

HARD TALK

A DISCOURSE ON POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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Dr. Jernail S. Anand



VISHWABHARATI
RESEARCH CENTRE

in association with



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SWAMI JI SAHAYE

Dedicated to all those soulful people who laid down their
lives for Mother India,
And to all those men of ignited imaginations
Who want to live for their country.
And in particular, this book is dedicated to the greatest
Indian of modern era: Sh. APJ Abdul Kalam

FOREWORD

‘Anandobrahma’- The WISDOM of ANAND

Nunc patimur longae pacis mala, saevior armis. Luxuria incubuit victumque ulciscitur orbem : Juvenal- Satires

We are now suffering the evils of a long peace. Luxury more deadly than war, broods over the cities, and avenges conquered front.

What Juvenal in his ‘Satires’ says is a profound truth. India is now suffering from luxuries of dreams, with transplanted branches displacing its own, blooming the unseasonal and unsavory flowers and fruits of Western front. We see many a Charge of the Light Brigade- ***‘C’est magnifique. Mais ce n’est pas la guerre’***-

Dr Jernail S. Anand, a well known poet, philosopher and peace seeker in this bouquet of scarlet flowers, expresses his concern over the common man’s dwindling hopes and dashed dreams of India. His incisive analysis stems from his critical observation and understanding of political trends of present, past and future.

In *Hard Talk: A Discourse On Political Consciousness*, Dr. Anand categorically and lucidly explains the perils of transplanting western branches of war to the ancient tree of non-violence. Yes we have forgotten Gandhi and nowadays children remember him only on his birthday because it is a holiday.

‘Whose India’ dwells on the decimated role of opposition party

and suggests that the tenure of elected representatives must be brought to two and half years and the majority party should rule the country for the first half and the opposition the next two and half years. I remember Voltaire's quote (Candidae- 1759) – ***in this country it is considered wise to kill an admiral from time to time in order to encourage others.***’- Yes! It may bring some solace or solution!

‘Enough is Enough’ is a wonderful essay. It ridicules the Jumbo jet ministries and mumbo jumbo promises of the political astronauts. The author comments on dirty and unholy nexus of politicians and corporate sector where democracy has become a mirage and commerce has taken over all the sense of right and wrong. To be really immortal, a leader must look beyond Madam Tussad Emporium.

In his essay of ‘India’s Man of destiny-’ Dr. Anand quotes Rousseau and places high hopes on a man of high moral and spiritual culture to lead the country into the second phase of the millennium. Dr. Anand wonderfully pens his ideas on Clean India_ Swachh Bharat, reinventing social responsibilities, and about ordinary citizens batting for clean administration, and on cultivating future leaders by reviving national consciousness, and the needed reforms and the paradoxical trap known as Education in which the present day Indian youth jump with ignorance. He dwells upon the future necessity of gender equality that brings harmony in the changing Indian society. He warns the humanity about the ruining of the environment by man-made mistakes and warns this walk is going to be on the melting surface of the ice.

From the various chapters, what emerges is Dr. Anand’s political philosophy. He wants the Politics of Consensus to replace the Politics of Confrontation. He favours Inclusive Government where even the parties which lose partake in the running of the government. These things may seem quite steamy, but the fact of the matter is that our constitution and electoral systems need a hard look. That is the central push of Hard Talk.

Dr. Anand is known for his fearless views and transparency of

ideas. He has expressed his views on present political scenario with much clarity and wisdom. The presentation is in lucid and aesthetically fine style. Dr. Anand's presentation of India as a world power with its absolute faith in peace is simply unparalleled:

India is a phenomenon, a world, a movement of tolerance, co-existence and peace; a spiritual monolith which can look backwards and forwards at the same time. The world which believes in human liberty looks up to India for her spiritual heritage of common good. Even in her turmoils, which are common to all humanity, India has evinced an inherent power to surprise the world by regaining its balance and moving forward.

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God'.

Here I give a few quotes to conclude my review-

Im ewigen Kampfe ist die Menschheit gross geworden-

Im ewigen Frieden geht sie zugrunde- Mankind has grown strong in eternal struggles and it will only perish through eternal peace- (Adolf Hitler-Mein Kampf-1924)

'Morality is contraband in war'- (Mohandas K. Gandhi- Non-violence in peace and war- 1948)

Dylan Thomas (1953) says- *the hand that signed the treaty bred a fever, /and famine grew, and locusts came/ Great is the hand that holds the dominion over/ Man by scribbled name.*

But Dr. J. S Anand is hopeful- 'The world needs men to run its chores but civilization need philosophers. Only Universities can fulfill this emergent need of Humanity.'

Yes sir! You are right. We need pure poets, positive philosophers and pristine politicians to work for the better society that works for the people.

Long live humanity and brotherhood!

Long live hope and mercy!

Long live love and peace!

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PREFACE

Every body has a political side to him, be he a leader, or even a poet. Even saints cannot claim to be non-political. When we are living in a society, we are bound by its rules. And, rules put together become a socio-political system which helps us live in peace, security, and look for future development of the human race. As human beings, either we are conforming to the rules, or we are resisting them, there is no third way. Both ways proclaim that we are political beings, inhaling a political culture.

This book is the result of my ruminations on the Indian system of governance, which, I sorely think, needs a review after 60 years of its functioning. Every house, built 60 years ago, had to be broken, because it has grown old, and it cannot house our multiples vehicles. Similarly, we are naïve if we think that the constitution we adopted in 1950 is a document which still retains its relevance in totality. Much water has flowed down the Ganges, and this water has been muddied so much, that it has lost its transparent beauty. If Ganga needs mega operations for cleansing, our Constitution too has been lying untouched for several decades.

Time has come when we find our democratic structures absolutely subverted by our political leaders, who have by now developed highly perfect methods to bypass the provisions of law and misuse these provisions for personal gains. My simple logic is: If we can abolish five year plans, why not review the five year period for the legislature? The major issue today is: during the past

fifty years, when and by whom were we governed in a near perfect manner? Political parties have evolved the system of political alliances. But, we have still not developed any positive programme to defend our democratic values. Whenever a minister goes wrong, instead of dropping him, the entire cabinet stands behind him. The sense of responsibility, the sense of resignation, the sense of shame, is missing from the present set of legislators.

I wonder if what I say is correct. Who will sit down to modify and bring about changes in the Constitution, particularly when it will affect their own fortunes? But, our constitution needs a review. We have to learn about a cooperative governance. We have to rise above party rivalries and think of our nation. The deterioration of the political dialogue further warrants a review of the entire system. I hope this effort of mine will put things in perspective and open the doors for a full fledged debate on the issues which challenge our democratic credentials.

Dr. Jernail Singh Anand

Secretary General, World Parliament of Literature,

Cross of Literature,

Cross of Peace,

Ambassador, World Union of Poets,

World Icon of Peace [Nigeria]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am a poet but a poet loses his relevance if he cannot portray and try to resolve the predicaments and paradoxes of the society he inhabits. It is a living response to reality. This book is a collection of articles written during the last two years and some of them were published by newspapers [Daily Post, in particular] and I am thankful to the paper for bringing me close to the heart of the thinking populace.

I do appreciate the role of my family members in this project, but the real impetus came from Dr. S.B.Garg who always stood by me in my thoughts. Now, Dr. Shivputra Kanade has offered to publish this book. I hope it will ignite the imagination of the younger generation who are looking for a change. Thanks are also due to Cav Silvano Bortolazzi, Founder and World President, World Union of Poets, Italy, Dr L. Sr. Prasad, Surgeon and great author from Warangal, who captured the soul of my work in his Foreword. Sh. Ramakanta Das from Rajya Sabha and Dr. Rama Krishana Perugu have always been a source of strength. Ade Caparas Manilah from Australia whose love and blessings are so precious to me and Dr. Seema Devi from Puducherry deserve special mention because of their sustained flow of good wishes.

DR J.S. ANAND

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1

POLITICAL NARCISSISM

Up till now, the constitutional discourse has it that a minister is the most important person in the political set up and the highest stakes are laid when an election is going to be held. Looked at from a distance, ministers, though elected, are only a part of the government machinery, like ‘babus’ who are there to executive the will of the people. We have seen that, theory apart, the will of the people is nowhere to be seen. Within a year, the elected representatives forget that they owe their powers to the people, assume the mask of immortality, and start thinking that for five years, no one, not even God, if he is there by mistake, can challenge them. Such an assured state of permanence naturally invests them with an aura of immortality. Once a minister, always a minister.

Before I question the system, I would like to address a basic misconception about a minister. Minister means ‘Sewadar.’ A man who is there to serve the masses. In our present day dispensations at the state and the Centre, who is serving whom? who is powerful and who is the victim? is all too clear. Once a man is elected, he loses all pretensions of being a representative, or a servant of the people. He is his own servant, and master of all those who voted him to power because these poor givers of power are left with no

power to withdraw and change their verdict. For five years, no one can reach the ivory tower and drag the minister into the streets for his non-performance, or foul performance, or miscarrying their verdict. Indian constitution makers made it sure that once elected, the leaders should remain unchallenged, and people should cringe before them for favours. And it is continuing.

My basic fight is with the system. They are legislators. But on what they will legislate? The party in power who wins the votes has an agenda, and accordingly they want to legislate. But, here I find a great gap between what the policy wants and how the legislators act. My first objection is that all the legislators are not fit for the ministries which are put under their charge. By doing an MA, a person cannot do justice to his portfolio as Education Minister. In the same way, if someone has done any degree in IT, and if we think he will be best suited for Technical Education, we are mistaken. These departments need experts and I can give an affidavit that the people whom we elect are not in a position to handle these departments of themselves. They come to power after a bitter fight and then, once in the saddle, it is all the job of the secretaries, who themselves are hand-picked, and hence, with their half-baked knowledge of the department, what we get is a total mess in every department.

Way-Out:

I ask the people why can't we have ten different departments, and ten different commissions. All the Govt. policy should be debated here and at first, the CM should approve all the changes that are required. Thereafter, the changes suggested here should be taken to the legislative assembly, where they can have a bill and then an act. Now, the question is what are the minister for? They are legislators, no doubt. But, we must know that all are not well equipped to think in terms of future needs. All are not trained properly. They are men of the masses, and they are elected to serve the masses. The tag of service must not be forgotten. What the masses want, they can tell the Govt. or their respective Commissions, and then, very cool head discussions can take place, and decisions can be taken.

As I have already mentioned, ministers are a part of the bureaucratic structure of the state. They are superior executive. The PCS and lower forces are at their command. But the policy matter, what to do, and what not to do, should be the domain of commissions, where only people with trusted merit should be appointed. Here is a functional example of my views. If there had been an Agricultural Commission, they would never have approved the pesticides which caused havoc in Punjab. The real decision makers should be like this:

The Commission plus the Ministers in Charge with CM as its Head. Major Commissions can be like Education Commission, Agriculture Commission, Health Commission, Technical Education Commission, Road Transport Commission, Commission on Creation of Infrastructure, Railway Commission, Special Castes Commission, Employment Commission, Law Commission so on.

Their working can be debated upon. But it will be certain, the chairman will hold the Cabinet rank, and the Minister associated with this Department will act as the Executive and implement the decisions taken by the Commission.

