suu Kyi. The common platform was a strong message to India's past detractors and this could be seen as the biggest political gain for New Delhi.

Myanmar's strategic salience as a land bridge to China on the one hand and to South East Asia on the other hand can not be over emphasised. While approaches from China through Myanmar are important from military, security and economic point of view the connectivity to South East Asia is relevant from the economic point of view.

Myanmar's strategic salience as a land bridge to China on the one hand and to South East Asia on the other hand can not be over emphasised. While approaches from China through Myanmar are important from the military, security and economic points of view, the connectivity to South East Asia is relevant from the economic point of view. Security and stability in the border areas is an imperative for overall development and establishment of multi-modal corridors linking India and Myanmar and beyond. Both Indian to Myanmar leaders have assured each other that territories of either country would not be allowed to be used for activities inimical to the other,

including for training, sanctuary and other operations by terrorist and insurgent organisations and their operatives. This is relevant because recently a ceasefire agreement has been signed between NSCN (K) and the local government of Sangaing division of Myanmar which had been viewed negatively in Indian strategic circles. However, the Indian PM gave a positive interpretation to the agreement, saying that it would be useful for ushering in peace.

India has also sought to support border regions by providing monetary assistance and open border haats (markets for small-scale trade) to develop the area. Evidently, where Indian officialdom needs to pay attention is in implementing of the decisions taken on some of the projects and schemes. The record

so far in respect of execution of projects has not been satisfactory.

Strengthening of relations with the Myanmar military, particularly in the field of training is another gain in this field though this was not as much reflected in the joint statements.

Major gains were also made on trade and economic front. India is developing major interests in energy, minerals, and iron ore in particular, as well as the hydro power sector of Myanmar. The target of bilateral trade to reach \$3 billion, by 2015 is modest and achievable. India's offer of a soft loan of \$500m could be a driver towards expansion of bilateral trade. Trade and economy related MOUs will add impetus in this direction and includes, a Memorandum of Understanding regarding US\$ 500 million Line of

Credit, an Air Services Agreement between India and Myanmar and a Memorandum of Understanding on Establishment of a Joint Trade and Investment Forum.

The visit will provide impetus to the Look East Policy. It needs to be noted that the year 2012 is being celebrated as marking two decades of India's Look East Policy; comprehensive engagement with Myanmar would impart impetus to the realization of such a policy. Further, Myanmar is scheduled to take over as the Chairman of ASEAN in 2014 and both leaders agreed to coordinate and cooperate in making the forthcoming ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit successful.

Some of the initiatives in relation to major vectors of the Look East policy are as follows:-

(a) Communication Linkages. Agreement to expand road linkages from India to Myanmar and Thailand by 2016 would improve connectivity to South East Asia exponentially. India is also implementing the Kaladan multimodal transport project that involves upgrading the Sittwe port and constructing a highway to connect the town of Paletwa in Chin state to the Indian border in Mizoram state by 2015.

(b) Support to Regional Role. Support to Myanmar's role in ASEAN, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) has been affirmed. Myanmar is the current chairman of BIMSTEC and can play a very useful role in furthering the objectives of this grouping.

(c) Diverse Engagement. India is expanding engagement in diverse sectors, including science & technology, tourism, transport & infrastructure, information and communication technology, agriculture and energy.

(d) Tourism. Opening up air service to Myanmar and road linkages would not only promote tourism but would also intensify people-to-people exchanges.

(e) Education. The number of training slots for Myanmar under technical assistance programme has been increased from 250 to 500 every year. An agreement on the setting up of the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology will boost capacity in the ICT sector in Myanmar.

The Chinese official reaction to the Indian PM's visit was on expected lines as the Foreign

Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin told a press briefing that China welcomes the engagement. "Both India and Myanmar are China's friendly neighbours. China is happy to see the development of relations between them. We hope such development of friendly relations is conducive to the stability and prosperity of the whole region". However the Chinese media have been less considerate and have clearly stated that India is making up for lost time after it finds itself left out by Chinese and Western initiatives in Myanmar. The truth may however be somewhere in between.

China's overall policy on Myanmar is likely to remain unaffected by these developments i.e, both Indian and Western entry to Myanmar. China's deep political linkages with Myanmar

would be evident by in that Beijing recently hosted a delegation from Myanmar's largest political party the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) comprising of military junta loyalists which had a meeting with Vice President Xi Jinping.

While there was a setback to china with the suspension of work on the Myitsone dam, indications are that this is likely to be limited

and some say that, on the ground, work is continuing. Thus China's policy of trade routes and transportation corridors to the Indian Ocean through Myanmar is unlikely to be impacted.

India has been one of the last few major states to engage with the new regime in Myanmar including the emerging political order where Aung Suu Kyi, despite her official status as only an MP has a major role to play in the future.

India has been one of the last few major states to engage with the new regime in Myanmar including the emerging political order where Aung Suu Kyi, despite her official status as only an MP has a major role to play in the future. However, India could be said to have made up for this lost time by establishing multi dimensional engagement covering all essential facets during the visit of Dr Man Mohan Singh.

However, India could be said to have made up for this lost time by establishing multi dimensional engagement covering all essential facets during the visit of Dr Man Mohan

Singh. It is only the effective implementation of the MOUs which have been reached with Myanmar that need to be monitored and executed.

[Back to contents](#)

Critical Appraisal Of Kashmir Interlocutors Report

- *Sushant Sareen*

The basic purpose behind appointing the team of interlocutors for Jammu and Kashmir was to lower the temperature in the Kashmir Valley after a rather 'hot' summer in 2010 marked by civic disturbances in the form of stone-throwing mobs and casualties caused by police firing to control these violent demonstrations. As such its role was that of a 'safety valve', a point tacitly conceded in the report¹. Of course, whether the temperature in the Valley came down because of the Interlocutors exertions (as they seem to indicate)² or in spite of their presence is another matter

altogether.

The Kashmir Interlocutors (KI) initiative followed an all-party delegation that visited J&K and the incongruity of appointing a non-representative team of people to make recommendations of a political nature with far-reaching consequences suggests that the Government of India (GOI) never intended to take the report or its recommendations very seriously. Nevertheless, since the KI was an official body, its report is important to the extent that it will become a reference point (along with other such similar efforts and reports) either to buttress the arguments in favour

* *Sushant Sareen – Senior Fellow, VIF*

of certain demands or, if there is no action taken on these recommendations, to point to the ‘perfidious’ and ‘insincere’ approach of GOI to the Kashmir issue.

The composition and character of the KI team is problematic also because while on the one hand the GOI never tires of pointing out the successful democratic exercise in the state of J&K and the existence of a functioning elected assembly of people’s representatives, on the other hand the GOI seems to perpetually ignore this very assembly in trying to solve the political problems in the state. In other words, instead of

The composition and character of the KI team is problematic also because while on the one hand the GOI never tires of pointing out the successful democratic exercise in the state of J&K and the existence of a functioning elected assembly of people’s representatives, on the other hand the GOI seems to perpetually ignore this very assembly in trying to solve the political problems in the state.

empowering the elected representatives of the people by entering into a sustained political dialogue with them, the GOI always seems to have sidelined them in favour of non-elected and often non-representative players

like the APHC. Rather than strengthen the pro-India elements in J&K to a point where the anti-India and separatist element gets marginalised, successive governments in New Delhi have

subscribed to the view that unless they can settle matters with the anti-India forces, they will not be able to settle the political dimension of the Kashmir issue. This is a theme that is reflected in the KI report as well.

While the KI report contains some benign and even useful, not to mention cleverly worded recommendations, it is replete with inane generalities, heroic assumptions, naive presumptions, gratuitous observations, contradictory suggestions, pedestrian prescriptions, at least one glaring factual error – how does the Diamer-Bhasha dam threaten Indian water use?³ – and most disturbingly, the constant use of a rather objectionable phrase ‘Pakistan administered Kashmir’ instead of ‘Pakistan occupied Kashmir’⁴. The use of this phrase, and that to by a government nominated body, raises some serious and troubling questions on whether or not the GOI has surreptitiously accepted the illegal occupation of a part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan. This suspicion is confirmed when the

KI supports an Indo-Pak understanding on Kashmir on the grounds that this would safeguard ‘their sovereignty [emphasis added] in the areas of the erstwhile princely state under their administration’.⁵ Despite stating emphatically in many places in the report that Jammu and Kashmir’s status as a constituent unit of India cannot be questioned, the KI seem to be convinced that the nature of relationship between the State and the Union remains ‘ambiguous’.⁶

A constant theme that has been unnecessarily played up through the report in a rather one-sided manner is the ‘sense of victimhood’ and ‘aspirations’ of the people of the state, especially in the Kashmir Valley. The report underscores the need for ‘empowering the state’s people to

enable them to address their political, economic, social and cultural concerns, interests, grievances and aspirations', but doesn't highlight how or in what manner the people of the state have been disempowered. ⁷

Moreover, when you start breaking down this 'sense of victimhood', it comes out that both the causes and conditions – from human rights to governance issues and from economic aspirations to political yearnings

– that fuel this sentiment as well as most of the prescriptions offered by the KI are no different in Kashmir than in other parts of India. In this sense, J&K is no different from any other Indian state and perhaps had a KI type

exercise been conducted in any other state, the responses of the people would have been no different. For instance, who in India doesn't want 'rule of law, justice, equitable distribution of economic resources and jobs,

infrastructure development, end to corruption etc.'⁸

Advocating great sensitivity in addressing the 'sense of victimhood', the KI has made no effort to challenge it as a misperception that is largely, if not

entirely, manufactured for nefarious political reasons.¹⁰ Tying in with this 'sense of victimhood' is the KI recommendation to reappraise the 'erosion' of Article 370 to let the

Advocating great sensitivity in addressing the 'sense of victimhood', the KI has made no effort to challenge it as a misperception that is largely, if not entirely, manufactured for nefarious political reasons.¹⁰ Tying in with this 'sense of victimhood' is the KI recommendation to reappraise the 'erosion' of Article 370 to let the state government have the powers that it needs to promote the welfare of its people on its own terms.¹¹

state government have the powers that it needs to promote the welfare of its people on its own terms.¹¹ However, while pandering to the ill-informed sentiment in Kashmir on Art. 370, the KI report doesn't explain how the 'erosion' of this Article has hindered the ability of the state government in advancing the welfare of the people. A reading of the Articles of the Indian constitution extended to J&K leaves little doubt that some 'erosion' has been necessitated by the need to prevent any constitutional crisis or vacuum in extraordinary situations, others for ensuring probity, good governance and tackling inter-state issues, still others to ensure justice and secure fundamental rights of citizens and finally to harmonize the state laws with central laws in order to avoid the legal and accounting difficulties

that would arise if this wasn't done.¹² Indeed, the KI acknowledges that many of the central laws 'should not give rise to any strong objections'.¹³

In order to address the issue of Article 370, the KI recommend the formation of a Constitutional Committee (CC) to review all central acts and articles extended to the state. The CC is to be entrusted with what seems to be a virtual 'mission impossible': first, its members must be 'acceptable to all stake-holders' in both the state and in the centre; second, the CC is supposed to pull a rabbit out of its hat by functioning not only under a set of principles around which a political settlement can be found¹⁴ but also within certain given parameters – dual character of the state vis-a-vis the centre and dual character of the people within the state¹⁵ –

and try and reconcile all the various competing demands to come up with recommendations that will satisfy them all substantially if not entirely; third, the CC's recommendations must be reached through consensus so that they are acceptable to all stakeholders in the state assembly and in Parliament; finally, the CC recommendations will have to be ratified by both Houses of the State Assembly and the Parliament by a two-thirds majority!¹⁶

In a way, the entire suggestion of the CC is futile since the KI recognises that the 'clock cannot be turned back' to the pre-1953 status and lists out the various factors that the CC will need to take into account while coming up with its recommendations. These include the unexceptionable and very valid limitation that there is

no possibility of entertaining any change in the sovereignty of India or disruption in its territorial integrity or compromise in defence or strategic economic interests.¹⁷ Also included is the limitation that any change recommended must be judged on its relevance with regard to enhancing the welfare of the people, and since none of the central acts impair or adversely affect the welfare of the people of J&K, the entire exercise will be cosmetic. While this could beguile the public opinion among some disgruntled sections in the Valley, it could just as easily backfire by igniting the public opinion as another example of India's perfidy.

The idea of the CC is to buttress the 'special status' enjoyed by J&K in the Indian union. But the fact is that the state's 'special

status' is really in the context of the state assembly having to endorse any central act before it is extended to the state. This remains in place and hasn't been tampered with. Then there is the all-important question of how any central law abridges the State government's powers to cater for the welfare of its people and how does such a law affect J&K adversely if it doesn't affect any other state adversely?

Then there is the all-important question of how any central law abridges the State government's powers to cater for the welfare of its people and how does such a law affect J&K adversely if it doesn't affect any other state adversely?

Moreover, if the J&K assembly has endorsed a central law, doesn't it amount to turning back the clock by now seeking a repeal of the same law?¹⁸

The report makes certain political recommendations of its own, some of which are questionable

(replacing 'temporary' by 'special' in heading of Art. 370 and using Urdu nomenclatures for Governor and Chief Minister along with the English nomenclatures); some debatable because of their implications for the larger federal scheme (procedure of appointment of governor, creating regional councils in the three regions of the state, namely Jammu, Kashmir and Ladkhakh); and other controversial, if not objectionable (reducing proportion of All India Services officers in the state administration, imposing limitations on how Art. 356 will operate, and 'harmonizing' changes in all parts of the state, including the areas under Pakistan's occupation and promoting cross-LoC cooperation).

