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Editorial

“Muddy water, let stand, becomes clear.” – Lao Tzu

The last few years have witnessed significant political turmoil and the chaos consequent to complex developments in international relations. Today, the sea appears to have attained a modicum of calm. In keeping with Lao Tzu’s political wisdom, now is the time to contemplate, and it is such contemplation that this edition of Avalokana attempts. The issue’s contributors have brought to these pages the results of intense observation, brainstorming and analyses over subjects ranging from relations with one’s immediate geo-political neighbours to the condition of nation-states in the aftermath of a revolutionary change in political leadership.

The issue encapsulates the essence of Niccolo Machiavelli’s observation, “Everyone who wants to know what will happen ought to examine what has happened: everything in this world in any epoch has their replicas in antiquity”. Here, young minds engage with a spectrum of socio-political issues, entwining within it what the past had held and what the future will. These discussions of contemporary relevance include Afghanistan’s post-Taliban milieu, the effects of AFSPA in India, recent changes in the political guard in Maharashtra and China, and the relevance of Gandhism in such troubled times.

Avalokana thus carries forward its commitment to address a mosaic of relevant issues in socio-polity and political economy, not confining itself to political events but extending itself to engulf the nexus between the State, its Media and its People.

The views expressed in the articles are of the individual authors and must not be ascribed to the editors, department or Christ University.

A Summary of the Socio-Political and Administrative Structures in the Ramayana

- Asha Venugolapan

Indian epics split their narrative of history into the Ramayana period and the Mahabharata period or the Treta Yuga and the Dvapara Yuga respectively. Ramayana is the biographical outline of the life, exile and works of Rama, the prince of Ayodhya. Unlike ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic records, ancient Indian works give more insight into the administrative and social structures of the era. Sociologists, indologists and historians have relied on the Vedas and ancient works like Kautilya's Arthashastra, Al Beruni's Indica and Megasthenes' Indica to understand the socio-economic and political environment of ancient India. Valmiki's Ramayana can also be used in the same manner by discounting some poetic imagination of Valmiki.

A matter of contention here is the age of the epic. Valmiki states various non-Aryan kingdoms such as Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas in the south. This information can be used to estimate the age of the epic. While some historians have placed the age of the epic at around 8th to 3rd century BCE, other historians like Albrecht Weber has estimated it as late as 3rd or 4th century CE.

The Ramayana is considered by many scholars to be the allegorical depiction of the first attempt of the Aryan conquest of South India. But the lack of civilizational change seen in the South post-Rama's expedition can be used as an argument against the Aryan conquest theory. Vanaras are seen as a mystical tribe in south India but they may be the aborigines of the southern lands or descendants of an earlier Aryan wave. The term 'Vanaras,' or Monkeys, may be the totem of the tribe.

In this essay, I have extensively referenced the book 'Ramayana Polity' by P.C. Dharma, written under the under of Dr. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, in 1941. 'Ramayana Polity', Dharma's doctoral thesis, is an exhaustive analysis of the polity during the Ramayana era. She looks into macro and micro level administrative systems in both Ayodhya and Lanka, the ritualistic practices of the Kings, their military strategies, the differences between the practices during the Vedic and post-Vedic or late-Vedic eras besides other institutional practices.

The essay will look into the governance system and the election and conduct of kings. It will also summarise the economy, in terms of fiscal policy, the administrative arrangement, the maintenance of law and justice and the protection of cities by the military and the general conduct during war.

System of Government

The Vedic society was scared of anarchy and preferred a monarchical system of governance. Constitutional monarchy was the system of government practised. The Varna system of social stratification and Untouchability had been already established by the time of the epic. Only the dwija castes are considered with importance in Ramayana; Sudras and Untouchables are almost ignored. The members of Kshatriya Iksvaku line were the traditional kings of Ayodhya. The Brahmins were the learned but they also acknowledged their inability to rule. The Vaishyas, traders and agriculturists, had a say in the running of the state as will be seen soon.

The King

Although Kingship was hereditary based on primogeniture, the selected person had to be approved by the Assembly. Rama's crowning as Heir Apparent by Dasaratha had to be ratified by the Assembly. Lankan system of heredity was the same; Ravana was the eldest in the family.

The rule of primogeniture could be overlooked in certain cases in order to ensure that the new king isn't despotic or insane as was the case with Asamanja who was thrown out by his father, Sagara. The system of regency was allowed. Bharatha was allowed to act as Regent, not king, in the absence of the first-born Rama after Dasaratha's death. However according to Ksattra Dharma, if a deserving first-born is overlooked, the son may:

- Fight his way to the throne and kill the king
- Imprison the King and assume the reins
- Win over the citizens, ministers and the army and depart from the city to form a new kingdom.

The citizens of Ayodhya were said to have threatened to leave Dasaratha's kingdom, protesting the ill treatment of Rama. This was considered the most severe form of punishment for a king.

A king is expected to be an all-rounder, although he will have various ministers with acumen in various fields. He must be well-versed not only in military but also science, economics and political science.

Conduct of the King

An interesting aspect to Ramayana era is the significance of public opinion. The king had to maintain an impeccable image and is expected to favour public opinion over personal views. The king, although considered divine, is not free from public condemnation. An excellent example of this was the exiling of Sita by her husband Rama to avoid a scandal. Similarly in Lanka, Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, had pointed out that killing of an ambassador (Hanuman) would result in public outrage.

Also, to ensure that the king is constantly involved in the welfare of the people, he had to give audience to the public every day. The king lived and worked for the welfare of the people only. This leads to the question of sovereignty of the monarch which appears to have rested with the citizens of the kingdom.

Yet another fascinating aspect to the conduct of the kings was the ban on acceptance of gifts. The king was not allowed to accept gifts from anybody. This was placed in order to ensure that monarchs do not become corrupt.

Economy

The king received as tax, one-sixth of profits or produce from his citizens. From the ascetics, he received one-sixth of the merits of their virtuous deeds. Thus the king had the duty to protect not only the citizens who paid monetary taxes but also the sages in the forests. The merchant community, agriculturists and animal breeders were given special interest as they have to bear the brunt of taxation.