At present, the Governments have no policy, except to please the legislators and keep them glued to them by offerings sops. This business must stop. In key areas, no compromises should be made. Only technocrats and experts must have the last laugh, only then we can reverse the vicious process of hero-worship of the politicians.

The Govt. should have the power to sack the ministers who indulge in corruption or try to short circuit the rules. Certainly for such a fair play to come into force, we need a government of the people, for the people and by the people, and men, at the helm, who have proven record of honesty and integrity. Some changes need to be done. No minister should hold office for the third term. Politicians beyond 65 should be retired. Let us think of merit coming to the centre stage. And the leaders should shun narcissistic tendencies.

2

THE SLUM DOG AND SOCIAL EQUALITY

Restructuring the Laws of Inheritance

The Chaye Wala has come to power: Now the question is not only to give power to the penniless; but also to shift power from the powerbrokers to the powerless. No social change is possible unless this power structure is altered in favour of the unprivileged and deprived sections of society. And the only idea which can bring about a change is restricting the laws of inheritance. We inherit property, and there are millions who inherit poverty also. Who will take care of them, if not the awakened mass of society?

The idea of 'haves' and 'have-nots' articulated in the beginning of the 20th century, which was instrumental in bringing about the bloody revolution of 1917 in Soviet Union, and establishment of the Communist empire, should have been given a decent burial by the beginnings of Prestroika as a consequence of the rise of the democratic ideal which moved the mass imagination in the aftermath of the two world wars. Much water, dirty and foul, has gone down the Ganga as well as the Don and there is hardly any piece of earth where this gap, between the 'haves' and 'have nots' has been bridged. To rub salt on the raw wounds of the unprivileged and deprived sections of society, globalization has come to rule the fancy of the growing generations. Rich or

poor, people have lost their sense of balance, and are after a life-style much beyond their means. The worst of all is that the idea of poverty has been erased from the reckoning of the world. We are now talking in millions, instead of thousands, and the shopkeepers of yore have acquired the new 'avataar' of merchants, and the industrialists of fifties are now corporates with accounts in the Swiss banks, not to mention the nouvelle riche class of the politicians whose wealth records might set Kuber rethinking.

Certainly, the world has changed. But the cutting sensation of those who have been left behind, has grown intense. No democratic ideal has been able to bridge this gap between the haves and the have-nots of the Soviet era. This is our tragedy. This is our trauma. Poverty is no longer an academic exercise in the text books. It has taken a destructive turn. These people, whom society has thrown into the dark corners for so long, do not accept their lot with any sense of resignation. They are growing up on the left-overs, not to continue with this fate for long. They will strike back. The slum dog will not only bark, but has decided to bite also. And it is not difficult to visualize the vast empire of the underdog, the deprived, the pushed back, the neglected, turning into a burgeoning fire to grab the things which are not easily available to them. At this point, the few rich and the millions of those are living in the margins, are found at the same platform: grabbing, with force. The corporate grabs the wealth of the nation with the blatant use of power and wealth; and the poor man tries to equalize it with dacoities kidnappings, ransom, and joining the underworld. Who is responsible for fouling up the stream of life? Can we blame the slum dogs why they dream of millions? Can we restrain them from pursuing their passion for overnight riches through means which stand justified by the unscrupulous ways of those in positions of power? Who will call a wrong a wrong, when nobody has the guts to say the right the right?

Where is the solution to this ages-long problem of social inequality which has now become only too visible? We have seen a society with in-built caste system, a system of heredity which favours the rich, because if heredity means landed property going to the

descendants of a person, it also means poverty to be inherited by the poor. How can a society remain in good health with such a system at work? And it has been working {???} for centuries. And, here is the result. Widespread discontent, crime and corruption at a mass scale, no respect for values, and every relation turning mercantile, the teachings of our sages and seers notwithstanding. There appears to be only one way we can think of having any semblance of equality in this world. The laws of inheritance must go. Why inheritance? Is it God-given? How can we dream of equality if inheritance is to create a wedge between the people? I find even our Constitution hitting the wrong target, when it declares everybody is equal before the law. If all men are equal, what is the implication? How can a boy who is born in a family with a landed property of 500 acres, be an equal to a child born to a servant? Let us confront the reality of our situation. There is no running away from it. The hard reality is there is no equality. Our Constitution guarantees inequality. Our Constitution tolerates inequality. And those who follow this Constitution, perpetuate inequality. There is widespread social injustice, social discrimination, and that is the reason behind the grave disturbances in the social system. Our TV channels spend millions discussing the symptoms, while the real genesis of the problem lies in the laws of inheritance.

Why a new born child should inherit poverty from his parents? This is my question to the entire world. Every child who is born should be equal in real terms: no body should be born with lands and millions in the banks, or with the debt burden of his father. The lands, the industries, must go to the people. Let every child grow in an equal environment, study in equal schools, get equal benefits, and if they can, let them build up fortunes, but these fortunes will not be for their sons and daughters. They will enjoy their riches to the end of their lives. And their sons and daughters will start afresh. We must make every child start afresh. Let there be no one who inherits wealth, and let there be no one who inherits poverty. Only then, we can think of having an egalitarian society, based on equality.

3

A CASE FOR INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

Is politics a WWF match? If you do not agree, you are invited to New Delhi. Inexorably, India has been drawn into a situation in which nothing is sacrosanct; there is no principle; any one can say anything, do anything, and get away with anything. Political Engineering has taken over and good and evil have retired from the scene. What one can easily see is an effort at bullying in the media, and in the social scene as well. The arrogance of power appears to have gone to the head and it is presumed that this ascendancy is going to stay forever. Trolling is a newly developed weapon to terrorise people who hold opposite views. Power is a fair weather friend. Where are the gigantic busts of Stalin? Where is Gaddafi? The really sad thing is that the present scenario that has been created in Delhi apparently shows that the central government is not the government of the country. They represent a party, a philosophy, and they are subserving their own party agenda. Prime Minister Modi has least bothered to project himself as the Prime Minister of India. He has failed to enthuse the masses. If crowds cheer him at political rallies, it should not be forgotten that it is a stage managed show. The reason: his actions smack of partisan politics. He has never lifted himself above petty politics.

After 70 years of politicating, our leaders know all the weak corners of the law, and they make the best use of it to down tread the opposition and superimpose their will. It is worrisome for the nation that we are witnessing a bitter game of one-upmanship. Media is being extensively used to project half truths as oracular facts. The govt. is wasting people's money on advertising its achievements while the people are crying under the weight of inflation and farmers are dying of bank loans, and their sons are either fleeing out of the country or falling into the hands of the drug runners. Now, demonetization has created a situation in which there is no work, no wages, and currency is an unseen dream.

These are apocalyptic times. It appears to be a great churning. India is emerging from the politics of perversion and going over to the idea of a transparent state. And, the transformation is always like a revolution. The old masters are still very powerful, and do not want to yield ground to the new and the younger generations; nor do they allow transparency in governmental work. Sometimes I wonder at the pledge of secrecy taken at the time of induction of ministers. Is it a transparent exercise? The nation has to look at several practices which create confusion and need to be given a new orientation in the changing scenario.

I believe that a government once elected must be allowed to function and work out its agenda but to avoid bitter fights on the floor of the house, these changes need to be discussed with the opposition leaders in a conducive atmosphere and necessary amendments made in the very beginning. This is a new style of INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE. I think there are solid reasons behind it. The government in power has been elected by the people. Now it represents the whole nation. It must look up to the view point of the vast majority of people who could not make it to the treasury benches. They also represent vast tracts of population. And, they must be taken into consideration before any legislation is proposed.

The interference of the central government in the states must be minimal. That is the reason the Governor has no executive powers. But these days, the central government is investing this

office with more powers, and sending people with powerful ideology. It is an error, because, we are sowing seeds of controversy. Trying to rule the states by proxy is an evil temptation, which has brought no credit to the central govt. Once in power, the elected representatives and even governments think that for five years, no one can challenge them. And five years are enough to make a fortune. The law of the land is made to look like an ass which does not even bray when these people make millions, turn tyrants, play with the law, and commit excesses. It is left to the next government of the other party to send them to jails for their excesses. Here, it is the people only who can force the legislature to frame laws to ensure that as soon as a leader changes party, he must resign as member of the house. This will stop horse trading. The election law should be amended to include the clause of Recall. The election should elect two governments; one of the majority for two and half years, and for the next period, the second largest winning party to take over. The govt. must have Deputy Prime Minister from the Main Opposition party. And, let there be government by CONSENSUS, rather than by CONFRONTATION. If India wants to grow into a world power, we have to do away with the politics of Revenge. Good Days will come when the nation, wizened by the bizarre scenes obtaining in the capital these days due to brazen misuse of existing laws by a majority party, learns to honour the rules of the game.

4

THE DARK CORRIDORS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

The recent elections in four states have given moments of joy for every party. Even the ill fated Congress has been given a face-saving in Puducherry. I look upon these election results as nothing surprising. But, the greatest lesson that one can draw from them is that electioneering by bigwigs has hardly any impact on the voting patterns. The choices of the people are made while they are suffering over the years, when they see their government at work. No amount of promises, or even fears, can dispel them from the destined course. One more thing which I want to stress here is that if there had been no electioneering, no big leaders making a bee line to the pulpit, even then, the election results would have been the same. Didi's have succeeded because of their pro-people policies; and Congress smile in Puducherry signals that the future is not completely dark. The BJP victory in Assam can be ascribed, less to the charisma of any leader, and more to the mistakes of the Congress leadership, particularly the son-rise phenomenon.

The statecraft that gets into play once elections are announced is actually an exercise which involves huge amounts of money, which ultimately belongs to the people. The incumbent governments

start flouting money and announcing projects in crores. One wonders from where these funds will come? Whose money is it that they are squandering as per their whims? Is there no one to ask them who are they to play with the wealth of the nation? Is it so important to win an election that all considerations of right and wrong are thrown to the winds? Govts. which are hell-bound to win the elections do not hesitate to create a state of scare in their state. One can look at the rising crime graph in poll bound states.

All the use or misuse of electronic media, [the lung power] the state power, [the muscle power] at their command cannot change the minds of the people, nor any largesse bestowed on them at the time of election. Politicians think that by announcing a large number of positions, they will be able to convince the people about their commitment to public welfare. It is only a vain belief. There is no Al Derado. People are like trees. When you cut a tree [our development route has claimed millions along the state highways], it never says anything to you. Because, you wield the axe. If it protests, you will cut it down further. So, it only assumes silence. And, this silence then turns into tornadoes, and washes away people in higher altitudes and in the form of earth quakes. Then, your might, your axes, your angry eyes, your fiery body language, the people behind you, and the people beside you, nothing matters when earth comes to take its revenge.

I don't believe in aggressive electioneering. World has changed a long since it was required. Electronic electioneering should be enough. There should be no need for physical assemblies because they are a drain on the financial resources of the people. Mega rallies by the governing parties are nothing more than sheer squandering of human and financial resources. Because, it is govt. show, and same people are ferried from here to there. Ultimately, it is an exercise in self-delusion. Media coverage is a masterly political activity. But, sometimes, as it is happening at an extensive scale, if you censor the information, it will only rebound on the players. I still remember the sight of the Tribune in 1975 and 1976 when news were found censored. There were only Indira Gandhi and Giani Zail Singh. But, did they stay in power? Are they still around?