The one recommendation that prima facie appears to be extremely objectionable – limiting Parliament's right to make laws applicable to the state – is on second thoughts loaded with riders that pretty much allow Parliament a free hand in extending laws to the state. The riders allow Parliament to make laws relating to the 'country's internal and external security, and its vital economic interests especially in the area of energy and access to water resources'.¹⁹ A major problem with the second and third category of suggestions outlined above is that some of these things have been demanded by state-oriented parties in other Indian states as well. Therefore, before considering these recommendations the government and the political establishment in India will have to take into account implementing these

recommendations will dilute the hold of the Centre on the J&K state as well as to what extent these will give rise to similar demands from other Indian states thereby weakening the centre.

While the KI wax eloquent over the need for ploughing Central assistance into the state, they do not seem to take into account the fact that Central transfers in per capita terms are among the highest in India. In a sense, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that J&K has been pampered in financial allocations by the Centre. What is more, the KI seems overly sympathetic for the financial and economic predicament of the J&K state in spite of the fact that both in terms of the structure of the economy (70% dependent on agriculture which contributes less than a third to the State's income) and in

terms of its indebtedness, the situation in the state is quite similar to the Indian state as well as different states of India. For instance, the KI plead for greater financial assistance on the grounds that the debt-GDP ratio of the state is around 66%.²⁰ Remarkably, this is almost the same as India's debt-GDP ratio. Similar is the situation in the case of fiscal deficit of the State and the Centre. Therefore, mere bandying of figures is meaningless and the real issue at stake is how efficiently the government is run and how to cut wastage in government expenditure. The lament of the KI over the poor investment climate is primarily a function of the local laws and of the law and order situation.

That the State government has been tardy in implementation and

utilisation of resources is actually an argument against the recommendation that the proportion of All India Services officers should be steadily pared down. There can also be an argument against the KI recommendation to promote economic self-reliance for J&K.²¹ If anything, it is a better idea to ensure greater dependence of the state on the Union. In this context, reopening the LoC for trade and expanding the scope of this trade will effectively nullify Kashmir's integration and its dependence on India. Since Partition, Kashmir's economy has been tied to India and by restoring the LoC trade there is a danger of restoring Rawalpindi as the primary market of Kashmir.

In fact, *prima facie*, among the most troubling is the approach of the KI towards Pakistan and the

importance that the report gives not just to the separatists but also to Pakistan in search for a lasting political solution in the state. In recommending that Pakistan and PoK be encouraged to enter into a dialogue on the CC's report and the GOI-APHC dialogue²², it appears as though the KI is ignoring, if not deluding itself, about Pakistan's engrained inimicality towards India and the fact that the dispute over J&K is nothing but a symptom of its compulsive hostility towards India. Treating Pakistan as part of the solution in Kashmir is a mug's game and best avoided. Conversely, it can also be argued that the KI recommendations on Pakistan and PoK are cleverly

In recommending that Pakistan and PoK be encouraged to enter into a dialogue on the CC's report and the GOI-APHC dialogue²², it appears as though the KI is ignoring, if not deluding itself, about Pakistan's engrained inimicality towards India and the fact that the dispute over J&K is nothing but a symptom of its compulsive hostility towards India.

worded and effectively rule out any possibility of the much vaunted 'joint institutions' apparently being discussed on the back-channel between India and Pakistan. By putting the rider that there needs to be 'wide-ranging constitutional change' in PoK in order to harmonize Centre-State relations and devolve power to the regional, district and panchayat levels before joint institutions can be developed, the KI seems to be pushing through the back door the cementing of the LoC as a border because any constitutional change in the status of PoK will mean that the Pakistanis will be changing their long-held position that the status of the J&K state remains to be

decided. While this violates the Parliament resolution of 1994, this is perhaps something that India might be willing to accept as a 'permanent' solution. Come to think of it, the KI seems to misinterpret the 1994 resolution when it maintains that 'the overall policy, of working in tandem on the Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan tracks, is in line with the 1994 Parliament resolution'.²³ Far from taking the pusillanimous

The recommendation that a dialogue be resumed with the APHC is also troubling. By all accounts the APHC is atrophying and is a divided house. Entering into a dialogue with unabashed anti-India forces at a time when they are imploding will give them a new lease of life. If anything, the government needs to work overtime to deepen the cleavages within the APHC and separatist ranks and let this organisation disintegrate.

approach as understood by KI, the resolution demanded a vacation of Pakistani aggression and occupation of PoK.

The recommendation that a dialogue be resumed with the

APHC is also troubling. By all accounts the APHC is atrophying and is a divided house. Entering into a dialogue with unabashed anti-India forces at a time when they are imploding will give them a new lease of life. If anything,

the government needs to work overtime to deepen the cleavages within the APHC and separatist ranks and let this organisation disintegrate. In any case, why should an unrepresentative

body like APHC be accord so much centrality. Strangely, while the KI claims to have met every possible interest group, the APHC had refused to meet with them formally. Yet, even though the KI got so much feedback, it continues

to give primacy to the APHC as if it is this body that is the final arbiter of the political solution in Kashmir!²⁴ The KI keeps using the phrase 'peace talks' while referring to a dialogue between GOI and APHC.²⁵ The reason why 'peace talks' is not an appropriate term is because such talks are held between combatants. In J&K, a dialogue with APHC cannot be called 'peace talks' simply because the latter don't control the war and are in no position to ensure the peace. The KI report accepts this when it says that 'inflamed conditions made it risky for them [APHC] to embark on talks [with the Centre's various interlocutors]. Nor for that matter can any peace talks be held with 'armed groups', most of which are proxies of the Pakistan army. Quite besides the fact that no government can afford to hold

talks with Pakistani terror groups like the LeT which are active in J&K, if at all peace talks have to be held then it should be with the patron (Pakistan) rather than the client (armed groups or separatists). As the KI admits, the GOI-APHC track 'worked best when it was cushioned by Indo-Pak talks'.²⁶

In an attempt to justify the restarting of the 'Composite Dialogue' process with Pakistan, the KI claims that this has 'impacted favourably in Jammu and Kashmir'.²⁷ The facts are however somewhat contrary to this assertion. Any improvement in the ground situation in Kashmir has less to do with better sense dawning on Pakistan and more to do with the deteriorating internal and external situation in Pakistan. Virtually on the brink of collapse, Pakistan's attention

has naturally shifted from Kashmir for the time being as it probably cannot afford to open another front at this stage. Equally fallacious is the amount of truck that the KI puts in store of the 'framework agreement for resolution' of Kashmir that is supposed to have been struck in the back channel diplomacy between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the erstwhile Pakistani military dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf.

Interestingly, the KI seems to have latched on to the concepts and terminology currently in fashion in the context of Afghanistan in Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, the KI proclaims that 'reintegration cannot be accomplished without reconciliation'.²⁸

The simple fact of the matter is that this so-called 'agreement' had neither been endorsed by the people or the parliaments of the two countries nor has it been accepted by Musharraf's successors, both civil and military.

Interestingly, the KI seems to have latched on to the concepts and terminology currently in fashion in the context of Afghanistan in Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, the KI proclaims that 'reintegration cannot be accomplished without reconciliation'.²⁸ It supports the proposal of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but accepts that this is an idea that might not find much acceptance in India. Nevertheless, the group does put a lot in store of providing a 'closure' to families affected by the violence by identifying bodies in unmarked graves.²⁹ Even as the KI recommend's 'amnesty for militants who renounce violence', there is no such 'amnesty' on offer

for security forces personnel who have been implicated in 'extra-judicial killings'.³⁰

Both on the issue of Human Rights, as well as on the issue of certain political and legislative measures required to be taken by both the Central and State government, the KI seems to have adopted a somewhat contradictory stand. On the one hand it wants a review and reappraisal of central laws extended to the state, on the other hand it wants amendments in state laws like the Public Safety Act (PSA)³¹ and is critical of the state government's reluctance to devolve power to Panchayati Raj institutions (PRI) as doing so would dilute the powers of the MLAs.³² In other words, even as the KI calls for a review of central laws extended to the state, it wants the state

government to implement other central laws in the state.

The issue of devolution to Regional Councils (RC) and PRIs is seen a sort of magic bullet that will substantially address the existing political problems and even communal polarization in the three regions, namely Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.³³ The complicated nature of the problem can be gauged from an observation of the KI that 'government programmes that intend to bring relief to specific sections of the community can end up causing friction'.³⁴ Thus, it is entirely possible that devolution of powers to the various regions might actually lead to greater polarization between the communities and as such add to the list of existing 'grievances' of the Kashmiris. What is more, the RCs, which are autonomous and

empowered could end up cementing the existing divide between the people and regions who would become largely free of influence and interference of other regions/communities, thereby increasing political and communal polarization in the state.

The complexities that will accompany the devolution haven't entirely escaped the KI which notes the problems of cohabitation at the local level between

MLAs and MPs of one party and PRI representatives of another party.³⁵ But cohabitation isn't unique to J&K; rather it is a problem in every political system around the world and inane advise like 'the need for parties to work together' is something that is just as well applicable in rest of

India and rest of the world as it is in J&K.

Staying with devolution, KI recommends that residuary powers as well as subjects requiring a common policy for the entire state shall vest with Srinagar.³⁶ And yet, when it

Staying with devolution, KI recommends that residuary powers as well as subjects requiring a common policy for the entire state shall vest with Srinagar.³⁶ And yet, when it comes to relations between Srinagar and New Delhi, KI favours residuary powers for the former and not the latter

comes to relations between Srinagar and New Delhi, KI favours residuary powers for the former and not the latter. Similar is the case in the recommendation

that the state government be enabled to 'take over the functions of a regional council if it does not shoulder its responsibilities according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution'.³⁷ While this provision is akin to the Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, a

different yardstick seems to have been applied insofar as the sort of safeguards and extreme caution recommended in the use of Article 356 in the state is nowhere mentioned within the state to the use of the similar constitutional provision in relation to the regional councils.

The report goes on to recommend a Legislative Council (LC) with 'fairer representation' of the three regions. But even as they call an equal representation for all regions (11 each) in the LC an ideal thing, they pull back (perhaps in deference to the Kashmiri Muslim majoritarianism that runs rampant in the state) by saying that that this 'might be a big jump for Ladakh which currently has only 2 seats.³⁸ Polemical though it may sound, the question is why, if in the US

every state has equal representation in the Senate, such a provision will amount to a 'big jump' in the case of Ladakh. Interestingly, there is not a word on the need for a fairer delimitation of assembly seats to reflect the true demographic character of the state (which will lead to an increase in the share of Jammu) and give representation to the various regions on a more equitable basis.

The bias against Jammu is also palpable. Notwithstanding the KI recommendations on RC and LC, the sense of neglect that pervades Jammu will only worsen because of the KI report which ignores both the political sensitivities as well as economic needs of Jammu to appease Kashmir. Take for instance the recommendation that once the RCs are set up, a 'relic of the State's feudal past' i.e. the

shifting of the Darbar to Jammu during winter months, should be 'consigned to the archives...for all times to come', is nothing if not an example of cavalier disregard for the sentiment in Jammu.³⁹ How Jammu will react to such a decision has been completely ignored. While the KI lament the 'communal polarization' in Jammu and Ladhakh, they ignore the fact that this is a direct and perhaps natural reaction to the Muslim majoritarianism and communalism in Kashmir Valley. Moreover, the KI turn a blind eye to the feeling in Jammu and Ladhakh that they are being done down simply because they swear by the Idea of India. Therefore, if the people of Jammu and Ladhakh now think that 'they need to be ever more strident...to have their grievances and aspirations heard by the State and Union governments', as the

KI have observed, then they are doing nothing more than emulating the strategy of their fellow State subjects in the Valley to extract concessions out of the State and Central governments.⁴⁰ Why grudge them this strategy when clearly it is this strategy that in many ways provides the *raison d'être* of even the KI!

The KI's keenness to end Kashmir's, as also Ladhakh's, dependence on Jammu for road connections is also not exactly conducive to a harmonious relationship between the various regions of the State, even less so given its impact on Jammu's economy. Ending Jammu's central position as a transit point will have a serious impact on that region's economy. Although infrastructure projects suggested by the KI are all very good and useful – Mughal road, Leh-Manali

road etc. – these projects have been needlessly and one dare say gratuitously been linked to ending dependence on Jammu.⁴¹

Making recommendations on the media, the KI first airs the allegations of publishers that newspapers that don't toe the government line are denied advertisements and then goes on to recommend that 'national media houses be encouraged to publish Jammu and Kashmir editions'.⁴² Apart from the apparent incongruity of this recommendation, there is also the question as to what form this 'encouragement' will take. Will it merely be an appeal to the good sense and perhaps patriotism of media houses or will it some kind of subsidy and commercial assurance as well? If it is the latter then it will run counter to the recommendation that a

thorough investigation into the sources of funding of newspapers be carried out. And if indeed such funding and disclosures are made, what will remain of the credibility of the media houses?