Administration

The central administration of the kingdom was conducted by the king through the Sabha (people's assembly), the Amatyas (the Cabinet ministers with portfolios), the Mantrins (Ministers without portfolios) and the permanent higher officials. The Sabha or the Assembly was the representative assembly. It also acted as a court of justice, presided by the king. The Sabha consisted of officials and non-officials. The nominated officials in the assembly were the Amatyas, who formed the Amatyagana or the Cabinet, and

Raja-kartarah (king-makers) or the Elders, who were the counsellors to the king. The Amatyas and the Gurus together formed the Ministry or the Mantrinah. Non-official members of the assembly were the Rajanah or the nobles and Paurajanapada, the representatives of people. The Rajanah were generally tributary, vassal kings.

The Ministry in Ayodhya was headed by the chief priest who was also the de facto Prime Minister. The Ministry called Mantrinah, consisted of Amatyas and Raja-kartarah. The counsellors were hereditary advisors to the king in matters of Dharma.

The Amatyas were the ex-officio members of the assembly. They were the executive hand of the government who maintained the administration of the kingdom. The portfolios were distributed according to its importance and the expertise of the minister thus three Amatyas for war, two for Finance, two for law and justice and one for chariots was the distribution pattern. The Tirthas were the departmental heads of state and permanent officials. They worked along with the Amatyas in carrying out the administration of the kingdom. The duty of the ministers was to ensure that the king was restrained from reckless and nasty deeds as the welfare of the minister was bound to that of the king.

The Paurajanapada is said to have also consisted of merchant guilds or trade corporations and heads of city corporations. The nature of representation i.e. through election or selection has not been explicitly mentioned in the epic. The members of the Paurajanapada were mostly from the Vaishya community as they directly contributed to the wealth of the empire. The Paurajanapada consisted of representation from city organisations (Paura) and of rural pastoral villages (Janapada). They served on various legislative committees. The Sabha thus was a representation of all dwija varnas and the related expertise. Thus the Brahmins represented by the Raja-kartarah were the spiritual advisors, the Kshatriyas represented by the Amatyas, with expertise in military science, and Rajanah were military advisors and the Vaishyas, represented by the Paurajanapadas, were the economic advisors.

In Ayodhya, the members of the assembly are expected to be of flawless character and honesty and he must always contribute to the discussions at hand.

Ravana's Sabha was similar in composition and he consulted them during trouble. He placed great importance on the quality of the counsel. In Lanka, Ravana defined the best decision as the one that is decided unanimously by the ministers. Even in Ravana's court, the council members held the right to criticise the actions of the king but had to inadvertently support the king. An example is that of Kumbhakarna who criticised Ravana's action of abducting Sita without the prior consent of the assembly thus bringing the wrath of Rama on Lanka yet he promised to help the king in his endeavours to keep Sita. But when Vibhishana advised Ravana to apologise to Rama, it was considered a betrayal.

Law and Justice

The Judges of the courts were those chosen for the impartiality and knowledge of Law and Politics. The Supreme Court was the Assembly with the king as the Chief Justice. Various ministers advised the king on law, political science, practicability and political repercussions of judgement. The merchant guilds advised on commercial law, the sages on dharma-shastras and traditions. The king's brother, the princes, ensured that the privileges of the crown weren't misused.

The courts were characterised by the instantaneous and free admission for every complainant who came to the king. The litigants were given speedy trial with little or no expenditure. The punishments for crimes ranged from imprisonment and torture to capital punishments.

Law and order was maintained by the police. In fact, the police was characterised in Lanka by their use of lathis. The police was also involved in traffic maintenance. They were allowed to use torture which was feared by even rival kings.

The espionage and intelligence department was depended on heavily to maintain peace in the kingdom. Dasaratha, Rama and Ravana employed several spies to check on their ministers and officials regularly.

War and Military

During war many states came together for mutual protection. Princes were trained in military science along with their regular education. The War Council consisted of Army Generals who were also Cabinet Ministers. In Lanka, a special minister well-versed in the strength and capabilities of the kingdom held the military portfolio.

Cities were surrounded by forts, towers, gates and deep moats, in a constant preparedness of siege. In fact, Ayodhya literally meant the impregnable. Lanka was another unassailable city on an island surrounded by sea and fortified by deep moats filled with crocodiles and thousands of soldiers at every gate. Furthermore, it was strategically located at the top of a mountain, surrounded by dense forests.

A good army is said to consist of infantry, cavalry, elephant section, chariot section, sappers, miners, commissariat and camp followers. The infantry, cavalry, elephant section and chariot section together was called the four-fold army or chatur-anga-sainyam. Ravana's army is said to have consisted of the four-fold army and another two sections on camels and donkeys. The chariot-warriors were looked at with great respect as this section has the knowledge to fight on foot, elephant and chariot.

The kings used to take a special interest in keeping the soldiers happy. Rama specifically states that if the soldiers aren't treated kindly and paid well, they will not be prepared to die for the king. So the soldiers were presented with a portion of the booty, their houses were well furnished and their families taken care of. In Lanka, women were allowed to join the army as can be seen in the description of female soldiers who used to drink and dance.

There were several military etiquettes and ethics in place. Kings could not wage war without a legitimate reason and notice had to be served to rival kings on the impending war. It was considered unjust to kill intoxicated, unarmed or tired soldiers. It was considered sinful to kill women and children.

As we can see, the Ramayana is an extensive literature on the political and administrative norms of the era. It gives an insight into the polity of ancient India. The differences between the Lankan administration and that in Ayodhya are very slight and almost negligible. One may notice the combination of democracy and constitutional monarchy in ancient India which shows that early Hindus experimented with different forms of government. By the time of Ramayana, several Vedic practises had been lost or corrupted which can be seen by the change in the nature of the yagnas performed by the Ikshvaku line of kings. We can also see the fourth Varna i.e. Sudras being ignored in the distribution of power. It was assumed that they would be sans doubt taken care of by the king.