The wrath of the people landed Indira Gandhi in jail.

My point is that people cannot be taken for a ride. Whatever a government has done, it is etched on the hearts of the people, who have suffered indignities. Now, if you give anything, it will further alienate them. The best way to reach out to the hearts of the people is to acknowledge your wrongs, and if you have to stay away from power for five years, it should be a period of introspection. But, instead of introspection, our opposition believes in keeping the political scene on the boil; and even the govt. does not hesitate felling elected governments in fragile states. So, it can be said that our democracy is better designated as 'combat democracy.'

The period of six months before the elections is very crucial. Election commission clamps code of conduct three months in advance. But it is not enough. The govt. must be disabled six months ahead of an election; they should be allowed to make no financial policy statements, nor any transactions, except the necessary ones like paying salaries. These are the days when maximum horse trading and bull fighting is done. This period has to be closely monitored by the Election Commission. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission to keep the political atmosphere in a state of normality. Punjab has been on the boil for the last six months. Labour pains should not be allowed to go on for long.

The Indian electorate has so many voters belonging to poor strata for whom vote does not mean anything beyond a bottle. Such people, who are living on the margins of life, are the object of political parties to tilt the scales. Then there are spiritual *babas* with blind followers. These pockets of Indian electorate are actually dark corridors in which anything can happen from liquor to drugs to money. I wonder if the Election Commission has any remedy to stop this absolutely undemocratic exercise. Considering all this, the most vital issue is the prestige of the politician which has taken a nosedive.

THE DARK CORRIDORS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

The recent elections in four states have given moments of joy for every party. Even the ill fated Congress has been given a face-saving in Puducherry. I look upon these election results as nothing surprising. But, the greatest lesson that one can draw from them is that electioneering by bigwigs has hardly any impact on the voting patterns. The choices of the people are made over the years, when they see their government at work. No amount of promises, or even fears, can dispel them from the destined course. One more thing which I want to stress here is that if there had been no electioneering, no big leaders making a bee line to the pulpit, even then, the election results would have been the same. Didi's have succeeded because of their pro-people policies; and Congress smile in Puducherry signals that the future is not completely dark. The BJP victory in Assam can be ascribed, less to the charisma of any leader, and more to the mistakes of the Congress leadership, particularly the son-rise phenomenon.

The statecraft that gets into play once elections are announced is actually an exercise which involves huge amounts of money, which ultimately belongs to the people. The incumbent governments start flouting money in the Panchayats and giving largesses to those

who belong to their party, while denying the basic due to the Sarpanches who belong to the other party. I sometimes wonder, whose money is it that they are squandering as per their whims? Is there no one to ask them who are they to play with the wealth of the country? Is it so important to win an election that all considerations of right and wrong are thrown to the winds? Govts. which are hell-bound to win the elections do not hesitate to create a state of scare in their state. Punjab is going to polls in 2017. Same is the case with UP. One can look at the crime graph in these states; and see how it is rising. And the governments in these states are busy making promises to the people, and trying to convince them that they have been in the right.

All the use or misuse of electronic media, the state power, and the lung and muscle power at their command cannot change the minds of the people, nor any largesse bestowed on them at the time of election. Govts. think that by announcing a large number of positions, they will be able to convince the people about their return, it is only a vain belief. There is no Al Derado. People are like trees. When you cut a tree [our development route has claimed millions along the state highways], it never says anything to you. Because, you wield the axe. If it protests, you will cut it down further. So, it only assumes silence. And, this silence then turns into tornadoes, and washes away people in higher altitudes and in the form of earth quakes. Then, your might, your axes, your angry eyes, your fiery body language, the people behind you, and the people beside you, nothing matters when earth comes to take its revenge.

I don't believe in aggressive electioneering. I want only electronic electioneering. There should be no need for physical assemblies because they are a drain on the financial resources of the people. Every third day, the Govt. in power can organize a rally here and a rally there, and all of them are very impressive. Because, it is govt. show, and same people can be ferried from here to there. Ultimately, it is an exercise in self-delusion. Media acts only as a mirror. You can say anything. You can show anything. They will take a snap, make a video and show to the people. But, sometimes,

as it is happening at an extensive scale, if you censor the information, it will only rebound on the players. I still remember the sight of the Tribune in 1975 and 1976 when news were found censored. There were only Indira Gandhi and Giani Zail Singh. But, did they stay in power? The wrath of the people landed Indira Gandhi in jail. Ultimately, my point is that people cannot be taken for a ride. Whatever a government has done, it is etched in blood, on the hearts of the people, who have suffered indignities. Now, if you give anything, it will not stay. Rather, it will further annoy the people, and alienate them.

The best way to reach out to the hearts of the people is to acknowledge your wrongs, and if you have to stay away from power for five years, do it. Because, that is the period when you can see where you went wrong. But our leaders think that only their adversaries have the patent to go wrong, and whatever they are doing in their wisdom is the ultimate advice Machiavelli would offer.

The period of six months before the elections is very crucial. Election commission clamps code of conduct three months in advance. But it is not enough. The govt. must be disabled six months ahead of an election; they should be allowed to make no financial transactions, except the necessary ones like paying salaries. These are the days when maximum horse trading is done. This period has to be closely monitored by the Election Commission.

The Indian electorate has so many voters who belong to poor strata and for whom vote does not mean anything beyond a paper. Such people who are living on the margins of life, are the object of political parties to tilt the scales. Then there are spiritual *babas*. Govt. heads start visiting religious leaders in the hope of winning the favour of their followers. These pockets of Indian electorate are actually black corridors in which anything can happen from liquor to drugs to money. I wonder if the Election Commission has any remedy to stop this absolutely undemocratic exercise.

6

RELIGION: A POLITICIAN'S SQUARE MEAL

India is a strange land of contradictions. The Constitution of India declares her a neutral state in terms of religion. Yet, religion is so much embedded in Indian soil that it is really difficult to draw a line where religion ends and politics begins. The Indian princely states were run by kings, but their actions were under the influence of the *gurus* who always told them to act according to *rajya dharma* [Duty towards the State]. But, as times went by, the high traditions and higher ideals have also been washed away. What we see today is that religion and politics are not two different streams; they are so mixed together that the politician has grown religious teeth, while the man of religion proves to be a hydra-headed politician.

When parties fight elections on the basis of religious formations, it is an open mixing of the two streams, which has proved to be hazardous for the nation. In view of religious neutrality ordained by the Constitution, the leaders at the centre would pay respect to all religions of the land. We are a democratic nation, but unbridled use of religion and state power have pushed us back towards the political structure of a theocratic state [read Pakistan] which finds itself uncomfortable with minorities. We can forget it only at our peril that India is a growing economy. And a world

power in its own right. And if it is miles ahead of Pakistan in international reckoning, it is because of its impeccable democratic credentials. But, if religious forces go on dictating the political masters, very soon we shall lose our special status vis-à-vis Pakistan. Who wants India to become a land lost to fundamental liberties, pushing the country into the backwaters of international reckoning?

Indians have made sacrifices to gain freedom from the Imperialists. Now, we are threatened with religious imperialism. Anyone who uses religion for political ends, is playing with the spirit of the constitution of India, which promises to give to the people a state free from any religious repression. It is a pity that some TV channels spend 70% of their footage discussing who said what and keep the emotions on the boil in endless discussions, to ensure that the people neither see, nor say nor think, like human beings, like Indians.

In 1950, we adopted the road to religious neutrality. It was a clear proof that we had built on the experience of the western nations and liberal political thought, which had kept the religious outfits at bay and separated the state from the religious establishment. And, India has registered tremendous progress. Today, if we undo all that, and take the other route, we shall be pushing our country into a suicidal trap, threatening its very survival as the greatest democracy of the world. Much water has flowed down the Ganges, and people are not in a mood to accept autocratic behavior at the top.

It is, however, heartening that our leaders are often giving us dreams of turning our country into Canada. They are making visits to America, where they assert that India is a free nation, while at home, the rising turmoil in the name of nationalism and religion are belying what they are projecting there. There is only one exception. The people of Punjab who have faced highly provocative situations in the recent past, have proved that they have inherited the democratic ideal in its perfection. No one could provoke them into violence. Compare it with UP where violence is the rule, not the exception. The sense of insecurity among the citizens is increasing, and some people are out to create a scare among the

minds of the people to think in a particular way. Otherwise, prepare to leave the country.

However, if we go on with disowning populations, and alienating them from the ideal called India, and setting them against the mainstream, it will be a disservice to the idea of India as a nation, which our elders have always cherished. Political masters are seen giving huge largesses running into hundreds of crores to religious *deras*. When the elections approach, leaders are seen making beeline to religious heads to seek their blessings. We have gone too far in playing politics with religion; and playing religion with politics. Our leaders would do well to keep the two apart. Otherwise, society is already on fire and the frequency of mass violence can set off an ideological civil war.

Politics and Religion often make an incompatible, if not altogether indecent, union. Blending the two can serve the nation best, but only if the leader is astute enough to ensure that each maintains its dignity and they do not override each other. Sadly enough, decades of mindless pursuit of power, and wealth have led us into an ideological void where our leaders today are poor shadows of what we used to have. India is great because of its great leaders who strode the world like a colossus and led India to freedom. What have we made of our freedom? India is at the cross roads now. It remains to be seen whether we sail into more freedom, more prosperity, and greater well being of the nation, with a quantum jump in its international status, or our leadership lets the grand opportunity slip from its fingers, and allows the ship to drift into the dangerous terrains of an ideological civil war.

7

WORLD PEACE: THE ONLY SURVIVAL STRATEGY

“India is a phenomenon, a world, a movement of tolerance, co-existence and peace; a spiritual monolith which can look backwards and forwards at the same time. The world which believes in human liberty looks up to India for her spiritual heritage of common good. Even in her turmoils, which are common to all humanity, India has evinced an inherent power to surprise the world by regaining its balance and moving forward.”

Dr. J.S. Anand

The world is in the throes of a re-make. These are apocalyptic times when the old and the new are engaged in a bitter fight. The physical environment has changed; and the minds are on the transformation tables. The fundamentalist forces which are now engaged with the free world in a mortal battle will be quenched sooner or later; no doubt after claiming so many lives. But, world is an ocean. Oceans swallow islands, mountains, and whole civilizations. Same is the case with the marching civilization. It has left behind the horrendous Nagasaki and the Hiroshima blaze. World Wars have passed by. Laden is no more. Gaddaffi gone. Saddam lives only in the memory of women, he left widowed.

Baghdadi's days are numbered. The world is out to decimate that who threatens its visible order. Even when it is in dangerous turmoil, the sea does not lose its sea-ship. So will be the world. The crises we face today will be over. However, no guarantee they will not be replaced by other serious issues.