On the issue of human rights and the confidence building measures (CBMs) that will, according to KI, go a long way in search of a lasting solution and political settlement in the state, the report makes some controversial suggestions and recommendations. The KI appears to be endorsing the list of the most-often requested CBMs, which include phasing out of the Special Operations Group (SOG), ending intrusive presence of security forces and reviewing the various laws implemented for countering terrorism, compensation for migrants from PoK, release of political prisoners

etc. The KI admits many, if not all, of these CBMs have been demanded by the APHC and other separatist groups.⁴³ If for no other reason, then simply because these suggestions or demands have come from the separatists, they should be rejected. Take the case of SOG. It has been one of the most effective anti-militancy organisations in the State. No surprise then, that there is a demand for phasing it out. What is more, this recommendation ignores the special circumstances existing in the State that make the SOG a critical component in combating terrorism. While recommending that SOG be phased out, the KI don't say what it should be replaced with. The local police has very limited powers in taking

While recommending that SOG be phased out, the KI don't say what it should be replaced with. The local police has very limited powers in taking preventive and pre-emptive action against terrorists, something that the SOG is mandated for.

preventive and pre-emptive action against terrorists, something that the SOG is mandated for. Similarly, in case of laws meant to counter militancy, there is a demand for scrapping these laws by the separatists because this would once again give them a free hand. The simple fact is that even though the security situation in the state has improved vastly, it still remains precarious and until the danger of a resurgence in militancy remains, interfering with the security grid would tantamount to playing in the hands of separatists.

The KI suggestions on amending the PSA also do not stand to reason. While a valid argument can be made to use the provisions

of the PSA very sparingly and selectively, diluting the act itself would not be a wise thing to do. If anything, there is actually a good case for having a PSA like law for rest of India, albeit with safeguards and proper oversight to ensure it isn't misused. In any case, the objections raised by the KI on the reasons for detention under the PSA – for instance, “promoting, propagating or attempting to create, feelings of enmity or hatred or disharmony on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or region” – simply boggle the mind.⁴⁴

The KI lays a lot of emphasis on cross-LoC travel and recommends relaxing restrictions on who is eligible to travel across the LoC.⁴⁵ But until support and sponsorship of terrorism continues and PoK continues to be labelled as the ‘base camp’ for the ‘freedom

struggle’, easing travel across the LoC will require a leap of faith. The KI also presume rather fallaciously that ‘the more progress there is in dialogue towards a resolution in Jammu and Kashmir, the more it will push Pakistan to engage more productively’.⁴⁶ What is more likely is the converse: if things move towards a settlement in J&K, Pakistan will be even more desperate to play spoiler. Strangely, the single most important CBM that could become the game-changer has been downplayed by the KI viz. ‘curtailing and eventual disbandment of militant groups’ by Pakistan.⁴⁷

References:

1. Para 11 Page 15
2. Para 13 Page 16
3. Para (16) Page 118
4. Page 9 and many other places in the document

5. Para (18) Page 38
6. Page 91
7. Para (3) Page 33
8. Para (4) Page 12
9. Page 1
10. Para (6) Page 34
11. Page 2
12. Annexure 'A' Page 120-21
13. Page 4
14. Para (9) Page 41
15. Page 56-57
16. Page 56-59
17. Page 59
18. Page 3 Section IV
19. Page 5-6
20. Page 67
21. Page 3
22. Page 9-10
23. Para (36) Page 22
24. Page 9
25. Para (35) Page 22
26. Para (63) Page 31
27. Para (59) Page 30
28. Para (24) Page 102
29. Page 102-03
30. Page 7
31. Page 8
32. Para (24) Page 18-19
33. Para (13) Page 36
34. Para (31) Page 20
35. Para (32) Page 21
36. Para (3) Page 54
37. Para (7) Page 55
38. Para (4) Page 54
39. Page 59
40. Para (28,29) Page 20
41. Page 77
42. Page 62-63
43. Page 94-95
44. Page 95
45. Page 97; also page 116
46. Para (35) Page 106
47. Page 98

[Back to contents](#)

What After CA Dissolution In Nepal?

- *Hari Bansh Jha*

The Nepalese Constituent Assembly (CA), which had the jumbo size of 601-members, was expected to draft the Constitution within the stipulated time of two years, starting from 2008. But despite repeated extensions (four times), it could not finalise the Constitution during its tenure of four years until May 27, 2012. Finally, its dissolution took place the next day, on May 28, 2012.

As per Article 38 (7) (B) of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, the Prime Minister automatically lost his executive power as he lost his CA membership following its dissolution. The President of Nepal, Ram Baran Yadav asked the Nepalese Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai to remain in the post and

continue to perform the administrative duties of the government as caretaker until the new government was formed.

But on the eve of the dissolution of CA, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai declared November 22, 2012 as the date for holding elections to the new Parliament. President Ram Baran Yadav, however, is maintaining silence on this issue.

Moreover, the Prime Minister wants to give continuity to the present government in the post-CA dissolution period until the election of the Parliament, but other major political parties, including the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal –Unified Marxist-

* *Hari Bansh Jha*

Leninist (CPN-UML) and ten student wings want the Prime Minister to resign from his post immediately to pave the way for the formation of a national government. The NC and CPN-UML have already stopped giving support to the present government by calling back their ministers.

In fact, the dissolution of CA is a great setback to democracy in Nepal. Unfortunately, the CA could neither come with any formula with regard

In fact, the dissolution of CA is a great setback to democracy in Nepal. Unfortunately, neither the CA could come up with any formula with regard to the restructuring of the states under the federal system nor did it resolve the dispute about the system of governance. Some of these issues were major hurdles in constitution making.

to the restructuring of the states under the federal system, nor did it resolve the dispute about the system of governance. Some of these issues were major hurdles in Constitution making. CA's seriousness in drafting the constitution was observed only when the Supreme Court in Nepal gave its verdict that there would be

no further extension of CA if it failed to come out with constitution until May 27, 2012, the day its term expired.

The political leaders in Nepal in haste tried to resolve some of the issues that they could not address over the years. The problem of

rehabilitation and integration of the Maoist People's Liberation Army numbering 19,000 plus was largely addressed. Most of the combatants opted to go for

voluntary retirement from the cantonments and satellite camps. As such, only 3000 or so combatants were left to be integrated with the Nepalese Army and it was not difficult to do so as there was already an understanding among the political stakeholders to integrate 6,500 of those people in the Army.

A few days before the dissolution of CA, the NC and CPN-UML had even joined the government headed by Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (UCPN-Maoist). The loose alliance of Terai Madhesh Democratic Forum had already extended its support to UCPN (Maoist) in forming the government. With the joining of those two major political parties, the Bhattarai government in Nepal had really taken the form of a democratic alliance, if not a consensus government.

In a marked departure, the major political parties in the Bhattarai government including the UCPN-Maoist, NC and CPN-UML agreed to form 11 federal units. Besides, they decided that the President of the country would be directly elected by the people; while the Prime Minister would be elected by the Parliament. It was agreed that the Constitution

would be prepared on the basis a broad framework and the contentious issues would be left to the next elected Parliament to decide.

However, the political leaders of the major political parties like the UCPN (Maoist), NC and CPN-UML committed a blunder by not giving any details of the names and geographical boundaries of federal units. They were silent with regard to the question of power-sharing between the popularly-elected President and the Parliament-elected Prime Minister. They were also silent on the procedures of election of chief ministers in federal units and the election of the National Assembly members.

It was feared that the confusion over the division of power between the two executive bodies of President and the Prime Minister could trigger conflict. It was anticipated that the

President, backed by the Army could make the Prime Minister's position shaky, leading to the revival of an authoritarian regime.

Most importantly, by deciding to form 11 federal states, the three major political parties in the government embarrassed the Madheshi forces. They expressed complete disagreement with the proposal of the three political parties to form the so-called 11 provinces for the reason that it ignored the issue of identity. They also took this development as an attempt to foil the idea of ethnicity-based federalism. There was a growing apprehension that a conspiracy was being hatched to weaken the Terai by breaking it into multiple states rather than one state.

As is well known, the Madheshis have been demanding the formation of 'One Madhesh Province' from east to west in the Terai region. They had

stopped the Madheshi agitation in 2007 only when the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala made an agreement with the Madheshi leaders to concede their demand for the formation of 'One Madhesh Province.'

The Terai-based Madheshi People's Rights Forum, therefore, threatened to protest against the proposed agreement on the formation of 11 states if the contentious issues in the Constitution were not scrapped. Normal life in the Terai region had been plagued by *bandhs* (shutdown) for more than three weeks due to the call given by different ethnic groups, including the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities and Tharuhat Struggle Committee. Business and industry, as well as the movement of people had been affected. Cases of ethnic violence erupted in different parts of the country.

The Nepalese Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, including the Tamans and Newar communities of Kathmandu, had announced Kathmandu-centered programmes in their bid to oppose the political parties' decision on federalism. In this chaotic situation, the Western diplomatic missions and their aid agencies in Nepal had asked their staff and their nationals not to pay any visit outside Kathmandu.

Now in the post - CA dissolution period, it is very difficult to predict the political course that events will take. But certain signs of conflict among the major political parties have already started. The CPN-Maoists want the election of Parliament to be conducted on November 22, 2012, but the NC and CPN-UML do not want such an election to be conducted under the aegis of CPN-Maoists. Besides, misunderstandings have started surfacing between the President and

the Prime Minister. The President treats the Prime Minister merely as a caretaker until the next government is formed. On the other hand, the Prime Minister thinks of himself as the competent executive body to run the government and hold elections to the parliament.

In the existing situation, the NC and CPN-UML might lose their political hold in the country further if parliamentary elections are held as per the decision of Nepalese Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai. It is likely that the CPN-Maoists might use the government machinery in its favour to win the elections. It might also use former combatants during the time of elections to its advantage. Even many of the Madheshis might back CPN-Maoists during the elections. This is due to the fact that some Madhesh-based political parties are in the government and a message has gone to the people in the Terai region that the NC and

CPN-UML are in favour of dividing Madhesh whereas the CPN-Maoists are somewhat considerate to their cause of forming one Madhesh.

In order to save the country from plunging into further conflict, it would be appropriate if the President of Nepal facilitates a process whereby a competent retired Chief Justice of the country is made interim Prime Minister. The new interim Prime Minister could form a government with the help of non-political persons and then declare an appropriate date for conducting the next elections. After conducting parliamentary election in free and fair manner, the Prime

Minister will hand over power to the person who is elected Prime Minister by the parliament. It would be the duty of the next Prime Minister to see how the new Constitution may be finalized to the satisfaction of the people. In the existing situation, neither the political parties in Government, nor the Parties in opposition could be said to be appropriately qualified to conduct the Parliament and elections as they have failed to make any delivery so far. Any effort to deviate from this process might further endanger peace and stability in the country.

[Back to contents](#)

Indian Navy On A High - Growth Trajectory

- Nitin Gokhale

Last week, Vikramaditya, formerly Adm. Gorshkov, a 45,000-tonne displacement aircraft carrier built in Russia began its sea trials, six months before it is handed over to the Indian Navy on December 4, the Navy Day.

This week, four frontline warships are on a port call in Shanghai at the end of a sustained overseas deployment as part of India's 'Look East Policy'. The four IN ships, Rana, Shivalik, Karmukh and Shakti, under the command of Rear Admiral P Ajit Kumar, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet are on an operational deployment to the

South China Sea and North West Pacific. Earlier in the deployment, the first bi-lateral maritime exercise between India and Japan 'JIMEX 12' (Japan India Maritime Exercise) was conducted, coinciding with commemoration of 60 years of diplomatic relations between India and Japan.

According to the Indian Navy even as the four ships of the Eastern Fleet are in the South China Sea, another ship, INS Savitri is currently in Port Victoria, Seychelles. INS Savitri will participate in the National Day celebrations of Seychelles and thereafter be deployed for

* Nitin Gokhale - Visiting Fellow, VIF

about two months to undertake surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of Seychelles and Mauritius. The Indian Navy continues to maintain one Dornier aircraft in Seychelles to provide aerial surveillance for the Seychelles EEZ. Another Dornier aircraft is actively flying from Maldives to meet Maldivian requirements of EEZ surveillance and anti-piracy patrols.

INS Tabar is on a sustained deployment in the Gulf of Aden on convoy escort and anti-piracy patrol.

Four ships of the Western Fleet have just begun an overseas deployment to the Horn of Africa, Red Sea and the Western Mediterranean under the command of Rear Admiral AR

Karve, Flag Officer Commanding, Western Fleet.

Suddenly, the Indian Navy is the service to watch out for.

Quietly, it has gathered pace in acquisition and modernisation together. Currently it is in the middle of a planned expansion designed to cater to emerging maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

For instance, in April, India's latest naval base, INS Dweeprakshak (Island protector) was put into operation at Kavaratti in Lakshawadeep, the tiny island chain, southwest of Kerala. Although the Indian Navy has had a small presence on the strategically important islands for the past decade, its decision to open a permanent base emanated from recent incidents of piracy

very close to these islands. At least 100 pirates were caught and several piracy attempts foiled in the vicinity by the Indian Navy in recent times.

In a statement, the Navy said: “Indian Navy has been operating a detachment at Kavaratti since early eighties. With the commissioning of INS Dweeprakshak, the island territories would see calibrated strengthening of assets in step with their growing relevance to the security calculus of the Nation. A firmer footing in the islands, which are spread out astride some of the busiest shipping lanes of the world would provide the necessary wherewithal to the Indian Navy to discharge its responsibilities suitably. Indian Naval Warships on patrol would now extend their

reach farther with base support from INS Dweeprakshak.”