Many similarities can be drawn between the Mauryan rule as given in Arthashastra by Kautilya and Valmiki's Ramayana. This suggests that these institutions had a continuous process of evolution and were far from rudimentary.

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Senior Citizens in India: A Critique of Existing Policies and Further Recommendations

- Raj Vir Singh

Aging is defined as a decline in the functional capacity of the organs in the human body. It is a phenomenon that brings a host of problems to the elderly by way of depreciating health, capacity, and therefore income. Senior citizens were once productive members of society, and even though they aren't physically productive anymore, they are a precious source of experience, knowledge and insight. It is the duty of every country that terms itself a Welfare State to take proper care of its senior citizens and provide them with a satisfactory standard of living.

Yet, it is seen that it is the care of its senior populace that a country usually gets wrong. According to Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive, HelpAge India, "The issues concerning the elderly find no priority in any government's agenda. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is itself suffering from morbidity. The policies and programmes remain mainly on paper." This is usually due to lack of legislation/faulty legislation or the inability to execute laws intended for welfare, especially in developing economies, as they are already burdened with more threatening issues of economic and social character. They fail to give enough resources or consideration to the plight of senior citizens who are treated as mere liabilities on the society and economy.

Growing old decreases the body's capacity to properly function. However, health is not the only problem faced by the aged. They suffer from economic problems such as loss of employment, loss of regular income and economic insecurity; and also social problems such as social maladjustment, psychological barriers and even elder abuse.

This report shall look into the problems faced by the senior citizens of India. It will examine the measures taken/planned by the state, specifically the National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011 (NPSC) to solve these problems, and try to make further policy suggestions to help formulate more complete laws to help uplift the conditions of the aged.

The Demography of Aged Indians

According to the "National Policy on Senior Citizens (2011)", during the years 2000-2050, as the Indian population grows by 55%, the population of those who are 60 years old and above will increase by 326% and those 80 and above will grow by 700%, the fastest growing age sector. This growth is mainly attributed to the increase in human life expectancy over the years due to better medical facilities and health standards. 1/8th of the World's elderly population lives in India. The NPSC, therefore, has highlighted the need for care for the elderly in terms of "socio economic, financial, health and shelter".

Over 30 million of the current 90 million senior citizens live alone. And of these 30 million, 12 million are blind. By 2050, number of aged women will exceed men by 18.4 million. 6 out of 10 women above 80 years of age are widows. 39% of men and 11% of women above 60 are forced into work.

Abuse in the form of disrespect, neglect and verbal abuse is common. 69% of those abused are owners of the house they live in and 80% of them did not report a complaint against the abuse to preserve family honour.

Problems Faced by Senior Citizens

There are a variety of factors that affect the lives of the aged. But first it is important to note that different "classes" of aged citizens have different requirements. Property, or more specifically ownership of residence, is a major determinant of class. Not only does permanent owned or even rented residence give shelter, but it also takes care of many other problems. Firstly, it provides security not only against theft, but against natural elements and diseases. This is a very important factor considering the low immunity of senior citizens. It also saves on medical expenditure. Secondly, ownership of property is an investment that can be liquidated in time of need. Holding property in many cases means the existence of someone to look after the aged, such as children or grandchildren. The old usually prefer to live with family as most of their economic and social needs are met. Residence can greatly reduce problems faced by the aged.

The scenario is very different for those senior citizens lacking permanent shelter. They may not have a permanent residence for a variety of reasons such as insufficient income/savings, no family to take care of them, elder abuse, general poverty, or even the out casting of the old from their own houses. They face a number of additional problems such as theft, no food security, no protection against diseases and natural elements, lack of privacy, and also attendants to look after them. All their income is spent on meagre shelter leaving no savings. The government and NGOs focus more on such senior citizens who are left on their own in society.

Having said that, there are many common problems that all senior citizens face, whatever may be their socio-economic condition. First and foremost of them is health. The aged need special medical attention, and even despite that can develop several serious conditions such as arthritis, palsy, amnesia, diabetes, cataracts, cholesterol etc. In addition to this, the treatment of such diseases is very expensive and sometimes even middle income groups cannot afford it.

The second problem faced is of income. After retirement, all the money that senior citizens receive is of a meagre pension which is usually not enough to sustain themselves in a healthy manner. This becomes a serious problem especially in the urban areas where cost of living is very high. Lack of subsidy for basic necessities of life is also not available to the elder citizens in most cases. Despite numerous government policies and NGO programmes, majority of the aged receive no cost benefits on purchase of essentials such as food grains, hygiene related products and medicines.

Another issue is the lack of sufficient facilities to cater to the increasing number of 60+ citizens. People need to stand in long queues to avail medical and pension facilities. Due to this, many are unable and even more decide not to avail these facilities. Hence, even policies planned to benefit the aged go unrealized due to lack of sufficient faculties.

Corruption too is a major threat to policies aimed at benefiting the old. It is widely known that funds reserved for spending on the senior citizens are siphoned off by many layers of corruption and in the end a very nominal amount is actually received by the aged. It is also found that the aged citizens even need to bribe government officers to avail of the benefits reserved for them by law. Such shameful acts not only drain the government funds but cause much agony to our senior citizens.

Lastly, we found lack of family, or any nearby attendant to look after the day to day needs of the old is also an important problem faced by the elders. The aged require a great degree of regular care and attention which is best met by the family. In many cases it is seen that old citizens are left on their own and are made to fend for themselves. Personal care is also required to meet the elders' social needs.

Policies and Laws for the Upliftment of the Senior Citizens

The well-being of senior citizens is mandated by the Constitution of India, under Article 41-

“The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to public assistance in cases of old age”.

The National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011 states that any citizen above 60 years of age is a senior citizen. Its main objective is to address issues concerning senior citizens living in urban and rural areas, and cater to the special needs of the “oldest old” (above 80 years of age) and older women. It is designed to take care of health, income security, safety, housing and welfare of the Senior Citizens.