It is time to find out a strategy for the survival of the human race. No doubt, the survival of the fittest has been regarded as the penultimate condition of life and survival, which belongs to nature, but we, the human beings, are expected to improve upon such brutal realities of living. Survival of the Fittest is fine. But, what will happen to those who are not fit? Who are disadvantaged? Who are challenged in one way or the other? Will they be left to their fate? What type of a world we want? A warped, crippled, one-sided, selfish world? Or a world with a balanced mental set up, sharing life, sharing pain, so that there is a human balance also, to the live that is being lived. Have we said goodbye to the state of nature in which Rousseau found people to be rational and thinking human begins? People like Baghdadi were baked in the western masonaries of Dr. Frankenstein.

Let us look at our world, with a positive mind. Let us count the bounties of this world. Let us see how much good is around. Then, surely we can assimilate the fact that no civilization was free from its blues. Nothing was perfect even in the past. If we Indians think that Ashoka's great was the kindest king, and his time is the golden period in the history of India, can we surmise there was nothing amiss? In the same way, all was not well with the reign of Elizabeth during the Renaissance period, although she is made out to be the best of rulers, and Elizabethan times are considered to be the best for the promotion of arts, sciences, navigation, music and painting etc. Same is true of our world, where if we have Obama to feel reassured, we have Trump to feel threatened. They actually balance each other out. In the same way, India also knows how to keep on the track. Neither Babri, nor Dadri can undo what the spirit of India has accomplished. Tolerance. An average Indian knows how to regain his balance, after the jolts in social and political life.

We are living in a world whose dominant value is peace and co-existence. Yet, these values have to be reinforced and reaffirmed. The idea of Liberty has remained confined to America, or very few western elitist nations. This is because these societies are unencumbered by fundamentalist ideas. Six hundred years ago, the Church had become subservient to the King in England. In the 17th century itself, Parliament had become stronger than the King. These are the nations where religion was shown its place. And, politics was not allowed to meddle in it directly. America whose history is no more than 400 years, is a nation conceived in the idea of Liberty, its blue notwithstanding. But the dominant value of American society remains the same. Statue of Liberty is what defines American value system. The other nations try to borrow the American dream, the American culture, but they do not try to assimilate the spirit of America. It has affected the life styles in other western and European nations also. People are leading a free life. No burdens, except those created by themselves.

What plagues eastern and middle eastern societies is their traditional value systems. It cannot be summarily said that tradition is a burden and must be shed off. Traditions are valuable only if they remind us of the best that has lived on. But, if we carry from it the worst only, and drop the best, we are at fault. This is what is happening. The Muslim world and the Indian subcontinent are now in the grip of sweeping waves of fundamentalism. And, we can see, while one part of the globe is marching into unknown skies, the others are engaged in bullfighting. Religion has been reduced to a mask, which has now developed pock marks. More than half the world is on fire. And more it threatens to engulf.

Even a country like India where democracy has proved its unquestioned sway, sometimes appears to be heading towards a middle-eastern state of affairs. India is a movement, which cannot be reversed. History cannot be re-written. Facts can be twisted, but only for a limited period. Instead of re-writing history, and wasting the nation's time, it is better her rulers try to write a good future for the country, rising above the parties and their loyalties. Beyond all parties, and beyond all loyalties, stands our Mother India.

It will be a disservice to the nation if we do not measure up to the lofty ideals of freedom fighters.

There are hundreds of bodies which are striving for peace in this world. Certainly, it is a beautiful world. In spite of its flaws. In spite of its blues. Its charms, its horizons, are expanding by the day. Only, we have to ensure that we choose our leaders with care. And the most important issue today is to ensure peace. Poets, who are called 'unacknowledged legislators of the world' are making pleas for a peaceful world. The World Union of Poets, based in Italy, has given a world-wide call to observe 21st June, 2016, as WUP Day for Peace on Earth. Let us all respond to this call from World President of World Union of Poets, Knight Silvano Bortolazzi. We are not crazy that we will expose man, the best of creation, to a self-annihilating passion: War.

8

YOUTH AND THE TRAP OF TRADITION

When we talk of a growing economy and a resurgent India, we cannot help talking about the role the youth of the country are to play in taking the nation forward, at home, and at the international level. There is so much that is good happening in our country. Yet there is so much good that remains to be done. Our movement may be slow, but it is sure, steady and forward. India has grown from a feudal set up to a democratic one; and now, we can see a moving shift from the agrarian to the urban sectors of living, with a rising middle class. India can, at best, be said to be a country which comprises of the best talent, but at the same time, suffering from frustrating maladies as well. Let us talk of our youth. There is no denying the fact that the youth of India have shown a lot of grace in the face of grave provocations; they believe in preserving the sanctity of the sacred institutions of society; and they are going ahead, at a measured pace, and making their name in the international arena. Yet the question stares us in our face. How many? What happens to the so many who cannot make the grade? And who are left to their fate?

It would be better if this discussion is given a wider scope and

we go back to the times when one after the other inventions were being made in England. We are called upon to ponder at the single fact, why, excepting a very few like Ramanujam, no invention, no discovery has come our way? What is wrong with our master minds? What has gone wrong and where, that India is even scarcely mentioned, if not altogether non-existent in the list of immortals so far as innovations and discoveries are concerned. Not that our Universities don't have research departments. Not that our industries not have R & D facilities. We are a nation with a growing student population; and a staggering number of Universities, but with unenviable results. Perhaps, because we have no faith in individual enterprise and conditions are still not ripe when an individual can carry out his work unchallenged by the restrictive norms of a tradition ridden society. Our systems are still apathetic to an individual's personal aspirations and the idea of social and commercial viability and total absence of people who are ready to invest in ideas make India a country, who has not learned anything from its western models.

It is here that we find India trailing behind them by centuries. Even today, we have no social security system. Everybody has to worry everyday for the day's bread. Not to talk of butter. So much population disables all welfare measures. We are fighting ourselves so far as growth criteria are concerned. And add to it the growing population of focusless multitudes. Students are multiplying by the day, and they are growing in numbers, without any particular objective in mind. It is just to study, to take up training. And then, if getting ready to sell of their land to get a job. Yes, job is for which all our India students are reared and prepared. Service is the most cherished dream of an average, as well as a highly intelligent, student. Clerk in one case, and an IAS officer in another. We do not think beyond these stations. We are all possessed by the spirit of 'babuism'. And, wittingly or unwittingly, each school is preparing our youth for service. Creativity of mind is mortgaged and students are forced to study medical, not because of their inherent talent, but because a doctor can make millions. Engineering because they can get at least some sort of a job. Strange thing is

that young people from landed families too, run after small jobs. In a way, it can be said that India is a country of average people, with average dreams, and average performance. The extraordinary among our youth, leave the country and settle in America.

One major reason toward which our attention has never strayed, and which, I think is a potential logic behind the great innovations in western nations, is rooted in our social systems. It has to be agreed that the most productive period of a young man's life which can be used to pursue the dreams of grandeur is the period between the formative years from 15th year to the formed years of 35. This is the time when a young man has high reserves of energy compounded with high rise dreams. This is the period when he must be left alone to chalk out an orbit for himself in the skies. But this is what happens to him in an Indian school.

Instead of being fired with a dream to scale high peaks of achievement, our students from 10th standard onwards, through their graduate classes, remain busy with dreams of physical pleasure out of their class mates. Hardly 10% students mind their studies, whereas the 90% spend their time looking after their friends. When a young man grows into post graduation, he finds out a ladylove and wants to marry. But, the girl's parents say 'No'. Here, both of them are married off into different families. Now, what happens, after initial two or three years of fault finding and visits to the police stations, they come round, and one or two kids are born. Then, by 35, the man is busy riding the young ones to the day care centres or schools. **And by 38, the youthful dreams in him finally commit suicide.** No doubt, he was born a unique personality. But, social taboos, in which he could not enjoy normal moments of natural love, issues which were and are non-issues with his western counterparts, and which make him feel guilty, finally write his epitaph as a wasted youth. Millions of our young people die, at the altar of social norms, which instead of regulating the flow, coagulate them and freeze them into their shoes. Forcing them into an average fate. The dreams which lived in their blood, sometimes revolted, but were suppressed with violence.

As awakened citizens, we have to make sure that students grow

up more naturally, and their gender consciousness has to be groomed more carefully by the parents. So that their focus on studies remains unblurred. And in marriage too, we must not destroy the castles which they build in the air. Good parenting, and better transparent [teachers] is the need of the hour, so that we could bring them back to a life of idealism and commitment. India needs innovators and we must create conditions in which students can work with a mind at peace.

9

THE INDIAN DREAM

India has been a land of dreams, grandeur and magnanimity. And one after the other, ruler after ruler has tried to emulate the great examples set by Raja Harishchandra, and later on, by King Ashoka, who renounced violence forever. The Ashok Chakra, his emblem, is our greatest strength, and shows to the world our overpowering faith in the great King. India has seen political power slipping into the hands of tyrants also; and the Indian psyche has suffered bruises, which even after centuries, speak up, whenever someone touches us hard. The great ideals of non-violence have found mention in our Constitution also which speaks of India as a country where no coercion can be used in the name of religion, caste or creed. Although the dream of equality still remains distant, still, India has never swerved from its avowed objectives.

However, of late, we find this dream fractured. The only thing India had been proud of, our faith in non-violence, has been slipping from our fingers. And, sadly enough, we have deviated from the great apostles of peace, and nowadays trying to charter a path which deviates from the original dream of every Indian. The Americans had a dream too, it was the dream of liberty and

prosperity. America and several other western nations like England and France, have followed a policy of co-existence, in view of the plurality of the social fabric. If we today think that we want India to become powerful and number one nation of the world, we always think of it to follow the trajectory of American dream. We are following the western dream. We are trying to recast India into a new world power, and a new power structure, based on military power.

We have to reckon with two issues concerning the American dream which we want to transplant in India. One, we cannot ride rough shod over the Indian dream. Second, American dream has its own parameters which hardly fit into the way Indian rulers think. Merely thinking that by corporatizing Indian economic systems, we can create a new climate of progressivism, is dreaming too hard. For the sake of aggressive campaigning, such ideas can be acceptable, but the ground reality is something different. Mr. Modi is pursuing an agenda of putting India in the top bracket of the nations of the world. He deserves credit for enhancing the image of India so far as world leaders are concerned. But, his handling of this land of complexity is far from satisfactory. Dreaming of the American dream means we are ready to accept the liberalism which is at the root of American psyche. Here is what is in entire contradiction with our thoughts. Not to think of our adversaries, India has shown a tendency to throw away colleagues who express different views from the mainstream politicians. How far away are we from a real democratic set up, where at least Members of Parliament have a right to think independent of what their party leaders are saying or doing.

The western countries are looking at resurgent India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi with fingers crossed. But, it is not difficult to realize that this India has drifted from the Indian dream. We do not at all talk of non-violence, we do not at all talk of collective well being, we do not talk of co-existence. Religion, which has been pushed into the background in western countries, has come to play a central role in Indian political system. It should not be forgotten that America and England gained emancipation

from the Church, and only then, Liberalism could become the guiding deity of the western society. We are marching away from the Indian dream, not to talk of the American one.

Secondly, in the western world, the reigning religion is Christianity. And they have a great centre of religious power at Vatican in the Pope. The Pope is not a political figure, nor does he meddle with state administration. This is what is happening in India, where there is no position comparable to the position of Pope, neither in Hinduism, nor in any other religion. The heart of the matter is that India is a democratic nation; it has multiplicity of religious population as in America, but we have now decided to deviate from the path of liberalism. The Trump phenomenon in America and what Owaisi says in India are unacceptable to minds bred in rationality.