The establishment of this base is in keeping with the announcement made by the Chief of Naval Staff, Adm. Nirmal Verma. “The Navy is also in the process of setting up Operational Turn Around bases, Forward Operating Bases and Naval Air Enclaves along the coast which would enhance the reach and sustainability of our surveillance effort. ..in 2011the Navy has provided a renewed impetus and focus towards creation of operational and administrative infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep and Minicoy Islands. These islands are the country’s strategic outposts and augmentation of the facilities would enhance our reach and enable extended presence in the

area,” he had said in December 2011.

The Navy’s long-term Maritime Capabilities Perspective Planning fact has identified a mix of two major roles for the force: One, the traditional blue water operational capability and two, a plan to effectively counter threats closer to the coast.

According to the report of the Standing Committee on Defence, tabled in Parliament in the last week of April, the Navy’s short-term plan has the following objectives:

- Augment airborne maritime surveillance, strike, Anti Submarine Warfare and air defence capability through induction of shore-based

aircraft, integral helos, carrier based aircraft, space based AIS and UAVs, along with suitable weapons and sensors

- Build adequate standoff capability for sea lift and Expeditionary Operations to

achieve desired power projection force levels, influence events ashore and undertake Military Operations Other Than War.

- Induct assets and develop suitable infrastructure to augment forces available for Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), protection of off-shore assets and Coastal Security framework.

The Navy’s long-term Maritime Capabilities Perspective Planning fact has identified a mix of two major roles for the force: One, the traditional blue water operational capability and two, a plan to effectively counter threats closer to the coast.

- Induct force multipliers like satellite based global communications, reconnaissance and network enabled platforms to achieve Battle-Space dominance capability and perform network centric operations.
- Induct state-of-the-art equipment and specialised platforms for Special Forces to enhance niche capabilities to conduct Maritime Intervention Operations and other envisaged roles.
- Develop support infrastructure in island territories to support the

planned force levels as well as support infrastructure for ships/submarines/aircrafts at ports and airbases.

Given the extensive plans presented to the Parliament, it is evident now that the Indian Navy is in the middle of its most ambitious expansion plan in the past three decades. Senior officers point out that the Indian Navy's perspective-planning in terms of 'force-levels' is now driven by a conceptual shift from 'numbers' of platforms -- that is, from the old 'bean-counting' philosophy - - to one that concentrates upon 'capabilities'.

now driven by a conceptual shift from 'numbers' of platforms -- that is, from the old 'bean-counting' philosophy -- to one that concentrates upon 'capabilities'.

Naval HQ says 50 modern ships are currently on order with the majority being built in Indian shipyards. The Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence was informed last month that while Indian shipyards have made remarkable progress in building hulls and associated equipment but still lag behind in building and manufacturing weapons and sensors.

Traditionally the Indian Navy has sourced most of its ships from the former Soviet Union but over the past decade, defence planners have leaned hard on Indian shipbuilding yards to deliver a variety of warship for the Indian Navy.

Two stealth ships—INS Shivalik and INS Satpura—commissioned recently have been designed and built by public sector Mazgaon

Docks Limited. The order books of India's oldest government-owned shipbuilders are full with the Navy wanting four more such guided missile frigates over the next five years.

There are more acquisitions in the pipeline. They include: four anti-submarine corvettes, four guided missile destroyers, three stealth frigates, six Scorpene submarines (being built at Mazgaon Docks with French technology and help) and two nuclear-powered submarines.

India's conventional diesel-powered submarine fleet is down to single digits right now but with the Russian-built Nerpa class nuclear submarine (leased for a decade) joining service earlier this year, the submarine arm has got a major boost. But the biggest force accretion in recent years has come

in the form of Boeing P-8i long range maritime reconnaissance (LRMR) plane that gives the Indian Navy a reach and capability to mount surveillance way beyond its traditional areas of influence.

According to its near-term plans, the Indian Navy has ambitions to become a three Battle Carrier Groups force by 2020. While its most prestigious acquisition—Russian Aircraft Carrier Admiral Gorshkov, renamed INS Vikramaditya—is likely to be inducted into the fleet latest by March 2013, one more carrier being built indigenously will most likely also join the service by 2015.

Little wonder than the US wants India and especially the Indian Navy to play a major role in its quest to form new and lasting regional alliances in Asia as articulated by visiting secretary of defence Leon Panetta.

Currently India operates a lone Aircraft Carrier, INS Viraat, a British-built 1960s vintage ship that is on an extended lease of life thanks to the Navy's innovative engineers and planners. INS Vikramaditya, once inducted, will give India the much needed edge in its maritime capabilities since it will come with the latest MiG-29 K series of aircraft. Indian Naval Aviators are already hard at work training themselves on the planes but away from the ship.

Defence Minister AK Antony in fact told the Naval Commanders Conference last month: "India's strategic location in the Indian Ocean and the professional capability of our Navy bestows

upon us a natural ability to play a leading role in ensuring peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.”

Little wonder then the US wants India and especially the Indian Navy to play a major role in its quest to form new and lasting

regional alliances in Asia as articulated by visiting secretary of defence Leon Panetta.

The author is a journalist with 30 years experience and the Security & Strategic Affairs Editor with Indian broadcaster NDTV

[Back to contents](#)

Costs Of Policy Convolution

We have a central bank that cites inflation concerns and holds rates steady, but monetizes the budget deficit in record sums

- *V. Anantha Nageswaran*

We will give global policymakers their due. We agree neither with their goals nor with their methods. Further, we do not believe that their methods will deliver broad economic and social goals: diffused prosperity, reduced inequality and social stability. Our horizons are different, too. But we have to evaluate them against their goals and not ours.

They have wanted to keep economies muddling through since no boom is likely now. Towards that end, they have done several things. For one, they have made sure that interest rates lose

their salience as the variable that equilibrates savings and investment. They have allowed money to flow into banks, allegedly for onward lending to the real economy, against all types of collateral. Last we heard was that paper towels in bank kitchens would be acceptable to the European Central Bank as collateral. They have made sure that commodity prices decline.

At the same time, they have managed to prevent signals from declining commodity prices flowing through to stock markets. Stocks would normally be in a state of funk if oil prices declined

* *V. Anantha Nageswaran*

20% or more due to worries over economic growth. Instead, the Dow-Jones Index is close to 13,000; the S&P 500 is above 1,300 and the DAX index is above 6,000. Even the Sensex has rallied around 1,000 points since the beginning of June. A combination of willing proprietary traders, sovereign wealth funds, central banks, government slush funds, government-owned enterprises, summit meetings and old-fashioned rumours has been put to work to keep stock prices from falling.

But the manipulation will not be costless. These actions are convoluted at best and diabolical at worst. Let us take the case of India, for example. This columnist praised the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for holding interest rates steady. However, on calmer

reflection, RBI's monetary policy appears to be hopelessly knotted.

Credit Suisse research notes that purchase of government bonds by RBI has amounted to an annualized 3.4% of gross domestic product in 2012, based on data on RBI bond purchases in the first 73 days of the fiscal year 2012. About 30% of these purchases have been unannounced. They note stoically that there has been no empirical correlation between M3 money supply growth and Wholesale Price Index inflation in India, but that periods of high and volatile inflation are coincident with high deficit monetization by RBI.

So, let us see what is happening. RBI holds interest rates steady. Private sector cost of borrowing does not come down. Public sector borrowing costs are held down by its bond purchases. Further, the

public sector garners most of the savings and liquidity with its disdain for restraining spending and spending meaningfully. The government announces a hike in

the minimum support price for agricultural produce, while consumer price inflation reigns above 10%.

So, what we have is a central bank that cites inflation concerns and holds rates steady, but monetizes the budget deficit in record sums; a government that is supposedly pro-poor, but ensures double-digit inflation with its fiscal irresponsibility; investors (who are they?) who bid up stocks and

sell the currency. Even a good criminal novel-writer could not have created such a convoluted set of circumstances, goals and actions.

So, what we have is a central bank that cites inflation concerns and holds rates steady, but monetizes the budget deficit in record sums; a government that is supposedly pro-poor, but ensures double-digit inflation with its fiscal irresponsibility; investors (who are they?) who bid up stocks and sell the currency. Even a good criminal novel-writer could not have created such a convoluted set of circumstances, goals and actions.

Let us move further north-west. In yet another novel way of printing money, the Bank of England and the UK treasury decide to lend banks large sums of money at low rates of interest so that they would lend that money to small- and medium-sized businesses. This is what

previous programmes of money printing aimed to achieve. For all intent and purposes, they have not been effective. If a medicine is not working, two options can be considered. One is to change the

medicine and the other is to increase dosage. Globally, policymakers choose the latter course invariably. An indebted society needs to save and should be incentivized to do so nor is there much point in encouraging banks to add to the mountain of debt that needs to be shrunk first. Yet, officials and their cheerleaders in the academia and in media can only thoughtlessly resist seeing the folly of their ways.

In Europe, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Bundesbank engage in so much open shadow-boxing that one dies of laughter, watching it. The Bundesbank has a nominee in the ECB governing board. Yet, the Bundesbank president and their reports gravely warn ECB that its actions make the euro worthless.

If a medicine is not working, two options can be considered. One is to change the medicine and the other is to increase dosage. Globally, policymakers choose the latter course invariably.

ECB lowers credit requirements for the collateral it accepts and reduces margin requirements even as German government officials confide to local newspaper editors that it is difficult to keep Greece within the euro zone and the Spanish think that Germany would kick them out eventually (http://reut.rs/L3HVqa).

Economic policymaking and analysis are suffering from some combination of

hubris, ignorance, crass selfishness and indifference to social consequences. Globally, leaders cannot and do not lead. That is less of a tragedy than the fact that the rest of us have not grasped it, yet.

[Back to contents](#)

Governance And The Prime Minister

- *Dr. M.N. Buch*

The whole theme of the Constitution of India is that this country must be governed and how this should be done is laid down in every Article of the Constitution and in particular in Chapter 1 of Part V of the of the Constitution for the Union and Chapters 1 and 2 of Part VI for the States.

The post of Prime Minister exists because Article 74 so mandates and it is he and his Council of Ministers who, in accordance with the Business Allocation Rules and the Rules of Business of the Executive Government framed under Article 77, will advise the President on how the executive

functions of government will be conducted. In this there is no ambiguity and the Constitution and the Rules framed under it demand that the Prime Minister will in fact govern. The Constitution does not permit or forgive lack of governance and a Prime Minister who does not govern has no right to occupy that post. Of course as the person who, together with the Council of Ministers, enjoys the confidence of the House of the People he is the one required to initiate and pilot legislation and to carry out the wishes of the Legislature as stated through laws, the budget, debate and resolutions, etc. The Prime Minister, therefore,

* *Dr. M.N. Buch - Visiting Fellow, VIF*

straddles the twin horses of the Executive and Legislature, both wings of the State being concerned with governance.

In order that a Prime Minister may govern there has to be an environment of government in which the Prime Minister can function effectively. It is for this reason that the Prime Minister enjoys and must enjoy a degree of Independence in functioning in which, while discharging his responsibility to the House and to the electorate in general, the Prime Minister is not subjected to nagging, pettifogging complaints which prevent him from performing his fundamental duty of governance. Does such an environment exist in India? After Independence at least till imposition of Emergency and its aftermath such an environment did exist and though people such

as Ram Manohar Lohia were the gadflies who tormented Jawaharlal Nehru for taking the decisions which a Prime Minister should, he was ever bogged down in controversies in which self-defence took precedence over governance. That was the period in which India took momentous decisions. We entered an era of planning and there was an immense thrust of building basic infrastructure so that the sinews of a modern industrial state were created. Whatever might be the complaints about adequacy and quality of electric power, the fact is that from a situation in which only five thousand towns and villages in India were electrified in 1947 when the British left, today we have one hundred percent electrification. Life expectancy has increased from twenty-seven years to sixty-three years, epidemics are under

control, food production has increased dramatically and India is a major industrial power today. There were inefficiencies which have prevented India from achieving its full potential, but that does not detract from the magnitude of achievement during a period when India was actually governed. Not surprisingly this was also the period when corruption was at its lowest ebb, which proves that taking decisions leads to less corruption than dithering and then taking decisions in panic.

To whom should the Prime Minister be accountable? Obviously to Parliament and, by implication he should be accountable to the President. He

is accountable to the electorate because every five years there is an election and the ruling party, if it wants another term in office, it has to convince the voters that its achievements in government have benefitted the average citizen and, therefore, it should get

If the ruling party fails to convince the electorate, then it loses power and the Prime Minister his office. We have seen this happen in India where a powerful Indira Gandhi was ousted at the polls, only to return to power at the next election. Atal Bihari Vajpayee won power and then lost it,

another term. If the ruling party fails to convince the electorate, then it loses power and the Prime Minister his office. We have seen this happen in India where a powerful Indira

Gandhi was ousted at the polls, only to return to power at the next election. Atal Bihari Vajpayee won power and then lost it, just as the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi won power and subsequently lost it. This is normal in a democracy, but the

lesson learnt from our elections is that a party and a Prime Minister whose conduct of government does not live up to the expectations of the people will lose power. In other words, what the people of India want is a firm government and not a government whose every step seems to be dictated by populism and immediate expediency. One wishes that this lesson is learnt by the present government and all governments to follow.