Health

The NPSC states that “good, affordable health service, heavily subsidized for the poor and a graded system of user charges for others” will be made available to the elderly and “a judicious mix” of public health services, health insurance, health services will be provided by not-for-profit organizations including trusts and charities, and private medical care.

Income Security in old age

According to the policy, income security will be met through the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, the Public Distribution System, Microfinance, and Income Tax subsidies. The Old Age Pension Scheme provides the pension of Rs. 400 to all senior citizens below poverty line. The policy intends to increase this amount to Rs. 1000.

Safety and Housing

NPSC provides for “stringent punishment for abuse of the elderly”. The police force will be asked to keep a friendly vigil and monitoring over the areas that are populated by senior citizens. The policy considers shelter to be a basic human need and seeks to “Develop housing complexes for single older men and women, and for those with need for specialized care”. It also talks about multi-purpose centres for social interaction between senior citizens.

Welfare

The policy aims to create a welfare fund for citizens whose revenue will be generated through a social security cess. The generated revenue will be allocated to states according to their proportion of resident senior citizens.

Further Policy Recommendations

The Government of India has implemented a number of policies for the welfare of the elderly and has allocated a huge fund to help raise their standards and conditions of life through pensions and subsidies. Still it is found that a large population of the already increasing elderly goes unaffected by these policies and receives negligible financial assistance. The problem does not lie so much in the content of the policy but rather in the problems associated with the execution of these policies. These problems include everything from lack of proper administration and facilities to corruption. In the following, an attempt is made to recommend solutions to these problems and new policy ideas.

Housing and Care

As mentioned earlier, residence is a factor that can solve many of problems faced by the aged. Those who do not own or live in a proper, clean and hygienic residence require the foremost attention of the government. The population of senior citizens is continuously increasing and there is already a shortage of proper “Old Age Homes”. Government investment in old age homes will not only provide the elderly with shelter and a variety of other benefits, which is the main aim, but will also reduce government expenditure on subsidies on medical and other general facilities which will now be in less demand and also create employment.

The problem of the aged not having any attendants to look after them can also be solved through old age homes as even only 10 attendants are sufficient to look after up to 50 senior citizens living together. This also reduces expenditure on safety. Doctors can easily come to these homes and efficiently and simultaneously attend to all residents without the need for them going and standing in queues in hospitals.

The establishments can either be funded by government funds, private donations or even generate their own income through different services. One example of such is in Jamshedpur where an institution for care of the elderly funded itself through a botanical nursery operated by its residents and other sales such as handmade candles and postcards that are very easy to make. NGOs too can establish such care homes.

Provision of Adequate Facilities

As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of adequate facilities for the execution of facilities as important as healthcare, and long queues in front of those that do exist, keeping senior citizens from accessing the amenities reserved for them.

Rather than having the senior citizens go to government hospitals, which are already burdened with patients and suffer from lack of adequate manpower, and stand in a queue, the government can establish small dispensaries for this exclusive purpose. The dispensaries can be distributed, for instance, constituency-wise, or residential area-wise and sell medicines at subsidised rates. Doctors can visit the nearest dispensary in rotation every day. This will reduce long queues in hospitals, the burden on hospital manpower and also generate employment in the dispensaries. Since the dispensaries are made for exclusive use of senior citizens, corruption too will reduce.

Alleviation of Social Abuse

Although the government can make policies to help improve the economic and physical condition of the elderly, their social problems often baffle the policy makers. Problems of generation gap, social maladjustment and elder abuse are just as important as problems of the aged. It is very difficult to tackle these problems, especially at a nation-wide level.

Possible solutions to this problem would be monetary benefits and grants to families that include senior citizens. This will help reduce the instance of senior citizens being thrown out of their own homes. Multi-purpose halls in residential complexes can be made to organise meets for social interaction between the elderly. Understanding of each other's problems will lead to better solutions to them. Multigenerational bonding can be promoted through education of both the young and the old.

All these measures can help reduce the inter-generational tensions that exist in society and also provide for social benefits.

These policies, when implemented can help and complement the existing policies for the welfare of the senior citizens. They can help increase the efficiency of government policies and at the same time provide benefits in other areas such as income and employment.

Conclusion

Senior Citizens, although not physically productive anymore, still form a treasured resource for a nation, imbued with experience and valuable insight. Every welfare state must necessarily provide for special care and attention to its aged citizens. This is of special concern in India as our senior citizen population is rapidly increasing and the state's welfare policies must keep pace with this growth.

People face many issues as they grow old but most of them can be easily tackled with through simple solutions which will also be highly cost effective in the long run. The care of senior citizens is certainly of paramount importance to the nation, and every possible step must be taken to improve their standards of living and guarantee respectable ageing to all its citizens.

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An Analysis of the Hu-Wen Era of Chinese Politics

- *Shalini Rajan*

At the 18th Party Congress of the Communist Party of China held in November 2012, the official announcement of the ascension of Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang was made. This marked the end of the decade-long reign of the Hu Jintao -Wen Jiabao administration, described arguably by many as the “*Shenshi Zhongguo*” or the Golden Age of China. Following is an analysis of China during 2003-2012 under the leadership of Hu and Wen as Party General Secretary and Government Premier respectively.

The key phrases of the Hu-Wen regime were “peaceful development” in the realms of expansion of economic capabilities and political transparency, and “harmonious society” through social construction. The facts speak for themselves. China’s GDP has increased four-fold, a multi-pronged approach to poverty alleviation has helped millions and the grandeur of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Shanghai Expo formally announced the country’s entry onto the world stage. Chinese Foreign exchange reserves catapulted from 287 billion USD in 2002 to almost 3.3 trillion USD. China’s survival of the financial crisis and recovery post the Wenchuan earthquake tragedy reflected the quality of governance under these two senior leaders. The manner in which Hu Jintao handled the 2003 SARS crisis immediately after coming to power was highly commended. Their leadership reflected the underlying scientific development ideology along with a broad-minded and people-oriented approach towards governance, contrary to that of their predecessors Jiang Zheming and Zyu Rongji.