The fact of the matter is that we have fractured the Indian dream, of peaceful co-existence, and we are far away from adopting the American dream too, which is rooted in liberalism. The tanks, and the guns show physical strength, but a nation thrives on its moral and spiritual power, and sadly, here India is languishing on the shores of time. We have succeeded in confusing political parties with the nation; and the nation with men of politics. India needs statesmen who can realize the threat to India as a nation from its own partisan philosophies and rise above parochialism. India which is free from its own inhibitions, its own limitations, is the India which the world is looking up to. Not an India which is embroiled in its own petty squabbles. No majority, however unfractured, gives the right to a political party to assume that this party alone is the sole arbiter of the nation's destiny. The country should not be confused with the government. They are two things apart. The govt. is the country's agent. And it must realize what the country wants. Not the other way round.

If we want to save the Indian Dream from further disintegration, we need to think objectively at what is happening to our society, to our political thought. We are degenerating by the day. Our political leaders are sick after power and wealth. The greatest passion for them is to remain in power. And for this, they

can tear through any opposition, physical or ideological. The philosophy that bound India together was the philosophy of a Hindustan which is now giving way under the pressure of partisan politico-scholarship. Indian society is now badly broken into religions and castes and every act of the politician is to use them for his vote-bank.

India is an idea which needs to needle all those who play foul with the basic, with the constitution and with our fundamentals. Much water which has flowed down the Ganges has lost its pristine glory. Constitution, our high moral standards, our men of great culture, — every thing is suffering erosion. We can further go down the drain, the moral order of society is waning, and the defenders are turning violators. The king is the preserver of the moral order. Now, it is the king and his men who have lost all character and sense of shame. The protectors are paid for personal services. It is a chaotic world. I wonder if the time has come to checkmate this chess of nonsense.

10

WHOSE INDIA?

The Idea and Ideal of an Opposition Party

Indian democracy is now an established fact. It has proved that in spite of so many possibilities, the Indian electorate prefers the ballot and believes in their own verdict. The worst of circumstances have seen people's faith in themselves get the better of the prophets of doom. It is this democratic spirit which has steered India now to a position of power in the world. Certainly the nation is now a world of possibilities and after China, the greatest market in the world.

However, it has to be remembered that India has always been a champion of peace at home and across the globe. It is India's tradition, India's way of life, India's philosophy and the only item, after spices, which it can supply to the world. I am referring to our great past to bring into sharp focus our present which is passing through a transformation from a peaceful India to an India whose peace is under threat, not only at the hands of our neighbours, but also from within. In Indian constitution, the opposition has been slated to play a constructive role in the running of the government. A powerful opposition is required to ensure that nation keeps its

balance on the right rope walk like a bamboo stick. A powerful opposition is not meant to stall the work of the Parliament, but to ensure that only those laws are duly passed which benefit the nation. The problem has arisen because we have forgotten the basic tenets of democracy. If today we find that the Parliamentary work was stalled by the Congress, it is also not difficult to discover that the ruling party was equally to blame.

Dismissing Opposition as Anti-National:

It is seen, of late, that the party in power dismisses the opposition as anti-national. I want to focus here on two aspects of a democratic process. One, the meaning of Parliament and the other, what an opposition should ideally mean. So far as the idea of Parliament is concerned, it is of note that the word 'Parliament' itself draws from the word 'parley' which means discussion. So, by inference, it can be stated that Parliament is a forum for discussion. In a democracy, laws are to be passed by the majority vote. It refers to the fact that every legislation is to be discussed threadbare, and then, voted upon. If the majority votes for it, it stands passed. If the majority votes against it, is dropped. Now, what is that majority? Our problem is that we confuse this idea of majority with the majority party which is also the ruling party. They ensure that their party votes en bloc like a rock. Here we make a travesty of the ideal. The idea of majority is the idea of a shifting majority. On every piece of legislation, there is independent, unbiased voting. Here, there has to be no division on party lines. If a piece of legislation is good for the country, the voting is across party lines and it is adopted. If a piece of legislation is considered anti-people, then, it is rejected by a majority vote. ***When it comes to voting for the nation, there are no parties. No loyalties. No biases. People act independently. Conscientiously. Without the fear of the whip.*** Perhaps, we have throttled this democratic process. We force the MPs and MLAs to vote on party lines. Only the leaders decide, and the party men just follow. Individual perception has no say. And horse-trading has brought down the moral stock of the legislators to the rock bottom.

The Idea and Ideal of Opposition:

The second part is the idea and ideal of opposition. My basic question here is: Whose India? Does it start belonging to the party in power the day it assumes office? Do those who lose at the hustings turn anti-national? If a candidate wins by 200 votes, does he, by the sheer logic of his victory, have a better vision than the one who loses by 200 votes? Can a party change the fundamental character of the Constitution without convincing the opposition of its dire necessity? I wonder. No party, no leader howsoever tall, should ever assume that he can ride rough shod so far as Indian Parliament is concerned.

Nation's Agenda:

The nation always belongs to the people. Their representatives are the trustees who are required to act according to the wishes of the people. Even if they have a particular vision of their own, they should be afraid of foisting it on the people. So far as national agenda is concerned, it is neither the headache nor the prerogative of the ruling party. It is the concern of the whole nation, and it has to be deliberated and discussed in an Institution like the Politburo where the heads of all the major political parties meet. Once the basic thrust of the national policy keeping in view international compulsions is decided, then, that NATIONAL VISION, or NATIONAL CONSENSUS should be evolved and the same is, thereafter, implemented by the ruling party. This would be government by consensus in which the philosophy of all the parties would be reflected. The party in power is only meant to run the government, while the national agenda is decided upon by a select group of national leaders. In such a set up, there should be no problem if the post of Deputy Prime Minister goes to the Leader of the largest Opposition party.

One more change that I think can help us is to reduce the tenure of the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies from 5 years to two and a half, the majority party ruling for the first part, while the governance going over to the next in majority for the next two and a half years. Governance should be considered a collective game, best played by consensus.

11

SOCIAL INERTIA

Time to Say 'Enough is Enough'

“Time has come when we have to pull up our socks, and say: enough is enough. The people, if they want a fair government, must ask for electoral changes and the most pertinent change which has to be introduced, and which will be vociferously opposed by the political class will be Recall.”

Of late, thanks to the lack of focus in our educational institutions, we are having a crop of young people who are busy trying to make both ends meet. They have no time, to reflect, on their own conditions. They have no time for what is happening around them. A few bucks and they keep glued to their tables, or their targets. To describe this new breed of non-worrying multitudes is: tables and targets. While these hard working young men are busy in their offices, they have no time to see what is happening in the society around them.

There are news which tell us that people who are recommended

for high positions in the government, or even for promotions to civil services, are sons and daughters of the ministers. All the major businesses are cornered by the politicorporates or corpoliticians. What is really intriguing is that we have accepted this malpractice as an established convention, because not a single voice is raised when the news is published. Merit has gone underground. Money and connections make new formidable relationships. We don't see red anywhere. That is what proves that political system and societal inertia have oiled the very roots of idealism. **We are now creating a society which will be ruled by less than the best possible. The army of ministers, and then the swarms of their relatives, read or unread, are waiting in the wings to ride the winds of power and get planted in offices for which they are no match. Still, speaking against the system, right or wrong, is rebellion, and rebellion has only one-way treatment: it is to be quelled.**

There is nothing by the name of opposition. It used to be a very prestigious issue to be sitting on the non-treasury benches once for a while. Now, opposition has been reduced to a shambles, thanks to internal squabbling, and the dynastic genes travelling from above down to the Sarpanch level. Disagreement today is disloyalty to the nation, and must be dealt with an iron hand. People are removed from offices, if they dare to express views which do not suit the establishment. What happened to an IPS officer, who dared the mining mafia in UP is still not history. Moreover, if the govt. wants to install an officer, there is no political machinery which can stall that move, however misplaced, misconstrued it might be.

The entire opposition has tried to heckle the PM on the issue of demonetization. The Govt. has lost all sense of responsibility that the entire nation is suffering and people are crying, still they are in no mood to mend their decisions. For a country of India's continental proportions, no government can take the people for a ride. No sudden decisions can be taken. We need a leadership which takes all major stakeholders into confidence before such decisions are taken. It seems there is more than black money and corruption which are at the back of this sudden decision, which has stopped

the PM from facing the opposition. This is a cryptic action which shows how a govt. assured of a brute majority can play with the feelings and aspirations of a country and go unscathed atleast till the elections. And elections are a far cry from being transparent. We in India know the facts too well, where money, power, wealth, muscles – everything comes into play as soon as elections are declared. Nobody wants changes because nobody wants to change.

We have played havoc with the idea of majority. Government by majority rule means: all those laws are to be passed which are supported by the majority of the MLAs or MPs. But today, majority party has the license to plough through all opposition, and get its bills passed, on the strength of its vocal chords, if not on its strength. Does numerical strength mean sagacity? Wisdom? And if we assume it so, we should not forget the Roman mobs who brought down many aspiring careers by their sheer folly.

Political sagacity is on the wane. Political gimmickry is on the rise. Politicians have realized it a day too soon that sun is not in the habit of shining all the time. Eat drink and be merry, lest it [the sun] should set tomorrow. Mr. Narendra Modi has done well to ask the MPs to adopt one village and ensure its development. Otherwise, all the money they would get was actually wasted on their wasteful luxurious living. I still do not agree with this idea. Why one village only? Why others should be discriminated against? Do these MP's not represent an entire area? What about others? These piecemeal solutions do not go far. Development has to be an agenda for the whole country and the road-map has to be laid down at the earliest.

I was talking of the non-worrying multitudes who are absolutely a callous lot. For whom, what happens next door happens in a foreign country. My simple question is: what is the importance of leisure in the life of a worker, or a service man? And what is the role of a man who is heading a family? In the present set up, in which 24x7 is the leading norm, I wonder if a person can even think of leisure. When man and woman both are working, where is leisure? Can they afford to have kids? Even if they have, when the kids are growing up, where is the mother on their bedside to

impart them the essential knowledge of the Ramayana and the *Mahabharata*? Have these epics turned hostile and irrelevant for the upcoming generations feeding on the spiderman's adventures? What are we up to? Perhaps, trying our best to ensure that the young man, who in the 70s hung a satchel filled with books on Marx and Revolution, does not return to haunt the naive rich. He must have no time to sit back at home. No time to relax. No time to reflect. So that he does not know and realize what this system is up to and how he is being drained of strength and how, instead of life and vitality, he is being fed on pipedreams. They must have no time at their disposal. Otherwise, 1917 can be repeated. Our politcorporates are far worse than the Czars of Russia; and our corpoliticians are far worse than the bad characters of the two World Wars.

I wonder if there is any political party, or any non-political organization which wants to instill meaning into our lives. Time has come when we have to pull up our socks, and say: enough is enough. The people, if they want a fair government, must ask for electoral changes and the most pertinent change which has to be introduced, and which will be vociferously opposed by the political class will be Recall.