This background about governance has been sculpted because ever since Anna Hazare and his cohorts launched a movement for the enactment of a Lokpal Act drafted by them government has been on the defensive. That is not all. Various actors have come on the stage and encouraged by a complete collapse of executive government have

begun enacting solo dramas of their own which do not necessarily combine to create a great play but individually lead to such chaos on stage that the audience cannot make head or tail of what is going on. The nearest resemblance in real life of what is happening in the world of government is a lunatic asylum at bedlam hour in which no one can make any sense of what people are saying or doing. This is made possible because in the manner in which coalition governments function in India no government can orchestrate a scenario of governance which makes any sense and, therefore, chaos reigns supreme.

This point needs to be illustrated or elaborated. The Constitution in Article 112 directs that the President will cause to be laid before both Houses of Parliament

and an annual statement of the estimated receipts and expenditures of the Government of India. In popular parlance this is called the budget. Under Article 113 each item of expenditure as estimated which is not charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India is to be presented to the House of the People in the form of a demand for grants and the House may approve or disapprove a grant. The aggregate of the approved grants would be the final amount of expenditure agreed upon by the House of the People and this would take the form of an Appropriation Bill under Article 114. No expenditure can be incurred before the enactment of the Appropriation Act. This entire process is initiated by the Executive, discussed and voted upon by Parliament and then handed back to the Executive as the sanction

on which it will operate in the matter of expenditure. This is purely a matter between Parliament and the Executive, with each Minister being accountable to Parliament on how the grants relating to his department have been spent.

In order that Parliament can judge whether the manner in which government has spent funds is according to what has been voted the Constitution, Part V, Chapter 5 provides for the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. Under Articles 149 and 151 Comptroller and Auditor General audits the accounts of government and in the case of the Union Government he presents his audit report to the President and in the case of the States to the respective Governors, who is then required to present the report to the House

of the People and the State Legislative Assembly, as the case may be. Till then these reports are not in the public domain and have to be kept between CAG and government. It is for Parliament then to decide whether it accepts the audit report and directs government to take action thereon, or that it rejects the report or only partially accepts it. The Comptroller and Auditor General, when auditing an office, can comment on the propriety and wisdom of expenditure, but it cannot do what the present CAG has been doing, that is, sitting in judgement over the decisions of the Executive and stating that had some other decision been taken there would have been

accrual or a certain amount of gain to government and that failure to take such decision has resulted in loss. Such hypothetical questions and views come within the realm of speculation and not audit.

No one is denying that our system

No one is denying that our system has been highly corrupted by the arbitrariness of political decision making and the complete and absolute surrender of the Civil Services to political bullying. This surrender has to a large extent been converted into a nexus between politicians and civil servants.

has been highly corrupted by the arbitrariness of political decision making and the complete and absolute surrender of the Civil Services to political

bullying. This surrender has to a large extent been converted into a nexus between politicians and civil servants. That is another story. At the same time CAG is not competent to state that if at the time that spectrum was being made available to

telecommunication firms, the auction route had been followed government would have gained Rs. 1,76,000 crores and, because this was not done, government has incurred this much of loss. What about the proposition that if the auction route had been followed initially there would not have been growth in the telecommunication sector? These are political and administrative issues and are not within the realm of audit, To assume corruption from such a defective audit report is a complete distortion of facts, but tragically this is what has led to the Anna Hazare movement which started with good intentions but which has now grown berserk and is threatening the very existence of meaningful executive government in India. Once again let me hasten to submit that this is not an apology for the wrongdoing of

government under the guise of compulsions of coalition nor does it excuse government from taking a firm stand but always succumbing to the pressures of such puny partners as Mamata Banerjee or Karunanidhi. Any movement to curb corruption which also forces government to provide good government would be welcome, but unfortunately Anna Hazare's movement is not the one which can do this.

More than Anna Hazare it is some of his more irresponsible associates such as Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan whose voices, in ascending order of shrillness, have launched a most incontinent attack on the Prime Minister and his Ministers for taking decisions in cases where lack of decision making would have been fatal. Let us take the allocation of coal blocks. No

decision of a Minister or the Prime Minister is open to question in this behalf unless it can be shown that there is some personal gain to the Minister concerned, which is not justified by law or the rules of financial propriety. Unless the decision has an element of criminality which could justify the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) no investigating agency with police functions can sit in judgement over such decisions. Increasingly CBI, which is accused by opposition parties of being a political handmaiden of government, is being involved in reviewing administrative decisions which it has neither the authority nor the competence to do. Legally CBI does not exist except as a government body constituted by executive order. The police is created by the Indian Police Act or the relevant

State Acts and it operates according to the powers vested in it by the Code of Criminal Procedure in the matter of maintenance of public order, prevention of crime, investigation of offences and their subsequent prosecution. The Delhi Special Police Establishment, popularly known as CBI, is such a police force constituted under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, enjoying legal powers as conferred by the Act. CBI as such has no legal powers. It is not the administrative superior of government officers or ministers because the Rules of Business confer no such powers on it and it certainly does not have the competence to sit in judgement over the administrative decisions of senior officers and ministers. No investigating agency ever has such competence. Despite this, increasingly, CBI, through what

are called preliminary enquiries, is interfering in the general administration, which it has no competence to do. It is still a mystery why when under Entry 8 of List 1 of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution Parliament has the right to enact a law creating a Central Bureau of Investigation and conferring on it both functions and power, this has not been done and for which there does not seem to be any initiative on the part of government. It would be a sad day for our democracy if agencies like CBI begin sitting in judgement against the decisions of ministers.

It is still a mystery why when under Entry 8 of List 1 of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution Parliament has the right to enact a law creating a Central Bureau of Investigation and conferring on it both functions and power, this has not been done and for which there does not seem to be any initiative on the part of government. It would be a sad day for our democracy if agencies like CBI begin sitting in judgement against the decisions of ministers.

In this behalf let me tell a true story. In 1977 when Indira Gandhi was ousted from power and the Janata Government was formed, in Madhya Pradesh also we had a Janata Government dominated by BJP. K.L. Pasricha, the then Chief Secretary, issued an order to all Secretaries of the State Government to review the orders of their ministers in the past five years and to bring to notice for action such cases where they felt that the minister's order was wrong. My colleague, B.J. Hirjee and I independently wrote to the Chief Secretary that under the Rules of Business it was the job of the Secretary to ensure that if an

order of his minister is contrary to rules or the law, or even the canons of propriety, he should advise the minister accordingly and if the minister did not agree, then to bring the matter to the notice of the Chief Minister through the Chief Secretary in a process called Coordination. If, therefore, the Minister had taken a decision and the Secretary had failed to advise him correctly, then he was equally responsible for the wrongdoing and would have to bear the brunt of consequences. He could not hide ex post facto under the excuse of wrongdoing by the Minister, thus sitting in judgement over his Minister. We both stated that allowing a Secretary to sit in judgement over his Minister's orders ex post facto is not permissible in a democracy. The same applies to CBI or any other agency. Of course if they are

investigating a criminal case duly registered under law, then it would be a different matter.

Our past experience of bringing government to a halt on account of allegations against the Prime Minister has been very unhappy. V.P. Singh, who went on to be Prime Minister, alleged that in the purchase of Bofors 155mm guns for the army illegal gratification had been paid. Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister, first denied the allegations, then said neither he nor his dear ones had taken any bribe and became increasingly embroiled in an unseemly controversy in which the Indian Express came out with an expose. For the remaining years of his tenure Rajiv Gandhi was just defending himself and could be described as a lame duck Prime Minister. V.P. Singh neither provided clinching proof

in the matter, nor withdrew the allegations and this, while creating an environment of distrust which has still not dissipated, brought government to a halt.

Contrast this with the case of Yoshihiro Tanaka, Prime Minister of Japan. It was alleged that he took a bribe of Dollar Two Million from Lockheed Corporation for purchase of aircraft. The complaint was registered as a criminal case, duly investigated, found proved. Tanaka was prosecuted, convicted, given a jail sentence and his party expelled him and he was removed as Prime Minister. A corrupt man was punished but the Prime Minister's post was unscathed. In India we

persecute but do not prosecute and this seriously harms the post.

If the Prime Minister is convinced that neither he nor his colleague did wrong then it is his duty to categorically state that neither CBI nor anyone else could inquire into their conduct and that under no circumstance would he concede what Arvind Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan are demanding. Having said that the Prime Minister must resolve to govern firmly and justly and not be deviated from this path by the likes of his present detractors.

[Back to contents](#)

Ideology And Political Parties

- *RNP Singh*

The nationalist movement provided, particularly after 1920s, a broad framework of ideologies for political parties in India. Nationalism, socialism, secularism and democracy became the main plank of the Congress with special appeal to casteist and minority sentiments, and this remains so till now.

After Independence, a section of the political parties, including the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, while expressing full faith in socialism, secularism and democracy, laid emphases on nationalism based on the cultural and civilisational ethos. This was seen as an antidote to the divisive policies of

encouraging the identity politics of caste and religion, followed by the Congress. The communists' belief in secularism, socialism and democracy however, remained based on social revolution leading to the establishment of the rule of proletariat and peasantry guided by Marxism and Leninism. Thus, during the formative years, the ideologies of political parties were based on socialism, secularism, and nationalism, at least at the declaratory level. In reality, some parties blatantly misused these planks to appease (and encourage) casteist and communal sentiment. Other sought consolidation on the basis of cultural Hindutva; yet others on orthodox Marxist-Materialist

* *RNP Singh - Senior Fellow, VIF*

terms. Of course, there were parties based on religious identity, such as Muslim League and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) which visualized religious communities as separate political entities.

Within the Congress Party, there were different tendencies, and these were categorized as rightist, centrist, and leftist. The first group within the Congress Party who opposed the overall policy of the Congress were the Socialists, who left the party in 1948, and formed the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party underwent several splits and reunions. In 1951 Kripalani formed Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) but after the 1952 elections, KMPP and Socialist Party merged to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), so that an anti-Congress non-communist group could be forged.

In 1955 Lohia left the PSP and revived the old Socialist Party. Again in 1964 the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) was formed as a result of the merger of the Socialist Party, with the PSP. Another group in the Congress Party led by C. Rajagopalachari, who proclaimed their opposition to the Congress policy of giving a major role to the state in regulating, directing and changing the national economy and raising the public sector to the commanding heights, came out of the Congress and founded the Swatantra Party in 1959. The Swatantra Party stood for a liberal ideology. This party, however, soon went into oblivion, though it performed well in the 1967 General Elections and emerged as the second largest party in the Lok Sabha.

There was a split in the Congress Party in 1969. The split took place between radicals led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the conservative elements led by the old guard of the party called the 'Syndicate'. But in fact, ideology did not play any significant role in the split. The birth of the new Congress Party under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership was attributed more to the changed style of functioning of the Congress rather than to any changes in the party ideology. Later development showed that Indira Gandhi's ideological vehemence and radical slogans were only a means to establish herself as an undisputed leader of the party.

But in fact, ideology did not play any significant role in the split. The birth of the new Congress Party under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership was attributed more to the changed style of functioning of the Congress rather than to any changes in the party ideology.

The relationship between the Congress and the Socialists was always ambiguous. There were differences on co-operating with the Congress which were in a way responsible for the splits in the Socialist Party. The ideological opposition to the theory and practice of Communism and formal adoption of the objective of building of socialistic pattern of society by the Congress made the position of Socialists virtually indistinguishable from that of the Congress and drew them closer to the Congress Party. Narendra Dev and Lohia opposed any tie-up with the Congress. In 1953, talks between JP and Nehru on co-operation failed. In 1962 Ashok Mehta was expelled from the PSP

and he joined the Congress as a cabinet minister at the Centre.

The most vigorous opposition to the Congress came from the Communists. Soon after Independence the Communists waged an armed struggle in some parts of the country to overthrow the Indian Government. But soon the Communists gave up the path of armed struggle and joined the democratic process of election. The ideological debates on the character of Indian states, path to revolution in India, strategy and tactics of the revolutionary path led to several splits in the Communist Party. However, their participation in elections and success in forming and running governments at the state level firmly placed them in the arena of parliamentary politics. The splintered groups which believed in armed struggle were further

split into smaller groups and later merged into one group named CPI (Maoist) which is engaged today in a violent campaign against the established government.

Interestingly, after the inner debate in the party over the character of the Indian state and revolution, the undivided CPI came to the conclusion that it should support the Congress Party and form a united front with it. The other section which took a hostile attitude formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964. The split in the CPM and formation of the CPI (ML) and other revolutionary groups based on Maoism in 1967 and the splits within splits of these groups show the salient differences over strategy and tactics among the Communists. However, a closer examination of splits among the Communists

reveals the mature of leadership rivalries, personality clashes, organizational matters and programmatic positions.

After the split in the Janata Party in 1979, its constituent Bharatiya Jan Sangh formed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980.

Besides adopting the main ideological base of the erstwhile Jan Sangh, the BJP adopted Gandhism, Socialism and Cultural

Nationalism as its ideological plank. The main reason for the BJP's rise in the 1990s was its forceful presentation of Indian nationalism and stiff opposition to the Congress programme of Muslim appeasement. It awakened the people to the

danger posed by the Congress to Indian culture and the values of Hindutva. Its ability to penetrate into the middle class, to redefine nationalism and articulate the cultural and material aspirations of the people helped the BJP to consolidate itself. Its ability to

redefine itself, expand its social base and forge alliances with regional parties helped it significantly in its rise.