This decade also saw a rise in affluence among the people and a significant rise in their purchasing power. In 2002, only 17 million Chinese could afford foreign travel. But by 2011, this number has increased to 70 million. Within the country, length of highways doubled in one decade. In 2004, Shanghai witnessed running of the fastest train on the earth in regular commercial services. The Maglev train in China achieved a world record speed of even 501 KM per hour. Under the rule of Hu-Wen, the agricultural tax was rolled back and primary education in most areas was provided free of cost. In the last 10 years, China also saw a significant surge of Internet users – netizens - from approximately 60 million in 2002 to 560 million in early 2012. However, the draconic censorship policy still stands. News and reports which the party and the government do not like are instantly blocked and any remarks by the common man on the micro blogs are immediately deleted as well. Medical support system in most areas has improved vastly and small and medium class cities have also seen significant development.

However, it is a common view among analysts that economic development and political stability cannot go together. On the one hand, economic development is capable of reducing political conflict; on the other, it can also have a cascading effect leading to future political strife. From the controversy following the Nobel Peace Prize being conferred on Liu Xiaobo in 2010 to the 2010 Bo Xilai saga, the CCP’s “peaceful development” strategy is being exercised on the mouth of a volcano. The final year of the Hu-Wen tenure was marred by the unraveling of cronyist corruption rooted deep in the political and bureaucratic lines.

Another issue that was a highlight of this decade was the increasing income gap that almost led to the revival of Maoist ideologies. Rural-urban conflicts from labour to housing also went on to become an increasingly common phenomenon. The Hu-Wen regime, with the retrenchment of the State-owned Enterprise (SOE) model established by their predecessors, could not be curtailed due to their decreasing clout over the provinces. Zhiang Jian from Peking University rightly observed that all the dividends that China once reaped, from a young population to WTO membership, has been squandered in one way or another.

China's policy on Tibet and Taiwan was highly criticized and the 2009 ethnic clashes between the Han and the ethnic Muslim Uighurs had a spillover effect to other parts of the country. Nearly fifty Tibetan Monks had immolated themselves after the complete breakdown of negotiations over Tibet. Added to this, Hong Kong's democratic aspirations are gaining steam and efforts are intensifying for the formation of a new State. An anonymous online post, inspired by the Arab uprising, called for a 'Jasmine' Revolution. However, the small demonstrations were crushed by Beijing in a timely manner. It was during the Hu-Wen tenure that cracks within the Communist Party emerged. They failed to democratize the party internally as well as bring in greater transparency into the party. The Xilai and Liangyu controversies revealed that the Mao rule of winner-takes-all style of political culture was still prevalent. This led to questions being raised over whether the power vested with Hu-Wen or if key government ministries and state-owned companies flexed their muscle regarding China's domestic and foreign policy. Other challenges include the question of sustenance of China's weak middle class, fallouts of a rigid population control policy, tabs on independent research projects, non-availability of a stable state energy supply system, clash of established communist institutions with emerging capitalist forces, static strategy with regard to foreign policy as well as mounting public dissent.

It is evident that Xi-Li have been entrusted with the challenge of addressing a multitude of issues. However, if they do follow the scientific model of "peaceful development" as laid down by their predecessors, they must undergo "democratic validation" (United Daily News editorial (Taipei, 2012). While the dazzling scorecard of the Hu-Wen regime is somewhat dulled by political stagnancy, their tenure was not entirely a lost era. While the economy took several progressive strides, politics remained where it was ten years ago. As Wen Jiabao has advised his successors, "Without assurances of political reform, the fruits of economic reform will be lost." The world will be closely watching whether the younger cadre can deliver on its promises and revive the nation.

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Armed Forces Special Powers Act: The Conflict Catalyst

- *Shreya Murali*

The Kashmir conflict has been one which has been prolonged for over six decades, with two countries engaging in a disagreement which has escalated to the level of a possible nuclear war. The crisis in Kashmir has its repercussions at levels which were unforeseen, with the biggest stakeholders being the perpetrators of violence and gross human rights abuses. In order to understand the conflict and the magnitude of it, one must understand the nuances of the issue in hand. This qualm over the territory dates back to the pre-partition era.

Throughout ancient times, the breathtakingly beautiful Valley of Kashmir and the rugged terrain of Jammu has stood for peaceful contemplation, intellectual advancement and religious diversity coexisting in an atmosphere of tolerance. In the modern geopolitical era, this same diversity, evident from the blend of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, Indians, Pakistanis in this single state, has made it a center of warfare rather than cultural advancement and peaceful coexistence. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was created in accordance to the Treaty of Amritsar after Raja Gulab Singh had purchased it from the East India Company for Rs.75, 00,000. But ever since the repressive Maharaja Hari Singh of the Dogra dynasty's rule began, the state began to crumble both internally and externally. On the 15th of August, when the Indian subcontinent became independent, Kashmir signed a Standstill Agreement with the newly-formed state of Pakistan.

At the time of Independence and Partition, the princely state of Kashmir exhibited a distinctive mode of regional nationalism that did not fit easily into either the secular nationalist vision of India or the religious nationalist vision of Pakistan (Varshney, 1991). Kashmiri political action at the turn of the century coalesced around an indigenous political leadership, with feudal peasants rising up through the early 20th century to fight the oppression of the Hindu Dogra maharaja, culminating in sweeping land reforms, known as land to the tiller, in 1950. This indigenous leadership became sidelined by patterns of Indian governance in Kashmir.

The most significant breach of understanding between the newly formed state of Pakistan and India was on the 22nd of October when thousands of Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan, recruited by the Poonch rebels, invaded Kashmir, allegedly incensed by the atrocities against fellow Muslims in Poonch and Jammu. The Hindu Maharaja had disregarded them despite his very own Glancy commission's recommendations. India accused Pakistan of violating the Standstill Agreement with Kashmir by engaging in an armed rebellion by sending in the tribesmen and brewing the insurgency in that area. On the other hand, flustered by the insurgency, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession (IOA) with India and acceded 75% majority Muslim region to the Indian Union, in exchange for safety and security provided by the Indian state and army. According to the 1948 Indian White Paper, India accepted the accession, regarding it provisional, until such time as the will of the people could be ascertained by a plebiscite as Kashmir was recognized as a disputed territory. The Indian army thus entered the state to repel the "insurgents". Pakistan retorted by dismissing the accession itself and calling it illegal given the Maharaja had no right to accede when the standstill agreement with Pakistan was still in force and as Pakistan could not be held liable for actions of certain rebel groups within it.