LIVING BEYOND MADAM TUSSAD'S EMPORIUM

The resurgent India is passing through the labour pains of emerging from a sleepy religious nation to a vibrant nation which is an undeclared world power today. World's greatest market, and the greatest repository of human talent, India is going to emerge as a world power and a stabilizing influence in world affairs. But, back home, the rising cacophony of religiosity threatens to throw this country back into medievalism, disregarding the lessons of subsequent history. Religiosity has plunged the Muslim world into the dark times of yesteryears; and if we compare India and Pakistan, the religious state theory has plunged Pakistan into the backwaters of contemporary history, where democracy is but a shadow, progress, an illusion, and hatred is the culture in which the past, the present, and the future generations are bred. Peshawar and Lahore are stark examples of the failure of the religion-state theory, where people are left to the mercy of the bullets.

Indian democracy is a vibrant democracy as it is rooted in deep faith in liberalism and humanism. India was conscientiously declared a state which is neither religious, nor anti-religious, but a neutral state, where there was space for every religion to grow and

every religious community to propagate its religious tenets. Indians were the proud people who had left medievalism behind, and taken a call with the future. Future lay in leaving the left-overs of the past, what Nehru called *dead wood*, behind. And moving along in a new environment of hope and accomplishment. India may have seen many upheavals, but our faith in the democratic ideal has never swerved. If Indira Gandhi played with the feelings of the people, and imposed Emergency, she was penalized for her excesses. History has never forgiven Hitler and Mussolini, who wanted to superimpose a particular ideology on the world. Similar was the fate of Russian rulers like Stalin, who drew an iron curtain and tried to rule the Soviet Union with the might of the jackboots. Lesson is plain. People do not like to be advised in their personal thinking patterns. Those who tried to play with their freedoms, and their feelings, met a sad fate.

The saddening part of modern times is that religion is being used to garner votes. Rath Yatra and the Tirath Yatra trains of Punjab are meant to take the people for a ride. It is shocking that our leaders, when they get into political trouble, take shelter in the shrines. These very people rush to religious places to seek blessings of the Almighty when they get into the saddle. They are certain that Almighty is deaf and dumb. And, what they do, and what they think, He is immune from it. So are they from Him. Going to the shrines is a political gimmick, a professional 'do it'. Cars go to service stations occasionally. But we make a beeline to religious places in the morning and in the evening, so unsure we are of ourselves and our relationship with the Almighty. We always doubt him. Sixty percent time of an average Indian is spent in visiting the holy places, and praying. Still, when they come out of the holy precincts, they are the same good old people, back to their usual devilry.

If Almighty is deaf and dumb, not so are our religious gurus who are never shy of patronizing these politicians. This nexus of 'mayadhari' corporate gurus and politicians is a strange Indian phenomenon, unseen anywhere in western countries. This is a real time contribution of Indian politics to the contemporary political

thought. Small time and big time religious gurus use every type of language, rough, tough and volatile, to help the political masters, as well as to retain their seats. Rarely, you see such a constellation of power, politics, religion and wealth come together, as it is happening in India now.

The present dispensation of the BJP is different from Atal Bihari Vajpyee's times. His nationalistic credentials were too strong, and his vision of an *Akhand Bharat* so pervasive, so inclusive, that he kept the religious outfit of BJP, the RSS, contained to its barracks. But, today, when the cart has been put before the horse, Mr. Narendra Modi has to decide whether he wants to go down the drain like Manmohan Singh, [who allowed his goodness to be debauched by the unscrupulous Congress], or to park himself as a man who could transcend contemporary history, as his contemporaries APJ Abdul Kalam and Atal Bihari Vajpyee have done.

Time is very cruel. But we have to agree, it is very transparent and equanimous. It gives equal opportunities to all, to rise, or fall. Mr. Narendra Modi, who started off with a great goodwill, was given a mandate for development, rejecting the rotten regime of the Congress. He cannot change his agenda. Otherwise, there is Arvind Kejriwal, waiting in the wings to fill the vacuum created by him. History does not like to be re-written. It repeats if we learn no lessons. It has to be remembered that the patriots who laid down their lives, during freedom struggle, not a single patriot died for *Hindu Rashtra*. They died for their country. India. Hindustan. Bharat Mata which loves all its sons and daughters in equal measure. Nobody died for a step mother who makes a difference between Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims. All these developments are cutting heavily into the emotions of the country, and if the Prime Minister does not assert and prefers silence over what is happening, he may miss the bus for immortality which Madam Tussad's Emporium cannot grant him. However, if he has a dream to stride the world like a colossus, he still has time, and our good wishes are with our Prime Minister.

13

INDIA'S MAN OF DESTINY

History is very cruel. It may or may not repeat itself, but it will not spare those who did not let the dead lie in peace —

Dr. Anand

If the common people who make humanity are the most important factors of human living, as Rousseau contends, then, those who consider themselves above them are hardly worth considering. It is, however, worth noting, what an ordinary man in the street wants: here is the list of his most natural demands: he wants a job; he wants a home; he wants education for his children; he wants medical facility; he wants security; he wants peace. Now, this is a very modest demand of a civilized society. But, our country, pitched very high on the development agenda, shadowed by a religious do's and don'ts, is a poor 118 on the list in the world. Our government says we are in the top bracket, but how you reach the top bracket? By showing off muscles, at first to your neighbours and then to your own countrymen? The launching of SLV's and the purchase of destructive systems add to the killer potential of the country, but do hardly anything to enhance the sustaining capacity of the people.

It is sad, and shameful, that leaders have developed foul mouth and every other day, declare to cut the throat of this or that person. It seems the 60% who did not vote for the ruling alliance, are all *desh dbrohis*, traitors. One more thing, it seems all the sixty years other parties were in power, the country was in the hands of the *desh dbrohis* and always in danger of disintegration. And now that the saffron outfit has managed majority, they think that India should be of a particular kind; forcible pruning of unwanted realities notwithstanding. Let us dig out our history. And relocate our heroes. No matter if peace becomes a hostage. Let there be forces of anarchy let loose under official patronage to call some dogs mad, who cry for food, and then, spray them with bullets.

India has always prided itself on its moral strength. On the strength of its spirituality. On the strength of its philosophy. The past history and mythology is replete with examples where the kings were directed by *raaj dharma*. And this *raaj dharma* was pronounced by none else but religious gurus. But, today, our religion has taken shelter under the poisonous leaves of the tree of politics. They decree what the 'netaji' wants. Our political system is now breeding monsters who acquire wealth during the five years they are in power, hold the country to ransom, and stack their millions of dollars in foreign banks. These are the people who come again to ask for votes and people, sometimes helpless, and sometimes, shamelessly get liquor and give votes. Can demonetization stop these anti-social activities? I wonder.

What these governments of the rich have done for the poor? They have snatched from them cheap electricity by putting in high running meters. They have piped their homes with centrally controlled media systems. They have developed business interests which run counter to the interests of the state. Today, the universities which are brain of the country are under attack. Academic freedom is being compromised. Still the people have no choice but to run after the political masters like their shadows.

What credit can be given to the BJP for the last two years it has been in power. The rhetoric of development does not weave any magic now. When will our leadership realize that theatre and politics are two sides of the same coin, and politics which does not grow

into sagacity, remains at the level of pranks only, and pranks may win elections, but not the hearts of the people. The real kingdom of a king lies in the love, the people bear for him. The People love if he is just and impartial. But, we have started playing with history. *History is very cruel. It may or may not repeat itself, but it will not spare those who do not let the dead lie in peace.*

India is a country, but more than that, it is a philosophy. It is an ideology. It is a framework for collective living. People who laid down their lives for India, did not die for a Hindu Rashtra. Those who died did not know any difference between Hindus and Muslims. Those who died included Hindus and Muslims. How can one party, who by chance, comes to power, with majority, claim to be the sole arbiter of India's destiny?

My compatriots! If you want common man to hold the reins of power; and if you want that you remain in power even after you have given your vote to your representatives; if you want that the focus of all the money spent by the govt. is you, the common man, you will have to look beyond the traditional parties. You will have to put your faith in your own self. India needs men of stature, ideas, ideals and moral strength to lead you from slavery of the rich to the freedom you deserve.

Who is India's man of Destiny? Time has come to stop and think. Indian electorate must check the credentials of the people asking for votes. The leader who will lead India into the next phase of this millennium will be one who has his eyes upon the stars, but feet firmly planted on the earth. We are in search of a leader who is selfless, whose heart throbs with the love of the poor, and who can deliver justice and be fare to all. I wonder if today we have any such leader. India's past is glorious because we had men of great culture, and this culture is in decline today. During the last 60 years, India has not seen one leader who can be accepted as the uncontroversial leader of the country, with the exception of Hon'ble APJ Abdul Kalam and Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Indians are looking for chrisma, a leader who can lead the nation as a whole. Mr. Modi appears to have erred here. He has yet to emerge as the leader of the masses, because even today, he represents the BJP, not the diverse Indiaspora.

14

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN DUTIES

I wonder if the constitution of any other country has a chapter on Fundamental Duties. Whatever the circumstances under which these ideas were incorporated in the Indian Constitution, the fact remains that the idea of human duties deserves to be reinvented and taken out of the national context. In this world, where even a pinch on the body sends reverberations across the globe, courtesy social sites like Facebook and Twitter, and people in millions are ready to send petitions supporting various causes, it is imperative that the focus shifts to the idea of International Human Duties, of nations towards nations and of men towards men. It has to be recognized, sooner than later, to be on the safer side as a global community. What Mr. Narendra Modi is doing now by starting Swachh Bharat Abhiyan [Clean India Campaign] is another version of reminding the people of their duties towards themselves. We need a clean enviros, as we are the agents of pollution. If considered a duty, towards oneself, towards the society and towards the nation, and going beyond it, towards the global community, each of us can become an agent of change which is always waiting in the wings, but, unfortunately, gets postponed at every juncture.

The Spiritual Dimension:

At the spiritual level, it is like reading out Bhagwat Gita to oneself. To relearn [as if we have forgotten the wisdom of the great Scripture] from the pages we hold in great reverence, the idea of 'dharma', the idea of human duties, towards oneself and towards the society. I think The Gita is the text which can ensure the safety of the coming generations, because it upholds the message of Human Duty. It involves the idea of ethics, it informs our mundane life with a spiritual message. Every action that we undertake has reverberations in the space, and actions not taken when required, also create chasms in psychosphere of the time, and invite Tsunamis and Hudhuds. Whenever man fails in his duties, the divine sends across apocalyptic figures like Lord Krishana, who re-establish the lost value system and 'dharma' on earth, and destroy those who were out to destabilize the balance of body politik.

The New Charter:

At the world level, it is time to come to terms with the idea of International Human Duties. The United Nations has done well to make the world understand the idea of Human Rights. But, rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Without an understanding of duties, rights are a mere nuisance. Moreover, while in the case of international human rights, the focus has always been on the minorities who have been denied these rights. This crusade must go on. But, the idea of Human Duties directly relates to those who are in power, who dictate terms, and who decide the fate of humanity. In other words, it relates to the major powers of the world. By incorporating these ideas, adopting a charter on International Human Duties, the UN can force the international community to realize their duties towards their fellow men.