In the functioning of political parties, caste, religion, language and region also have acquired ideological overtones. The Muslim League during the pre-partition days claimed that Indian Muslims constituted a separate political community. Islam and Urdu provided the two

The main reason for the BJP's rise in the 1990s was its forceful presentation of Indian nationalism and stiff opposition to the Congress programme of Muslim appeasement. It awakened the people to the danger posed by the Congress to Indian culture and the values of Hindutva.

distinguishing marks. After Partition the Muslim League was revived in 1948, although there were splits in it later. The AIMIM in Andhra Pradesh is the continuation of the Majlis of the Nizam period. It is mainly based in Hyderabad city, it almost exclusively appeals to the Muslims of the state.

Similarly SAD of Punjab has its roots in religion. The leaders of the SAD believe that

Language and region also acquired the nature of ideology. As language and region grow together, regionalism takes the form of linguistic nationalism. When they are further combined with religion, culture, or ethnic identity, they become a powerful force.

the Sikhs constitute a separate political community (Panth). The Akal Takht is the highest seat of religious and political activity. The SAD launched a campaign for a Punjabi Suba (separate state for Sikh) that excluded the Hindi-speaking areas and included areas where Sikhs are in a

majority. In the 1970's and 1980s it carried out a militant struggle for Khalistan. Despite all the turmoil this caused, it was successfully contained by the late 1980's, and is now a closed chapter. There are Christian parties too in the country, as in Kerala.

Language and region also acquired the nature of ideology. As language and region grow together,

regionalism takes the form of linguistic nationalism. When they are further combined with religion, culture, or ethnic identity, they become a powerful force. It is witnessed in the South, West and East, in the emergence of several regional parties and separatist groups. The

consolidation of TDP, rise of Shiv Sena, AGP, BJD (and its earlier version, Utkal Congress), National Conference and PDP in J&K, JMM, Trinamool Congress etc. shows how region has the potential to assume the form of a political force.

With the emerging trend of the formation of regional parties, centre-state relations are getting strained. Leaders of the regional parties

However, the ambitions of the leaders of regional parties generally do not remain confined to the region only and they also tend to catch up with national aspirations and therefore, they compete with the national parties for power.

demand more powers for the state in a federal framework. This trend has also given rise to the decline of national Parties in those states as it has resulted in consolidation of regional parties. Regional identity and interests remain a potential issue for political mobilization. Often this

has taken the form of centre-state problems.

However, the ambitions of the leaders of regional parties generally do not remain confined to the region only and they also tend to catch up with national aspirations and therefore, they compete with the national parties

for power. They therefore, adopt belligerent postures particularly against the Congress, the

established national party. The BJP, the more nationalistic of the national parties, quickly grasped this emerging trend and forged alliances with these parties. Later the Congress too followed suit but it is yet to come to terms with the reality of co-existing with the regional parties.

Inspite of different ideological positions, to get themselves registered with the Election Commission, it is mandatory for all parties to declare themselves as secular, socialist and democratic. It is a different thing as to how they interpret these principles. Even parties which appeal to people on the basis of caste and religious identities regard themselves as secular. For instance, SAD, Muslim League, National Conference, Kerala Congress and Shiv Sena too stand by secularism. They say that they stand for secularism and oppose pseudo-secularism. BSP stands for emancipation and empowerment of Dalits and so on. This is the way Indian parties have evolved and the values of secularism and socialism have been internalized in the Indian psyche.

Except in the initial years after Independence, ideology did not become a bar to forging alliances among the parties. The Communist and Muslim League fought elections in Kerala together. Both Congress and CPI could forge alliances and together they could arrive at electoral understanding in that state. The coming together of socialists, former Congress men and the Jan Sangh to form the Janata Party showed that ideology is no hindrance in party chemistry. Interestingly, the CPI and Jan Sangh, ideologically poles apart were the constituents of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal government (SVD) in Bihar, in 1967 led by Karpoori Thakur, a Socialist.

Thus, we find that the relationship of any party with any other is not fixed on ideological

positioning. Parties are always ready to make compromises due to electoral compulsions and political requirements. The coalition arrangements change as per the requirements of the situation. Some of the socialists joined hands with the BJP in 1998 and they are happy together since then. DMK and AIDMK switch sides between NDA and UPA. In UP, the BSP formed a government with the support of the BJP. SAD and National Conference became partners of NDA in the Union Government after 1998.

Theoretically any party except BJP could fit into the UPA. The Third Front which went into oblivion immediately after its birth but is struggling to take shape again, can accommodate any party except the BJP and the Congress, while the NDA can take

any party except the Congress and Communists. The exclusion and inclusion is more due to party competition and electoral considerations rather than ideological positions.

The loss of values and ideology could be due to changing perceptions of the people, leaders and the followers at the ground level. Ordinary people hardly bother about ideological quarrels. For both, people and followers, pragmatic politics have become the norm. Parties are increasingly looked upon as a means to serve personal interests. Now we see fewer and fewer leaders having fixed loyalties. Some political leaders change parties as per their convenience. The parties too now follow an “open door policy” in accepting leaders from other parties.

The country has travelled a long way from the principled politics of the 1950s to personalised politics today. Whether this flexibility of ideological values is better for our

democratic future is matter of opinion and debate.

[Back to contents](#)

Official Apathy Towards Culture In India

- *Anirban Ganguly*

Culture and cultural institutions in India have begun to bear the brunt of official apathy. In a strange turn of events the present government has reduced the allocation for 2012-13 for the Ministry of Culture. It is indeed unimaginable that in a country like India which retains an unparalleled cultural and civilisational continuity, the government of the day refuses to see the larger role that a Ministry of Culture can actually play in disseminating and preserving India's civilisational repositories.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Culture in its Report on Demands for Grants – 2012-13 of Ministry of Culture (May 2012) has highlighted this aspect and brought to notice the various discrepancies and anomalies that have been allowed to creep into the entire edifice of the administration of culture in India. The Committee noted that against the projected demand of Rs. 2916.43 crore, the Ministry of Culture has been allocated only Rs.864.00 crore for 2012-13 an amount that is less than 1/3 of what was proposed by the Ministry.'

* *Anirban Ganguly – Associate Fellow, VIF*

In no uncertain term it noted 'the apathy of the Government towards the cause of preservation and promotion of our ancient culture.'

The Committee further observed that even during the XIth five year plan Art and Culture 'got a share of only 0.16% of the total central plan allocation of the Government of India' and argued that the Ministry of Culture 'certainly deserves a better treatment in allocation of funds in view of its importance' and has urged that the concerned disbursing ministry and the body such as the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission be sensitized to 'appreciate the contribution of art and culture to our nation's life.' At a time when cultural diplomacy and the wielding of soft power is

assuming greater importance as instruments of internal relations it is bewildering to note this piping down of resources for culture.

Similarly the 2012-13 budget for the premier body for cultural diplomacy and outreach, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), has been kept at the same as for the year 2010-11. This has been done at a time when ICCR has expanded its activities within and outside India and has been constantly demanding an enhanced budgetary allocation in order to meet its international commitments. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs in its Report on Demands for Grants (2012-13) (May 2012) has observed that 'during the

last three years the ICCR has been allocated almost the same fund of Rs. 150 crores against their demand ranging from Rs.166 crores to Rs. 252 crores this year.’ The Committee has thus pointedly told the Government that with ‘such insufficient fund allocation ICCR will not be able to achieve the objectives of cultural diplomacy’ with any meaningful impact. It also expressed its ‘displeasure over long pendency of opening up of Indian Cultural Centre at Washington’ and directed the Ministry to identify land/space for the proposed centre and expedite the process.

The state of Museums in the country, especially the National Museum and other units related to heritage conservation and preservation

is not bright either and seems to require urgent and innovative interventions. For example it was noted that the expenditure has been ‘less in those areas which are critical for preservation and propagation of culture and invariably [required] more funds such as [Archeological Survey of India] ASI, Museums and archives.’

Some stark facts regarding the state of cultural affairs also emerge from a scrutiny of the report which gives lie to the view that much has been done over the last few years for Indian culture. A huge gap seems to be existing ‘between the sanctioned strength and assessed strength’ in ‘almost all categories of staff and officers in ASI.’ The Committee did observe that such a

situation is 'certainly telling upon the work relating to preservation and protection of our monuments.' The staff position especially in the Science and Epigraphy section of the ASI was particularly alarming; especially the Epigraphy branch immediately needs subject matter specialists or faces risk of gradual decay and eventual closure – an unthinkable situation for a country like India, rich in epigraphical sources and material.

In fact, a large number of vacancies continue to exist in cultural institutions across the country. The Ministry has not been able to fill up these and a number of posts have actually lapsed due to delay in the recruitment process. The Committee wondered how with

so many posts lying vacant at various levels these premier institutes succeeded in functioning at all.

The Committee was also at a loss to note that the nodal 'Institute of Archaeology which was set up in 1985' continues to remain 'nonfunctional for want of requisite staff till date.' Its earlier recommendation that ASI be developed as a Scientific and Technical Department has also not seen any concrete action taken by the Ministry of Culture as well as ASI. Referring to its 91st report on this matter the Committee said that the ASI has failed to develop itself not merely 'as an administrative body but also as a spearhead for consolidating the scientific discipline of archaeology in the country' it called on the central

archaeological body to ‘reinvent itself, not merely as an administrative wing of the Government, but as an agency for protecting and safeguarding our national heritage, which involves a lot of scientific and technical work.’ Unless this is done the very *raison d’être* of the organisation stands to be defeated.

The Committee also found that museums were not being properly managed and were faced with a number of issues such as ‘large number of posts lying vacant for years, lack of personnel with required training/skill, poor upkeep/maintenance, galleries being closed for longer period’ and a lack of inter-agency coordination. In any case it found the reasons proffered as

‘purely technical, vague and repetitive.’

In another huge gaffe the Acquisition Committee at the premier National Museum in New Delhi has also not been revived due to shortage of space thus holding up for an indefinite period the entire process of art acquisition – which is a crucial lifeline for all museums. The Committee found the shortage of space argument rather ‘specious.’ The work of documenting built heritage and sites undertaken by the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA) also seems to be advancing slowly. During the 11th Five year plan the NMMA could ‘document only 80000 built heritage and sites out of 4 lakh estimated.’ At such a pace it will take another 20 years to

complete the entire documentation process thereby delaying the formation of a crucial master repository of heritage sites structures in India. The Committee highlighted this as well.

In this connection it may be mentioned that it asked the Government to show greater initiative in preserving our historical sites and directed it to restore and preserve the temple of Dev Varunark in Bhojpur district of the state of Bihar and place the idols of the temple. This magnificent 14th century temple complex with ruins of many deities and inscriptions of the King of Magadh is being neglected with the idols lying in a terrible state of neglect.

One of the most serious and damning finding of the Committee was that the physical verification of objects at the National Museum New Delhi and the National Gallery of Modern Art had not been done since 2003 and 2000 respectively, ceding space to 'unscrupulous elements' to have a field day. The Committee has argued that if the verification is 'not done for a longer period,' 'fixing the responsibility will be a daunting task' and has recommended that 'for the sake of preserving the invaluable treasures, the Government should take immediate steps to conduct physical verifications' of artifacts in these leading institutions of art and culture.

Acceding that there is serious shortage of 'cultural managers

and technical experts' in the country the Committee called for the Government to seriously devise 'suitable courses' that need to be introduced in the academic institutions and universities at various levels.' This of course requires an imaginative academic approach and thinking – which is lacking in the present educational planning in the country.

The picture does not really inspire optimism, and at this rate all our symbols of Indian history and culture appear to be seriously threatened. It is difficult to fathom the present Government's apathy and inertia towards the discovery, preservation and promotion of Indian culture.

inertia towards the discovery, preservation and promotion of Indian culture. Its professed cultural aficionados have been repeatedly ignoring the imperative of creating a vibrant Ministry of Culture that shall work with a civilisational perspective in mind. Burdened with a myopic vision of history, ceaselessly engaged in deconstructing Indian nationhood our present policymakers do not seem to have the inclination to seriously look into these vital aspects of national identity and ethos.

The picture does not really inspire optimism, and at this rate all our symbols of Indian history and culture appear to be seriously threatened. It is difficult to fathom the present Government's apathy and

The Parliamentary Committee has indeed done a service to

the nation by bringing to light the acute official apathy that Indian culture faces in India itself. It is a state of affairs that calls for urgent intervention and rectification. Is anyone listening?

[Back to contents](#)

An Interaction On ‘Indo-US Relations: Global Partnership’

On June 28, 2012, a group of eminent security experts held an intense and wide ranging interaction with **Mr. Jason Isaacson**, Director of Government and International affairs at the American Jewish Committee in Washington. The informal interaction, held at the Foundation’s premises, focused on the subject ‘Indo-US Relations: Global Partnership’, but it included a range of other related issues such as Pakistan’s support to terrorist groups.



Iran’s quest for nuclear weapons, the nuclear proliferation of Iran, the growth of radical Islam in the Middle East, the rise of China in Asia-Pacific region and the bilateral relations between India and Israel. Mr Isaacson was accompanied by **Ms. Patty Friedman Marcus**, Director of the Asia Pacific Institute at the American Jewish Committee. With Ambassador Prabhat Shukla, Joint Director VIF in the Chair, others who took part in the interaction included Mr Ajit Doval, Director VIF, Mr.