Hence began the conflict; the game between the states on "who gave you the right to - - ?" It all began with the Treaty of Amritsar. Was India owned by the East India Company that they got to 'sell' Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh? Developing on that premises and fitting it to our context, did Maharaja Hari Singh have the

authority to sign the IOA with the Indian Subcontinent despite the demographics of the state and the existence of the Standstill Agreement? Finally questioning the choice of the people and the absence of a plebiscite conundrum in Jammu and Kashmir post 1950, it is another blunder which has left the territory stuck between two nation-states. Thus today we have a troubled state with three regions with high concentration of human rights abuse, violence and political unrest; Jammu, Kashmir valley and Ladakh.

Given how Jammu and Kashmir fell under India's territory, the Indian government believed that a plebiscite in the region was unnecessary as regular elections began happening a few decades later. Despite a democratic setup being in place and article 370 of the Indian constitution granting Jammu and Kashmir a special autonomous status, martial law was imposed on the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the area fell under the purview of the Disturbed Areas Act (DAA) and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). The two draconian acts, with a special emphasis on the AFSPA is one which has attracted more national and international attention than any law in the world and particularly the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. The Court's insensitivity towards citizens' rights in cases where "national security" is involved - be it on the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) or the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA)-is appalling. (Navlakha, Security Policy: Enemy of Democracy, 2002) Its judgments are short on legal analysis and rich on patriotic and romantic rhetoric which are wholly out of place in judicial pronouncements.

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act came as an attempt to secure the lives and protect the civilians from the "grave threat" that they were perceivably exposed to. Despite being a law which empowers the military to take arbitrary decisions with regards to the utilization of force against civilians etc., India believed it was absolutely imperative keeping the greater good of the state's in mind.

By law, when the AFSPA (Masood, 2013) is invoked in a disturbed area, military and paramilitary forces are constitutionally obligated to operate in aid of civil administration to restore public order, such that all actions of the armed forces must contribute to strengthening state authorities. The armed forces may have special powers to search, arrest, seize property, and kill, but the civil administration, governed by the Constitution, the Criminal Procedure Code, and other statutory laws, maintains primary jurisdiction in the governance of the disturbed area. In practice, however, the intensive militarization authorized by the AFSPA dominates the administration of everyday life in the state.

As noble and legitimate as the law may seem, the AFSPA has violated every single core constitutionally enshrined value and gone against all codes and norms set forth by the government and has strayed far from the initially set out goal to be achieved. What we see today in Kashmir, more than that of the insurgents is state-sponsored violence in the name of "national security" perpetrated by the armed forces. There have been several cases of the armed forces allegedly raping, looting and indulging in violence in the Kashmir Valley. This is a case where the watchdog turns rogue, biting its own masters. The armed forces and the martial law are in place to protect the civilian population and ensure their safety and security; instead they're subjected to torture in the very hands of their harbingers of freedom and liberty.

The AFSPA today is what stands between a true, comprehensive democracy and India. The existence, enforcement and advocacy of this law epitomize the biggest flaw in our democracy. Firstly, the correlation of the demoniacal law with corollary of such a law is found in subsequent political fallout. The AFSPA's predecessor - the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance 1942, had been enacted in order to neutralize The Quit-India Movement. It was a colonial instrument which was used for the legitimization and continuation of colonialism. The British colonial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance, 1942 promulgated by Viceroy Linlithgow had provided for:

“Any officer not below the rank of captain in His Majesty's Military Force..., require any personnel under his command to use force as may be a necessary, **even to the causing of death**, against any person...”

The Indian parliament had acted as Linlithgow did, in Jammu and Kashmir for half a century. Nearly 30 nation-states and international humanitarian institutions are waiting for independence in the 21st century, notwithstanding states repression. (Sanajaoba, 2006) The 1942 demoniacal ordinance crafted by the British colonialists, had expedited and facilitated the passage of Indian Independence Act, 1947. The 1958 law inherits the same powerful political potency. The continual existence of this law is in turn making the Jammu and Kashmir Conflict a ticking time-bomb. Let it be an external intervention or an internal state of emergency, the future of chaos and destruction here, is inevitable. In order to understand this, the law, the gross principle and the jurisprudential fallacy needs to be understood first.

Starting with an understanding of the CRPC and its clauses with regards to the powers of the armed forces, the AFSPA seems like an unnecessary addition, almost an intentional abomination by the state. We thereby see clear principle fallout on the Indian government's side and how the repealing of the AFSPA shall merely restore the balance and not disincentivize the armed forces but put a leash on their atrocities. Looking first at the CRPC, article 130(3):

“130(3) every such officer of the armed forces shall obey such requisition in such manner, as he thinks fit but in so doing he shall use as little force, and do as little injury to person and property, as may be consistent with dispersing the assembly and arresting and detaining such person.”

It is important for us to note how the clause has been worded. (Noorani, 2009) The clause evidently emphasizes on how the armed forces shall use ‘as little force and cause as little injury’ to the people. This clause functions as an attempt to maintain check on the armed forces and grant them freedom to act according to their judgement but not absolute freedom. It is a statutory injunction which contrasts blaringly with article 4(a) of the AFSPA:

4) Special powers of the armed forces - any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces may, in a disturbed area –

(a) if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order, after giving such due warning as he may consider necessary fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in force in the disturbed area prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons or the carrying of weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons or of firearms, ammunition or explosive substances;

This in its crudest form is what one would refer to as “the right to kill”, a blasphemous notion in democracy. It is a near mockery of the statutory principles and violates the most important constitutionally mandated fundamental right of an individual, article 21, the right to life. The rape and murder of Asiya Jan and Neelofer Jan by members of the CRPF in Shopian, Kashmir and the subsequent dumping of their bodies in a stream is a horrific crime by any measure in any society.