Re-Inventing Social Responsibility:

The possible impact of such a scenario, where nations focus on this idea of duties, would be that it will re-focus on social injustice, which is the nursery of terrorism. The world will have to come up with strategies and plans in which the poverty stricken

masses are given a better deal. It will not be in charity. It will be out of a duty, not just felt, but realized under legal protection. Let us take the case of education. In this capitalism-ridden society, only the fittest get the best education, in hi-fi educational institutions. Who can dream of being a doctor if he belongs to a family run by a rickshaw puller? In a re-invented social system, education will not be a priority, it will not be a right of the great masses of underprivileged students, but duty of the society, duty of the govt., duty of the Sarpanch in the village to ensure that every child gets proper education. It will be the duty of the Municipal Corporation to ensure clean water to the residents. And if they fail, they are liable to be taken to court.

The Starting Point:

The idea of Human Duties at the international level can work wonders. It will put a brake on the strategic plans of the nations to engage in sabotage or war preparations. If we want denuclearization of the planet, this can be the starting point. If we want a peaceful world, this can be the starting point. If we want the people of the world to leave distrust, hatred, and grow as one community, this can be the starting point. It is to change the mindset, to think out of the box, to go a little further, and to work for the community beyond the self. The idea of Human Rights is a bourgeois concept, in which responsibility is postponed. But, the idea of International Human Duties is an idea which binds the humanity into an agreement, a redeemable agreement, that we recognize our duties towards ourselves, our neighbours, our society, our country, and then, the greater world community. Some one has said: "If you want to reach God, turn right and keep straight". It is like turning right, and then keeping straight. One can only wish the world needs a change of heart, a change of priorities, a change of perspective, and the idea of Human Duties which can bring about a phenomenal change in the way we look at human rights and give a fillip to the efforts of the world to establish an equitable system across the globe and fight the menace of war and terror.

ELECTION MANIFESTO OF AN ORDINARY CITIZEN

Batting for a Clean Administration:

Uptil now, only political parties used to have an election manifesto. But who knows when things get into reverse gear? India is a thriving democracy and no one can doubt our democratic credentials. Stray incidents happen. They happen in the countries called super powers also. But, they never lose their calm. And this calm is the prime possession of our leaders in here too. Whatever may happen, no feathers are allowed to ruffle. Conscience takes equilibrium pills and goes to sleep.

The political parties have realized over several decades of democratizing that manifesto is no more than a mouth-wash. It has no legal sanction. And, therefore, each one of them tries to paint the future as colourful as it can. Political parties stuff their manifestoes with almost every thing, including promising the moon. The Govt. at the Centre came to power on the agenda of development. Except some roads being widened, and tall talk on bullet trains, there is little real development, except in the suicide rate by the farmers, and the flourishing of the drug trade, at the behest of foreign powers, as our leaders very insightfully have us

believe. *The people might be feeling the pinch of electing people who become absolutely irresponsible, and totally insensitive, to their needs, once they are elected. Indian democracy comes under question mark only when we confront the fact that we have unresponsive, irresponsible, insensitive governments running for five years, and we have no means to pull them down, if they leave their promised manifesto and take up some hidden, undeclared agenda.*

We are convinced that the heavy consignments of drugs caught at the border, are destroyed, and they do not fall into the hands of the police people, [I don't believe a news item in a newspaper], nor are they, thereafter, sold to the slumbering youth of the nation. The best way to provide jobs is to encourage the private agents to export our youngsters to Canada or Panama. It is better to be second rate citizens in a developed country like USA and UK, and do slaving in farms [mortgaging their own, back in India]; We have no problem in uttering with full mouth, all the slogans they would want from us. This is the least we are exacting from the unwilling minorities in India.

In such a scenario, where politics has been reduced to a crazy game of wealth, power, politics and religion, an ordinary man finds himself transfixed, as to who will vouch for his well being? The govt. at the Centre has been running for two years, and development is only on the papers. The social environment in the country has taken a nosedive. Who bothers about the common man and his needs? Instead of bullet trains, he wants water at lower prices, and water meters to be genuine [not fast running as at present]. He wants free medical facilities and hospitals to have doctors and nurses and medicines too. He wants that for genuine students, education should be free, or heavily subsidized. Jobs on full pay to be available on the basis of genuine merit. He wants that the budget on education be more than the budget spent on war preparedness. More schools and more universities should be opened so that students could be given proper training. Religion should be separated from politics. There should be food counters at easy prices. Corrupt officials and leaders should be mortally afraid of the state power. Police should be free from political control. Elections should be held once in five years, but we should elect

two governments. The majority party rules for the first half, while the largest opposition party takes over for the rest of the period. National policy is decided once for all by a Politburo of leaders of all parties. Ordinary man does not want foul mouthed election propaganda. No rallies. All electioneering should be done on the electronic media. Three months before the election date, there should be President's rule, and the central forces brought in to ensure free and fair poll. No party should ever think of buying votes, offering liquor, or capturing booths. Countries like Pakistan are not wrong when they send their leaders, who bungled their powers, to exile. The governments in the states, where the elections are to be held, should be stopped from taking policy decisions, as in America. The leaders will resign from their govt. jobs, and their business interests also; only then, they will be sworn in. A politician should have two terms only. All leaders should retire at 65. There should be a Wisdom Pool consisting of all the retired politicians, cutting across party lines, where they could debate on the problems and the possibilities for the nation. The assets of the leaders will be under constant surveillance by an independent agency. It should not take five years to assess their wealth. As soon as it is found they are playing foul, they should be divested of power.

An ordinary man wants clean administration. Clean leaders. Clean environs. And clean corridors of power. That will be real 'Swachh Bharat' of Narendra Modi's dreams. Cleaning the streets was a symbolic act only. Those who play foul with the nation, loot its wealth, and fill Swiss banks, are the real traitors. The real danger to India is from those people who protect such offenders. And, last but not the least, ordinary man wants to have a country where 'there is no fear, and one can walk with his head held high'. This is the dream of an ordinary man. His manifesto. Who will take the call? Modi, or Kejriwal?

16

CULTIVATING FUTURE LEADERS

Reviving National Consciousness:

It is only adverse times which throw up great challenges and it is only challenges which throw up great men. It has been rightly said that if the going is easy, you may be going downhill. Since independence, India has never faced adverse times of the magnitude of colonial dominance. She has seen three wars, one lost and two won. The terrorist phase post-1984 and the Kargil War, Bombay Killings and attack on Taj Hotel and the Parliament—these were calamitous happenings, yet the average Indian held his feet on the ground, and nation has always showed great sense of restraint and maturity when it has emerged from the criss-cross of grim possibilities and given the rein of power to people most gracefully and almost non-violently. By and large, the times since independence, have been peaceful and marked with growth of India as a power to reckon with.

Why Loss of Idealism?

In fact, in these rather easy times lie the seeds of consistent erosion of our national character. It was S. Bhagat Singh and S. Kartar Singh Sarabha who were the representative figures of

erstwhile Punjab. Over the years, what we have seen is a declining stock of men at the apex. Men who are moved, not with idealism, but with personal perspectives. *It is really a sad state for India that the past 60 years of our existence as a free nation have failed to throw up men to whom we could look up for inspiration, with the exception, of course, of our worthy late President Abdul Kalam. Is there any one else since the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri who can appeal to our senses as a national hero, except of course Sh. Atal Behari Vajpayee? I wonder.*

Declining Public Conduct:

Where has our idealism gone? Where are our heroes? There has been a consistent decline in public conduct which has been reflected in national character. Political arena is singularly bereft of idealist culture and we have seen leader after leader crumbling before the lure of wealth and power, with the few exceptions like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. *We need to debate why our national stock has declined and why an average Indian has become a shadow of his previous self. Today, we see Indian people decked with high grade degrees; living in high rise buildings, dreaming hi-tech dreams. Thousands have lost to millions. And millions are now losing to billions. Switzerland is not the idyllic destination for nation lovers. And in the world, Punjab the land of bravery has become synonymous with the drug capital of India.*

Analysing the Moral Draught:

The loss of commitment, and the loss of values have triggered this mindless march of people towards the unenlightened 'self'. Religion and spirituality, which form the core of Indian value system, have failed to stem the tide of commercialization of human psyche; and no reference to *Mahabharata* or even *Bhagvad Gita* or even to other scriptures, is enough to stop an ordinary Indian from slipping into the maze of selfishness, meanness, resulting in his fall from grace. The rise of the corporates at the cost of the common man is mistaken as a symbol of double digit growth; but the peep into the kitchen of a common household tells a sordid story.

The bitter army of young men who emerge from such a value-safe society are today ruling the roost. Wealth is the final arbiter of

greatness and goodness in this society of go-getters. Actually, our schools are trained to produce average people, untouched by idealism of any sort. Our policy makers, our legislators, our leaders who emerge from these averagers, are self serving, self-oriented, self-driven, they get cabinet berths, on the strength either of their birth, or their wealth. The institutions have been hijacked and manipulated so that there is still the signboard of Democracy, while inside, the democratic ideal has been badly mauled.

Reviving National Consciousness:

Men learn by example. The youngsters are witnessing a moral void created by their elders. *We have to realize that India is greater than all the people put together. It is a great entity. It is indestructible. And its character must be understood and protected. It is time, as we train our young men for IAS and PCS, why not give a NATIONALISTIC TRAINING to our POLITICOS...* *The most important thing for this is to ensure that people with clean record get tickets. Electioneering by mindless rallies should be discouraged. A politician should not get more than two terms in office. The tenure of Parliament should be reduced to 2 and a half years only. National Policy should be decided by a Polit-buro consisting of Heads of all major political parties. And the post of Deputy P.M. or CM should go the leader of the main opposition party. Let there be government by consensus, instead of conflict.*

INDIAN YOUTH

The Trap Called Education:

“Knowledge that forces the senses on the self is necromancy;
Knowledge that releases is divine”

Dr. J.S. Anand

The educational scenario in India is simultaneously a depressing as well as a promising phenomenon; depressing because it is still amorphous in the absence of a basic educational philosophy informing the whole paradigm, and promising because it underlines our undying penchant for experimentation. The depressants of the system include its divorce with educational philosophy symbolized by Dr. Radha Krishanan, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, and its matrimonial alliance with modern day ‘gurus’ for whom, breaking with the tradition, is the starting point into a new world of cyber technology-based education. Education, in the past, centred around man, and his humanity. Now, it centres round a job, and loss of humanity. If it is not a fall [from grace, I would suggest], we are performing the last rites of a society which revels in its wisdom of the Vedas and takes pride in the truth preached by the sages.

Keeping the Pace:

It is wrong to glorify the past; but it is essential that we do not horrify the present. The speed at which the world is changing has cut at the root of stability. We are living in a dynamic world, changing with the movement of the second-arm of the clock. The past has turned past so fast, that the present has just tumbled upon us, and we are confronting future even while we have still not passed out of the present. Such a speed of the events and developments in every walk of life has actually overwhelmed the policy makers. What we find appropriate in the morning, turns stale by the sundown, the same day. How to stay relevant? That is the major question today.