AK Verma, Lt Gen (retd) RK Sawhney, Vice Admiral Raman Puri Brig Arun Sahgal and Brig Vinod Anand.

The interaction opened with Mr. Isaacson making out a strong case for much closer cooperation between India and the US than they have been able to achieve so far, a view shared by Director VIF who also underscored the fact that notwithstanding differences in perceptions in a few areas, the two sister democracies needed to evolve a common world view in their own interests. Mr. Isaacson stressed that in view of new challenges confronting the two nations, the choice they faced was not one between cooperation and avoidance or between cooperation and aloofness, but between closer and less close cooperation.

While he advocated the need for India and the US to build on the promise of the civil nuclear co-operation agreement, he also urged the need for building architecture for inter-dependence. Mr. Isaacson also said that greater exchanges between the officials of the two countries at all levels would go a long way in fostering better and stronger ties. Chiming in with his views, Mr. Doval said that a joint net assessment of common perceptions was necessary, especially to confront common challenges. He however said that areas of specific cooperation between the two countries needed to be identified as the future direction in the relationship.

The interaction which followed Mr. Isaacson's brief

presentation also dealt with several complex issues in a very cordial atmosphere, illustrating the desire on both sides not only to appreciate each other's point of views, but also to work together for

achieving common national objectives.

Report prepared by Sanjay Kumar

[Back to contents](#)

Scientific Dating Of Ancient Events

From 7000 BC To 2000 BC

- *By Saroj Bala*

The beginning of the Holocene Age (post last ice age) is now universally accepted to be around 12000 BP. Consequently the civilizations of the world naturally and simultaneously started developing near the rivers which initially started flowing due to the melting of glaciers near the Equator e.g. South India, Sri Lanka and Africa.

When populations multiplied, these river waters became insufficient. Therefore some people started travelling from south to north. Such northward

migration continued for several centuries and finally when these people from south India reached the banks of the Himalayan Rivers, they found climatic conditions conducive to long term development of civilization on the banks of these rivers, providing security of water, food and shelter for a very long time. Thousands of years later, when some of these Himalayan Rivers became non-perennial or started drying up, some of these people started moving towards Central Asia and Europe. As per ecologists this ecological cycle has been repeating itself and will be

** Saroj Bala - Member Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction, Ministry of Finance - Govt of India & Director - Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas*

repeated after every ice age and during the beginnings of all Holocene cycles. Therefore the history of the growth of civilization in the world is not 4 to 5 thousand years old, but more than 10,000 years old.

So far the history of the world, particularly of the Indian subcontinent, is based on linguistic guesswork and religious beliefs/hearsay. However, during last 30-40 years, several new scientific tools and techniques have been developed, which are capable of determining the dates of any ancient events in a scientific and precise manner. For example:

1. Computer aided extraction of planetary references from ancient books.

2. Planetarium software for astronomical dating of such references
3. Satellite based Remote Sensing techniques
4. Underwater explorations and Geospatial Technologies
5. Radiocarbon dating, Thermo Luminescence dating methods
6. Human Genome studies, Biological and Cultural Anthropology
7. Palaeobotanical, Palaeozoological and Palaeoclimatic studies
8. Geographic and Geological research tools.

The Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas through I-SERVE Delhi Chapter started working on a Research Project titled: **Scientific Dating of Ancient Events from Rigveda to Aryabhatta:** astronomical dating

of planetary references in ancient Sanskrit manuscripts by making use of planetarium software & correlation of such astronomical dates with corroborating archaeological, anthropological, paleobotanical, ecological, geological, oceanographic and remote sensing evidences. Smt. Saroj Bala, an IRS officer of 1972 batch is its chief research co-ordinator.

Very credible conclusions were arrived at in respect of the first part of research revealing that an indigenous civilisation, also revealed through the Vedas and Epics, has been developing in India for the last more than 9000 years and that India's contribution to world civilisation and culture is much bigger than acknowledged at present.

Intensive and extensive use of multi-disciplinary scientific research reports, prepared during last three- four decades by making use of such scientific tools and techniques, was done for dating the events narrated in the Valmiki Ramayan and results were amazing! Once the astronomical dating was determined around 7000 BP, it appeared that almost all research reports were corroborating such conclusions and opening before us the pages of our true history; shifting many events from the domain of mythology to the realm of reality.

The story of Shri Ram's life was first narrated by Maharishi Valmiki in the Ramayan which was written after Shri Ram was crowned king of Ayodhya, Maharishi Valmiki had a great sense of astronomy as he had

made sequential astronomical references on important dates related to the life of Shri Ram indicating the location of planets vis-à-vis the zodiac constellations and other visible stars (nakshatras). Needless to add a given position of planets and nakshatras vis-à-vis zodiac constellations and the equinoxes is not repeated for 25690 years. By entering the precise details of the planetary configuration of the important events in the life of Shri Ram as given in the Valmiki Ramayan in the software named 'Planetarium Gold' corresponding exact dates of these events according to the western calendar can be determined.

Sh. Pushkar Bhatnagar of the Indian Revenue Service had acquired from the USA the software named 'Planetarium Gold' (of Fogware Publishing)

which is used to predict the solar/lunar eclipses and distance and location of other planets from Earth by the scientists and astronomers. He entered the relevant detail of the planetary positions vis-à-vis zodiac constellations narrated by Maharishi Valmiki and obtained very interesting and convincing results, which almost determine the exact dates starting from the birth of Shri Ram to the date of his coming back to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. Sh. Pushkar Bhatnagar has given authentic and very convincing details of these dates in his book titled 'Dating the Era of Lord Ram' published by Rupa and Co'. some extracts from which are also being summarised in the succeeding paras.

Date of Birth of Lord Ram

Aadikavi Valmiki in 1/18/8-10 of Ramayan has given details that Shri Ram was born on 9th tithi of Chaitra month during day time when the position of different planets vis-à-vis zodiac constellations and nakshatras (visible stars) was as under:

1. Sun in Aries
2. Saturn in Libra
3. Jupiter in Cancer
4. Venus in Pisces
5. Mars in Capricorn
6. Lunar month of Chaitra
7. Ninth day after Amavasya
8. Lagna as Cancer
9. Moon near the star Punarvasu (Pollux) in Gemini Constellation.
10. Moon & Jupiter were shining together in Cancer.

This data was entered into the 'Planetarium Gold' software, the results indicated that this was

exactly the location of planets/stars vis-à-vis zodiac constellations on the 10th of January, noon time, in the year 5114 BC if viewed from the latitude/longitude of Ayodhya (25°N 81°E). Thus Shri Ram was born on 10th January in 5114 BC.

By making use of software to convert solar calendar into lunar calendar, it was found that this date also happened to be the 9th day of Shukla Paksha in Chaitra month and the time was around 12 to 1 noontime. This is exactly the date and time when Ramnavmi is celebrated all over India till date (Fig.1).

Date of Exile of Shri Ram

In Valmiki Ramayan it is mentioned in Ayodhya Kaand (2/4/18) that Dashratha wanted to make Shri Ram the king because the Sun, Mars and Rahu had

surrounded his
nakshatra and
normally under such
planetary positions the
king dies or becomes a
victim of conspiracies.

Zodiac sign of king Dashratha
was Pisces and his nakshatra was
Rewati. This planetary position
was prevailing on the 5th of
January 5089 BC and it was on
this day that Shri Ram had to
leave Ayodhya for 14 years. Thus
he was 25 years old at that time
(5114-5089) and there are several
shlokas in the Valmiki Ramayan
which indicate that Shri Ram was
25

old
he



Ayodhya for his 14 years of exile.



Solar Eclipse during War with Khar- Dushan

The Ramayan refers to
the solar eclipse at the
time of war with Khar-

Dushan in later half of 13th year
of Shri Ram's stay in the forests.
Valmiki has also mentioned that
it was Amavasya day and planet
Mars was in the middle. When
this data was entered, the sky
view generated by computer
software indicated that there was
a solar eclipse on 7th October,
5077 BC (Amavasya day) which
could be seen from Panchvati (20°
N; 73° E) (Fig. 2). On that date
the planetary configuration was
the same as has been described by
Valmiki i.e. Mars was in the
middle; on one side were Mercury,
Venus and Jupiter and on the
other side were Sun, Moon and
Saturn.

Other Eclipses mentioned in Ramayan

In Kishkindha kaand there is a reference to a solar eclipse (4/15/3) on the day Bali was killed. The software shows a solar eclipse on 3rd April 5076 BC which was the only solar eclipse during the entire year.

In Sunder Kaand there is a reference to lunar eclipse when Hanuman spots Sita in Ashok Vatika (5/19/14, 5/29/7, 5/35/87). Sky view reveals lunar eclipse starting from 4.15 pm on 12th September 5076 BC from Colombo (7°N; 80°E)

All these sequentially fully tally with the description in Ramayan.

Other Important Dates

Only six of the twelve constellations remain above the horizon at the same time. Valmiki

Ramayan contains graphic and poetic details of eight constellations during Hanuman's return journey from Sri Lanka to Sunaabh Hill in the middle of the sea which apparently took about four and a half hours from 6:30 AM to 11 AM. All these details of planets and nakshatras with reference to eight constellations described in Sarga 57 (1, 2, 3) of chapter five tally exactly with the sky view generated by the software for the morning of 14th September 5076 BC from Lanka.

On the basis of planetary configurations described in various other chapters of Valmiki Ramayan, the date on which Ravana was killed works out to be 4th December 5076 BC and Shri Ram completed 14 years of exile on 2nd January, 5075 BC and that day was also Navami of Shukla Paksha in Chaitra month.

Thus Shri Ram had come back to Ayodhya when he was 39 years old (5114-5075).

Sequential Details of Places visited by Shri Ram during 14 years of exile: Geographic Evidences

Many researchers, particularly a colleague Dr. Ram Autar, have researched the places visited by Shri Ram during 14 years of exile. They sequentially moved to the places stated as visited by Shri Ram in the Valmiki Ramayan. Starting from Ayodhya, they went right up to Rameshwaram. They found more than 189 (+60 identified later on) places, most of which still have the memorials connected to the events relating to the life of Shri Ram and Sita and also match the description given in Ramayan (see Map).

The locals believe that Shri Ram had actually visited these places. These details have been compiled in his book 'In the Footsteps of Shri Ram'. These details can be broadly divided into five phases.

First Phase-Gangetic Belt

They went to Tamsa Nadi Tal (Mandah), 20 km from Ayodhya, thereafter crossed Gomti river (Point no. 2 to 7 of map 1) and reached on the banks of Saryu river. After crossing the boundary of Kosal Desh, they entered Shringaverapura (Srigraur) which was kingdom of Nishadraj Guh and is famous for Kewat taking them across Ganga in his boat (20 km from Allahabad).

After crossing Yamuna near Sangam they reached Chitrakoot on the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Madhya Pradesh (MP) border – memorials here include Valmiki

Ashram, Mandavya Ashram, Bharat Koop etc which still exist. After Bharat Milap they left Chitrakoot and went to Atri Ashram located in Satana in MP.

Second Phase in Dandak Van

Along with Laxman and Sita, Shri Ram extensively travelled through this land of rivulets, water bodies and dense forests in and around MP and Chhattisgarh. They roamed around in Dandak Aranya area and visited Sharbhang and Sutikshan Muni ashrams in Satna. Thereafter, they visited several Rishi ashrams in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh area, along Narmada and Mahanadi rivers for 10 years, and then came back to Sutikshan ashram. Several memorials in Panna, Raipur, Bastar and Jagdalpur still exist which include

Mandavya ashram, Shringi ashram, Ram Laxman Mandir and Koti Maheshwar etc.

After crossing many rivers, lakes, hills and forests they went to Agastya ashram in Nasik. As per Valmiki, weapons made in Agnishala were given to Shri Ram by Agastya Muni in this ashram.

Third Phase along Godavari

Shri Ram, Laxman and Sita travelled along the Godavari. From Agastya ashram they went to stay in Panchavati – a place with 5 Vatavriksha located on the banks of Godavari in Nasik. This place is famous for the Surpanakha episode and war with Khar and Dushan. There are memorials at the place where Mareech was stated to have been killed; these include Mrigvyadheshwar and Baneshwar. In fact, Nasik area is

full of memorials, e.g. Sita Sarovar, Ram Kund and Triambakeshwar and Janasthan etc. After this incident, Sita was abducted by Ravana, who also killed Jatayu relating to which memorial 'Sar vatiratha' in Taked Village, 56 km from Nasik, is still preserved.

Fourth Phase along Tungbhadra and Kaveri

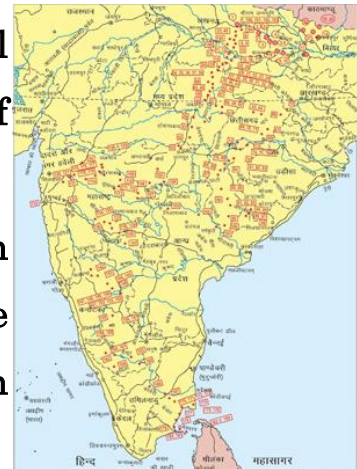
Shri Ram and Laxman travelled extensively through these areas in search of Sita. After meeting Jatayu and Kabandh they moved towards south to reach Rishyamook Parbat. On the way they visited Shabari ashram in Pampasarovar area which is now known as Sureban in Belgaon and is still famous for Ber trees. After crossing forests of Sandalwood, many gardens and water bodies, they went towards Rishyamook.