When the crime is committed by state forces in a situation of armed insurgency and nationality struggle as there exists in Kashmir, it takes on certain other implications as well. It shows how state forces operate in the region with complete impunity, violating all rights of the local population. (Basu, 2009)

In Kashmir there have been several reported cases of whole houses having been blown up by the army and paramilitary forces to trace a few militants hiding in them, instead of using other means to flush them out. The Supreme Court upheld this power as well without insisting on the requirement of reasonableness:

Section 4(b) confers “the power to destroy any arms dump, prepared or fortified position or shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made or are attempted to be made or any structure used in training camp for armed volunteers or utilized as a hideout by armed gangs or absconders wanted for any offence. It is urged that the said power is very wide in its scope and that apart from destruction of any arms dump, fortified positions, shelters and structures used by armed groups for attacks, it extends to destruction of a structure utilized as a hideout by absconders wanted for any offence and that, to that extent, it is invalid.”(Noorani, 2009)

This contention would be one which remains unique to India yet grossly unsubstantiated. Absconders wanted for an offence are persons who are evading the legal process. In view of their activities in the past the possibility of their repeating such activities cannot be turned a blind eye to. Conferment of the power to destroy the structure utilized as a hideout by such non-state actors in the eyes of the state, in order to control such activities cannot be held to be arbitrary or unreasonable. Thus this act of what amounts to sheer vandalism of public and private property by the armed forces goes beyond the judicial review.

Under relevant international human rights and humanitarian law standards there is no justification for such an act as the AFSPA. The AFSPA, by its form and in its application, violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture, the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, the UN Body of Principles for Protection of All Persons Under any form of Detention, and the UN Principles on Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal and summary executions. (Iqbal, 2012) The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 along with the two optional protocols constitute the body of international humanitarian law. These provisions are suited to human rights protection in times of armed conflict. Under these conventions the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is given access to all international conflicts. In non-international armed conflicts, the ICRC can only offer its services. (Dhar, 2012) The ICRC's mandate in the context of non-international armed struggle is based on Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions. However, India has not signed either protocol to the Geneva Conventions. Nevertheless; the ICRC can offer its services in such a conflict. Hence, when the ICRC offers its services in such a situation, a state should not consider it interference in its internal affairs. Basically in the long run, with respect to the working mechanism of ICRC, it well may be thought as an alternative to AFSPA Act. (Jenamani, 2012)

In contrast, one of our jurisprudential holy grails, the constitution and judicial framework of Britain holds a police officer liable for assault or false imprisonment, action for damages as well as a criminal prosecution. In 1987 three known IRA personnel were shot by four soldiers while it was thought that they were about to detonate a bomb on Gibraltar, a British Colony. The case reached the European Court of Human Rights (ECRR) under Case of McCann and Others vs. The United Kingdom. The Article 2 of the European Convention

for the Human Rights, of right to life was recalled as one of the most fundamental human right which cannot be violated. The verdict and on a 10 to 9 split was against the United Kingdom as the court ruled that there was no evidence of "an execution plot at the highest level of command in the Ministry of Defense or in the government" although "all four soldiers shot to kill". On the facts and in the circumstances the actions of the soldiers did not in themselves give rise to a violation of Article 2. But it was held that the operation as a whole was controlled and organized in a manner which failed to respect Article 2, and that the information and instructions given to the soldiers rendered inevitable the use of legal force in a manner which failed to take adequately into consideration the right to life of the three suspects. (CASE OF McCANN AND OTHERS v. THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1995)

Thus the state practice of carving out differential patterns of citizenship through the waging of perpetual warfare leads to a blurring of boundaries between "crimes of war" and "crimes of peace," producing a continuum of violence that scales from the routine violence of everyday social spaces, such as emergency rooms, court rooms, prisons, detention centers, and schools, to the spectacular violence of hot zones, such as border clashes, ethnic conflicts, and frontiers in the global war on terror (Scheper-Hughes, 2008). These sites of exclusion and concentration provide for the encapsulation and confinement of those forms of political life that have been stripped of rights, cast into a "zone of social abandonment", and subjected to the brutal violence of the state. (Duschinski, *Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley*, 2009). Such conceptual tools enable us to move past distinctions between "the exception" and "the rule" and examine patterns of militarization that define forms of social suffering for communities living in various domains of threat and "legitimate" destruction: marginalized peasants cast as indigenous rebels or "Maoists" and systematic, state sponsored violence against them would be some cases.

The immediate repealing of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958 is required as the first step towards resolving this conflict in the belligerent state. A de-militarization of that area whilst isn't a prudential solution given that all said and done there does exist an imminent threat there, internally and externally, and the role of the government is to protect its frontiers from external non-state elements. However, a reduction of the powers granted to the armed forces would result in a much required change in the lives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The constitution of India is flexible enough to permit many variations of relationship between the Union and the States. Article 370 gave Jammu and Kashmir sovereignty over all issues excepting defense, foreign affairs and communications. (Radha Kumar, 2011). A viable solution to the crisis by itself that we have, apart from the clichéd de-militarization and war against impunity (Chakravarti, 2005) in J&K, if the right of self-determination is what people exercise and not a choice imposed on them, then it lends strength to the fact that people want to decide for themselves and not be dictated to even by those claiming to represent their best interests or speak for them. (Navlakha, *Kashmir: Elusive Solution*, 2006). This desire to self-determination and independence unites Kashmiris across all divisions including the one crafted by the LOC. Therefore, democratically harnessing this desire and translating it into representation, could provide a voice to the plurality of views that actually exists and offers one way out of this mess of India's making.