We have no choice except to accept educational technologies pampered by the western thought-makers. Education for jobs is the ultimate logic on which our police makers are working. But what is the effect? How many of our graduates and postgraduates are employable? People are changing, not for the better, but for the worse. The ultimate that education has done to common people is to shed their fear of the wrong, and, if the criminalization of society is taking place at the mass level, educationists have a lot to answer for it.

The [Un]Holy Alliance:

Mushrooming of private institutions is more a business aimed at multiplying wealth, rather than educating the masses and serving the society. Knowledge that is being imparted is of a dubious nature and teachers too are given a raw deal. University Grants Commission prescribes higher qualifications for teachers, but leaves the salary part at the mercy of the private employer. The intermixing of business and education has done a great harm to society. There is definitely a sizeable horizontal expansion in numbers, but the quality is a big casualty. Educational institutions are run like business stores. Students are the biggest losers, because they are getting dry knowledge, which turns them into heartless machines, and pushes them into jobs, which have no human face. An MBA, or an MCA has never seen the scene of the setting sun, because, at that time,

his boss is holding a meeting, and taking account of the day's business. Young girls have to lose either their homes, or their jobs. It is a bitter choice for them. No marriage is safe because the pressure of the job has destroyed the free time, and taken away quality time from the young workers.

The Trapped:

Was education meant for slaving in an office? Is this the dream we are mad after? A young man spends 12 years [after Matric] learning various skills, only to become impotent in an office, lose his family, and leave his kids at the mercy of day care centres? How many MBA girls and MBA boys have successfully attempted to set up a home? If education is meant for jobs, well, who has turned jobs into home-breakers? The job has pushed all romance out of their lives. Where are the free hours, even on Sundays, when they could just compose themselves, and think over their lot, talk to their bodies, and converse with their souls? And also respond to the calls of their small children for taking them to the market? Our education fails to develop our sense for a balance in life. Doctors, engineers, and professionals are madly after success, wealth and power, and education, instead of becoming an agent of betterment, becomes a tool of exploitation of the masses, and amassing of wealth by the few.

Going Back to the Masters:

There is an urgent need to look at the whole phenomenon afresh. What type of education we want? It should be the decision of the society which is the main stake-holder. Because, the sudden spurt of criminal activities in every society can be traced back to the lack of proper education, among the young minds. The home is broken. The school is in a shambles. The religion too has failed the modern youth. There is no vision informing their lives. Jobs are only a part of the whole exercise, not its ultimate purpose. It would be wrong to displace man from the centre of education because only man is the best resource to re-mould this world into a better one. *What we need from educational institutions are not only trained skilled manpower, but also people who think, believe and act right.*

For this purpose, we shall have to go back to our traditional roots, and seek inspiration from our Scriptures, and from the founding fathers of the Educational edifice like Dr Radha Krishnan, for whom, education was a sacred duty, far transcending a job to raise a family.

18

EDUCATION

Mending and Transcending Ourselves

*The world needs men to run its chores, but civilizations need philosophers.
Only Universities can fill this emergent need of humanity.*

-J.S. Anand

The agenda of development which is part of the folk lore of the modern times makes little sense if it keeps its major development component EDUCATION out of its area of intensive experimentation. Education is a subject which affects the nation as a whole. Therefore, a consensus of all the stake-holders is in place before reforms in the educational policy are brought in. Otherwise, they face the possibility of being reversed by the next government. In fact, what we need today is an over haul of the entire system so that the issues which drifted into margins are put back at the centre. Reforms in national education policy should be effected only after thorough debate by forward looking educationists, belonging to diverse backgrounds who can take into account the agenda of development, as well as keep the composite fabric of the country intact. It is also essential to identify what

type of men we need to build a great nation. *The issues that face us today are total absence of role models, alienation among the youth, a faltering sense of national character, and a lopsided educational set up which forces them to remain average because it makes no concessions for the exceptional minds with unique mental qualities [UMQs].*

A University is meant to disseminate knowledge and wisdom in the society. University education, on one hand, enables a youngster to land at a job, but this is not the end of his journey. It goes beyond inculcating job skills and plays a great role in creating a culture of ideas because, civilization progresses by the creation of ideas. Therefore, a University believes in freedom of thought and the pursuit of knowledge should be unencumbered so that the idea of creating a perfect human world could be achieved.

In these times when policy changes are taking place, it is of paramount importance that Universities turn into knowledge actvents. But, the education provided must not be dry professional skills only. We need to produce a human being who is highly proficient in his profession, but at the same time, he is a complete society man as well. These social perspectives will be opened when our students come into interaction with our great tradition. Nothing new and worthwhile is possible without reference to our great heritage, The great Guru Granth Sahib, The *Ramayana*, The *Mahabharata*, The *Gita* and the great Bhakti Movement which swept across India during the Renaissance period. *The world needs men to run its chores, but civilizations need philosophers. Only Universities can fill this emergent need of humanity.*

Education has four phases. The elementary phase is Information. The higher phase is Knowledge. The next stage is Wisdom. And the final state is Light. If we apply this test to our education system, it does not grow out of the first stage of Information up to post-graduation. Knowledge is a reluctant guest even when after post-graduation. And Wisdom is non-existent even in our highly educated people, our doctors, our professionals, and our politicians; for whom Wisdom lies in the art of survival, and the other side of this Art of Survival is the Killer Instinct, to finish others. How many students attain the last state of Light:

being enlightened like the Buddha? is a matter of conjecture. Our degrees are bereft of knowledge. And the knowledge that we dispense in the Universities, is bereft of wisdom. Skill India, an admirable step of Narendra Modi government, however, skirts *the real issues that confront the nation: Alienation among the huge mass of youth, and faltering sense of National Character.*

The *real problem* in India is that our youngsters have been deprived of role models in society. Education has become costly. Syllabus too is too absorbing. And then, competition for jobs. What happens to a young man who, after MBA joins a multinational company. It is 24x7 job. Once in office, no time to get back home. Home is an overstatement. A flat. No time to think of marriage. So, live-in follows. If at all marriage, the wife too is MBA, service in an another multi-national company. When they get together? Broken at nights. And in the morning again rush to their respective jobs. My question is: *When will these people have a chance set up a home? Breed kids and then, take care of them? This is our emerging India, where people have no time left for themselves.*

Oh! but to breathe the breath

Of the cowslip and primrose sweet —

With the sky above my head,

And the grass beneath my feet [‘The Song of the Shirt’ - Thomas Hood]

Let our education have meaning. Literacy for all. After Matriculation, education only according to their stamina. *To each according to his capabilities, and from each, according their mite.* No need to force students to take up those subjects which do not interest them, and for which they need extra coaching. We should also dispense with the idea of fail and pass. Our certificates should simply reflect the marks obtained by a student in a particular subject. And he should be allowed to choose his subject. We must pick up our genius students from the 10th standard. And if they cannot afford, they must be the guests of the society, and the state. It is unfortunate we make no concessions for the really genius students. We have no system to identify students who can excel and surprise

the world with their achievement. We force them to remain average by reading all those subjects which make no sense for their unique mental qualities [UMQ]. Can we mend ourselves? Can we transcend ourselves? I wonder. Society to survive needs sincere, honest citizens for whom Vijaya Mallya is a criminal. Not an anti-hero, and far less, a role-model.

GENDER E---QUALITY

Perpetuating a My---th

The more the tradition forces its way into the modern life, the greater is the risk of the society being pulled back into the racial memories of a past, which deserve to be broken with. No flight is possible unless the plane leaves the pitch. But the pitch, in our case, the traditional values, have turned into a heaving mass which breaks into our speed. Let us take up the case of gender equality. The constitution says something else, and what is practiced in the society is entirely different. The equality of sexes is still a myth and we all are participating in the game of perpetuating this myth.

The Second Love of the Parents:

A girl is still the second love of the parents. Birth of the boy is still hailed, whereas a girl is still the unwelcome child. The skewed sex ratio and the falling gender equality graph speak volumes of our blind pursuit of the convention-ridden beliefs. The society has changed a lot, but still the mental culture of the average Indian man and woman, tells a different story.

What is freedom? What is equality? These terms need to be clearly defined so that they are not misconstrued to mean chaos

and unbridled struggle for power. In fact, man woman relationship is also a power relationship where woman is the subject and man, the master. And children, have to remain obedient like slaves. This has been the medieval mindset out of which our *sanskar-ridden* and *kebandaan-ridden* consciousnesses have not yet emerged. The role of Indian films can also be called into question here in which men are presented as killers and fighters with masculine power, whereas women are increasingly being cast as item girls or as objects of sex and titillation, rather than being projected as human beings involved in the serious business of living.

The Cosmetic Change:

The modern society finds young girls pursuing hi fi careers, and joining police and army. The work force in business ventures comprises mostly of women. Yes, but the transport authorities have yet to recruit women as drivers and conductors. And, India has yet to see a woman Chief of the Army Staff. These things may happen in due course of time. But it is imperative to have a look at the ground realities from which the woman of tomorrow is to emerge.

One cannot find any suitable explanation for our renewed interest in reviving our old culture. Our culture may be full of vibrant life, but it is also full of injustice towards women. Steeped as it is in sectarianism and casteism, it elevates the landed gentry, at the cost of the landless. The folk songs hardly reflect joy, which was only an occasional episode in the general drama of pain. They are soaked in sorrow arising out of misfortunes brought about by our lopsided customs. And, what happened to the women? Their dress code, and their family conduct, showed them to be far from a free woman. Repeating such episodes, in which woman has been confined to the kitchen, and home, is hardly doing any justice to the modernizing trends of the present moment.

Indian Festivals:

In a world under transformation, festivals like Karva Chauth and Rakhi appear to be absolutely incompatible. Behind these festivals, there is a conspiracy to retain the power by the masculine

sex, and at the same time, the business mind, to perpetuate their hold over society, and creation of wealth. We must not forget that these festivals lead to millions of rupees changing hands. Moreover, where is the faith in the sacredness of these occasions, particularly when the institution of marriage is under grave threat and the festival of Rakhi too puts a question marks on the idea of equality of sexes.

Re-Inventing Power Relations:

I don't think we can't do anything to salvage a society choosing to go down into the quagmire of historicity. We may agree or not, this renewed interest in our old culture, although symptomatic, is at the heart of a male dominated society, where power structures refuse to change sides. It is hampering the speed of the woman to acquire at least half of the empire which has been denied to her, forcing her into the margins of life.

I will consider the situation ripe for a real equality when people stop celebrating the birth of the son; when parents get the right to be taken care of in their later life even by their daughters, [who share their property along with their brothers, and also their responsibilities towards their parents] and when we modify the festivals like Rakhi and Karva Chauth, which are man-centric, and push woman towards the margins. Dowry is given the go by and women are free to choose their men, and also, whether to live with them or not. Marriage should not be a coercion, it should be a matter of love between the two genders. Social systems must be flexible enough to ensure that at the time of marriage, two bonds should be prepared. One for marriage and the other for divorce, and the couple should have the freedom to file with the authorities one of them within a period of six months. Why coercion? Life is a onetime affair, and it belongs to man, or a woman, and he or she must have the entire power to live it the way he or she likes, until of course, his/her actions clash with the general good of the society, rules for which have to be laid down carefully giving due respect to the liberties of the people in these matters.