Here they met Hanuman and Sugreev, and were shown Sita's ornaments. Shri Ram killed Bali in this area. Rishyamook and Kishkindha are located in Hampi, Bellary District of Karnataka.

Fifth Phase

Ram with his sena marched towards the sea. After crossing Malay Parbat, Chandan forests, many rivers and ponds they went along Kaveri River. After crossing Trishirapalli, Thanjavur and Ramanathapuram, they reached Rameshwara

m. Almost all the details of travel narrated in all these five phases in Valmiki



Ramayan tally with the existing geographic locations and memorials preserved.

Places in Sri Lanka

The location and physical features of areas, covered under Ravana falls, Ravana caves and Ashok Vatika in and around Nuwara Elya Hills in Sri Lanka, will persuade anyone to believe that Valmiki, the author of Ramayan, was fully familiar with all these places. Vibhishan palace is also located almost at the same place as is described in Ramayan.

Most of these places have similar geographic features, flora, fauna and memorials as have been described in Ramayan. If Valmiki had not visited/known about these places, he could not have given such precise details in Ramayan which was composed as biography of Shri Ram when he was

coronated as the King of Ayodhya in 5075 BC (1/4/1, 2). Originally it was passed on through the shruti smriti tradition for hundreds of years but was available in text form by around 1000 BC. References of Ram's story are available in:

- Kautilya's Arthashastra of 4th century BC.
- Buddhist literature in the form of 'Dasharatha Jaraka' ascribable to 3rd century BC.
- Terracotta figures of Ram ascribable to 2nd century BC excavated from Kaushambi.
- Stone panels excavated at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh of 3rd century AD showing Ram-Bharat milap at Chitrakoot.

- Terracotta panels of 4th century AD excavated from Nachara Khera in Haryana.
- ‘Janaki Haran’, a poetic composition of Kumaradasa of Sri Lanka who lived in 7th century AD.

There are hundreds of other pieces evidence found not only from India but from countries like Sri Lanka, Tibet, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia. In Nepal the oldest manuscript of Valmiki Ramayan written in 1041 AD in Newari script is still preserved, probably the oldest preserved manuscript of the world.

Ramsethu



During a visit to Rameshwaram, author got an extra-ordinary opportunity to observe the depth at which Ramsethu was found submerged under the sea which measured 9.5 feet on the fisherman’s oar. The author had also seen small portion as shown in figure 8 indicating contribution of human hand with marked boundaries and stone filling seen through the mask used for snorkeling.

Ram’s Bridge – its satellite image and oceanographic evidences:

Ram-sena first camped in Koddikarai but after surveying the sea area, the location was found unsuitable for constructing the bridge. Therefore, Shri Ram shifted the entire army to

Rameshwaram. In Yuddh Kand, sarg 22 (shlokas 45-73) Valmiki has given graphic details of Lord Ram carrying out research and exploration to identify a suitable location for construction of the bridge. After identifying the location, he requested Sugriva to search for an expert Shilpakar who could construct such a bridge. Sugriva recommended the name of Nal, a famous shilpakar, who had the expertise similar to that of Vishwakarma in constructing the bridge. Accordingly Nal was called; he concurred that the bridge could indeed be constructed at the location identified by Shri Ram. The construction of this bridge was completed under the supervision of Nal in five days by filling up of the gaps in the existing natural chain of land route consisting of islands, rocks and shoals (6/22/68-73).

The army of Lord Ram utilized various tools and implements for uprooting trees like saal, taar, coconut, mango, ashoka, arjun, bakul and bilva etc (6/22/47). With the help of various yantras they transported these stones, trees, creepers, and boulders to the seashore (2/22/60). Shilpakar Nal directed the army men to stand with long ropes on either side and got the bridge constructed in five days by binding such transported materials together. Even the use of measuring tools has been described (6/22/65).

Satellite Image

A few years back, NASA had put pictures on internet of this bridge, the ruins of which are found submerged in Palk Strait between Rameshwaram (Dhanush Koti) and Mannar (Thalaimannar). The

bridge is composed of a series of islands, rocks, and shoals and it is stated to be 30 kilometers long. It is found exactly at the location narrated in Valmiki Ramayan. See NASA picture of this Bridge (Fig. 10).

Sea Level Curve

The use of this bridge as the land route between India and Sri Lanka depended on the fluctuations in sea level for thousands of years as it was sometimes above the sea level and was at other times submerged under the seawater. Dr. Rajiv Nigam, Scientist-G and Head of the Palaeoclimate Project, Geological Oceanography Division, National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, in his paper on “Sea level Fluctuations during



last 15000 years and their Impact on Human Settlements”, explained that between 7000 – 7200 BP the water level was about three meters below the present level. Incidentally, the astronomical dating of the Ram era has been placed around 7100 BP (DoB 10th Jan, 5114 BC) and Ramsethu is found submerged at about three meters depth at present, implying thereby that in 5100 BC this Sethu was above the sea level and could be used as a land route between Rameshwaram and Sri Lanka. Thus even fluctuations in sea levels corroborate references to Ramsethu in Ramayan.

Report by Department of Earth Sciences

According to Dr. Badrinarayan, former Director of Geological Survey of India, under whom geological aspects of the Sethusamudram Shipping Channel Project (SSCP) were studied, “Ramsethu is a natural formation, the top portion of which appears to be man-made” because in between marine sands, there is assemblage of corals, sandstones and boulders etc. The report also revealed that on both sides of the Bridge there are some raised Teriformations that supported a rich assemblage of mesolithic – microlithic tools indicating the presence of strong human habitation and activity in these areas as early as 8000 to 9000 BP and as recent as 4000 BP”

Other Interesting facts

All attempts to create a shipping route by completing the Sethu Samudram project have so far failed. Shri Subramnian Swamy summarized the report dated January 23, 2007 published in the Asian Age stating that “the Dredging Corporation of India’s (DCI) dredger imported from Holland had broken into two and sunk into the sea when it began work on the Ram Setu. The DCI crane that went to pick up the dredger pieces also broke and sank. The Russian engineer consultant who went to inspect the mishap broke his leg.” As a result all efforts made on behalf of the Government so far to destroy remains of Ram Setu have failed and consequently Sethusamudram Shipping Canal could not become a reality.

The Sri Lankan government wanted to construct a land route

over this submerged bridge whereas Government of India wanted to blast it for shipping i.e. Sethusamudaram project. Shri Jaisurya, Energy Minister of Sri Lanka had proposed construction of land route between India and Sri Lanka on this submerged Ramsethu. There are several multi-nationals offering to construct the bridge under BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) scheme. One can imagine the number of people from India who will walk over this reconstructed Ram Sethu every year and the kind of profit the builder as well as Indian and Sri Lankan Government would be able to earn!

Ancestors of Shri Ram: Co-relation of genealogy with genetic studies

Indian history has recorded that Shri Ram belonged to Surya Vansh and he was the 64th ruler of this dynasty. Most of the names and other relevant particulars of previous 63 kings are listed in 'Ayodhya Ka Itihas' written about eighty years back by Rai Bahadur Sita Ram. In fact most of the names of these ancestors of Lord Ram have been listed in Valmiki Ramayan itself as narrated by Vashistha Muni to Raja Janak. (1/70 and 71). (all listed below in table 1).

1. Manu	25. Anaranya	49. Ayutayus	73. Ahinagu
2. Iksvaku	26. Trasadsva	50. Rtuparna	74. Paripatra
3. Vikuksi-Sasada	27. Haryasva (II)	51. Sarvakama	75. Bala
4. Kakutstha	28. Vasumata	52. Sudasa	76. Uktha
5. Anenas	29. Tridhanvan	53. Mitrasaha	77. Vajranabha
6. Prithu	30. Trayyaruna	54. Asmaka	78. Sankhan
7. Vistarasva	31. Trishanku	55. Mulaka	79. Vyusitasva
8. Ardra	32. Satyavrata	56. Sataratha	80. Visvasaha (II)
9. Yuvanasva (I)	33. Hariscandra	57. Aidavida	81. Hiranyabha
10. Sravasta	34. Rohita	58. Visvasaha (I)	82. Pusya
11. Brihadasva	35. Harita, Cancu	59. Dilipa (II)	83. Dhruvansan
12. Kuvalasva	36. Vijaya	60. Dirghabahu	84. Sudarsana
13. Drohasva	37. Ruruka	61. Raghu	85. Agnivarna
14. Pramoda	38. Vrka	62. Aja	86. Sighra
15. Haryasva (I)	39. Bahu (Asita)	63. Dasaratha	87. Maru
16. Nikumba	40. Sagara	64. Ram	88. Prasusruta
17. Samhatasva	41. Asamanjās	65. Kusa	89. Susandhi
18. Akrsasva	42. Amsumant	66. Atithi	90. Amarsa
19. Prasenajit	43. Dilipa (I)	67. Nisadha	91. Mahashwat
20. Yuvanasva (II)	44. Bhagiratha	68. Nala	92. Visrutavant
21. Mandhatr	45. Sruta	69. Nabhas	93. Brihadbala
22. Purukutsa	46. Nabhaga	70. Pundarika	94. Brihatksaya
23. Trasadsyu	47. Amabarisa	71. Ksemadhan	
24. Sambhuta	48. Sindhudvipa	72. Devanika	

Almost all the major Genome studies carried out so far have revealed an amazing correlation of this genealogy with the genetic profile of humans settled in north, south, east and west of India since the Holocene (about 11000 years BP) to the present. Almost all the

important studies in palaeo-anthropology, including those carried out by Kenneth A. R. Kennedy and Cavalli-Sforza, have concluded that the genetic profile of people of the Indian subcontinent has remained the same for last more than 55000 years and that for the 11000 years this profile is of a culturally developing people who had started speaking a structured language and were taking cooked food.

The Essence

From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Bengal to Gujarat, everywhere people of India believe in the reality of Shri Ram's existence and most of our festivals revolve around the events related to the life of Shri Ram. The events and places referred to in the Ramayan

represent our most ancient heritage, which has developed and got enriched subsequently during the eras of Lord Krishna, Mahatma Buddha, Mahavir Jain, Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed and Guru Nanak Dev.

The story of Shri Ram, when appreciated in its true perspective, would emerge as the biggest unifying factor for India and it establishes many ideals which we need to emulate today. He remains unparalleled as an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal warrior and an ideal king; that is why he is described as Maryada Purushottam Ram! He was a nationalist par excellence who left his kingdom to help the small kings located all over India to save their kingdoms from being usurped by wicked King Ravana of Sri Lanka and his relatives and devils like Khar, Dushan and

Maarich representing him in India.

Shri Ram moved from place to place to spread the message of unity by showing a very high level of respect for the people from tribes and those considered untouchable. He embraced Guh Nishad who belonged to a lower caste; he gave a strong message against untouchability by eating with great affection jootha berries of Bhilni (Shabri). He sent his wife and children to be brought up and educated by Maharishi Valmiki who is stated to be Shudra but was a great scholar in the ancient world. Shri Ram tried established the victory of good over evil. He helped rishis and munis in living a life of honor. He got the kingdoms of small noble kings restored to them and acted as the biggest unifying factor.

The astronomical dating of planetary references given in the Valmiki Ramayan with corroborating archaeological, geological, oceanographic, geographic evidences, further supported by genealogical studies duly correlated with genome studies have established with a fair amount of certainty that Shri Ram was actually born more than 7000 years back. Therefore discovering the physical details relating to the life and times of Shri Ram would be much more difficult as destruction caused by floods, droughts, earthquakes, tectonic movements, tsunamis and wars etc is bound to be far greater. But should that stop our quest for learning more and more about our most ancient rich cultural heritage? As Indians, let us all take pride in the fact that Indian civilization is the most ancient civilization surviving on

planet Earth. It is certainly more than 10,000 years old and has been growing and developing indigenously.

This kind of research creates invaluable **public welfare and business opportunities**: (i) The research outcomes have the potential of uniting all Indians by bridging the North-South divide which is based on only linguistic guesswork, having no scientific basis. These also raise their self esteem (ii) Focus on harnessing drinkable water underground trapped below dry paleochannels of ancient rivers like Saraswati and Drishadwati can help resolve some of the water-scarcity problems in selected areas of water scarcity (iii) Seminars creates huge potential for promoting tourism e.g. if a transparent tube and an underwater museum are created

at the site of submerged Dwarka city, the entire cost can presumably be recovered during the first one year and tourism in India will enter the next generation facilities.(iv). Gene based/ stem cell based research can be promoted based on paaeobotanic and anthropological studies.

There is need to gather, dig out, search, and analyse all the evidence, which would throw more light on ancient Indian civilization and culture. The Government needs to be persuaded to constitute a multidisciplinary team in order to carry out scientific research pertaining to most ancient events narrated in our ancient books and this team should consist of

Sanskrit scholars, astronomers, archaeologists, geologists, oceanographers, palaeobotanists, anthropologists, space scientists etc. This team should be asked to rewrite the history of the Indian Subcontinent based purely on scientific evidence. There is need for the print and the electronic media to take note of these facts and create an atmosphere which would motivate our young and educated youth to carry out research and unearth the true facts about ancient Indian civilization and wisdom and would also encourage them to put across the results of their research before the world fearlessly and with a sense of pride.

[Back to contents](#)