Drawing parallels to what happened in the state of Principality of Andorra or between Indonesia and Malaysia over Borneo; would be the most apt conflict resolution strategy possible. Jammu and Kashmir could be an internally autonomous but externally under the jurisdiction of the respective nation-states which as of today yield control over. The closest in terms of demographic factors, history and also military status would be in the case of Borneo. (Gidvani, 2009)

Thus the provisions of AFSPA, both individually and in totality, do not meet requirements of domestic and international law. The Act facilitates human rights violation and spawns a culture of impunity, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. To consider such powers and immunity as necessary to combat security challenges is a reflection of the continuance of the colonial mindset of subjugating the local population. The suggestion that human rights violations are permissible in certain circumstances is wrong. The essence of human rights is that human life and dignity must not be compromised and that certain actions, whether carried out by state or non-state actors, are never justified no matter what the ends are. (Srivastava, 2012). Hence the continued use and advocacy of the AFSPA reflects the predominance of a security mindset within the government of India. To put an end to the culture of violence, alienation and injustice, it is important not only to repeal AFSPA but also reduce the civil powers accorded to the army to ensure that it in fact only assists and not supplants the civil administration. It is now universally accepted that the most effective strategy for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism is to strengthen the local police and civil administration. Alongside withdrawal of the armed forces from town and cities, the police must be trained in accordance with international standards and eventually become the frontline force in the state. Finally, the recommendation of The Jeevan Reddy Committee ought to be integrated into the mainstream strategy to be adopted in Jammu and Kashmir. Protection of human rights and the criminal justice system must be developed as the bedrock of any security strategy. Only then will conditions for peace and conflict resolution be created.

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Citizen Surveillance: Good or Evil?

- *Tejeshwi N. Bhattarai*

We are under constant scrutiny today. Whether you stroll around a busy commercial street of a city or you browse through the innumerable vagaries of the online world, it is very likely that you are constantly being watched or monitored by one agency or the other. Life under surveillance has become one of the bitter truths of the modern era.

Surveillance however, is not just restricted to government espionage and monitoring. Private forces are also at work in monitoring what you do, what kind of web-pages you visit and what kind of advertisements lure you. In correspondence to these surveillance mechanisms, you are bombarded with very lucrative advertisements that are most likely to appeal to you.

One of the most common opinions rallied in context to surveillance is that it infringes upon privacy and curtails personal liberties. Alternatively, in the present times when terrorism and anti-social elements such as drug dealing and human trafficking have become so rampant, a completely surveillance-free world, many argue, would only result in poor law enforcement and a surge in criminal activities. This leads us to an important yet problematic question: Does society under surveillance give rise to a totalitarian state, or does it help meet the needs of the citizens in a proper way?

Before attempting to answer the question, there are a few things that need to be reflected upon. First, it is important to understand what surveillance really is and what its modes are. To most of us, surveillance would simply mean “spying”, which is a layman’s description of the term. Sticking with the Oxford Dictionary’s Online’s definition of surveillance, it is “Close observation esp. of a suspected spy or criminal”. Although surveillance can have various contextual meanings, in broad sense today, it can be referred to as the close observation and monitoring of any individual’s public as well as private life. It is easy to notice that surveillance today is not just limited to observing or monitoring suspected spies or criminals but it implies the monitoring of the overall public. Talking about the modes of surveillance, it can range from anything like monitoring activities in public spaces via CCTV cameras, using transponders in cars, retention of detailed mobile phone records, DNA database of citizens, espionage, assorted personal spying devices, and internet monitoring, to wire tapping. We often tend to assume that all of these forms of surveillance as the acts of the government, but as mentioned above private forces are also active in surveillance; especially in internet monitoring.

Second, it is important to analyze and understand how surveillance acts as a barrier that erodes personal liberties and individual privacy. State conducted surveillance has often been used as a tool by regimes of the past and present to conduct large scale suppression of the masses and their opinion. Surveillance makes citizens refrain from engaging in political activities by preventing them from uniting and voicing their opinion. It prevents them from formulating a political roadmap let alone the question of following it. When citizens are aware that almost all of their moves are being watched by the government, they themselves abstain from making any political statement for the fear of a probable arrest in the future. In other words, surveillance promotes self-censorship and erodes an individual’s freedom of expression. Businesses track the choice of their consumers by various monitoring techniques and through the data thus obtained they segment their consumers into different groups. Then these groups of consumer are bombarded with lucrative advertisements in correspondence to their preferences; thereby making marketing strategies more efficient. In a very similar way, state conducted surveillance can turn citizens into mere consumers too. By

identifying what kind of news appeals to various sections of the population or what does not, the state can manipulate the limits of political appeals of the public by feeding them with only the kind of information that appeals to them or by completely censoring another kind. If the type and amount of information that the citizens get access to are limited, then the political appeals of the masses will narrow down drastically; and this in turn will prevent the evolution of democratic ideas. Such surveillance corrodes the distinction between private and public life of an individual and places a ceiling on an individual's ability to develop a unique sense of self.

Although ill-fated surveillance can have all sorts of adverse results, complete abandonment of a surveillance system is not the solution either. A certain degree of surveillance is a pre-requisite to proper law enforcement and effective national defense. Installation of cameras in streets to catch hold of signal jumpers, use of cameras with face recognition technology in government as well as private buildings to identify fugitives in case of crime scenarios are some examples of healthy surveillance. All kinds of surveillance that promote proper law enforcement and do not corrode the democratic values and norms act as catalysts in creating good and responsible citizenry. Most importantly, in the age of terrorism, surveillance can prove to be one of the most effective tools in preventing and curbing acts of terror in a country wherein a certain level of surveillance of private and/or public life of citizens is inevitable. However, the government should pay greater attention to formulating surveillance strategies that respect its citizen's right to privacy and freedom of expression and in the meantime carry on with necessary monitoring in order to fight against terror.

So, does society under surveillance give rise to a totalitarian state, or does it help in meeting the needs of the citizens in a proper way?

Surveillance is like a magician's wand. It in itself cannot be good or bad. Everything depends on the attitude and intention of the user of the wand. If surveillance is used by a state to curb individuals' right to privacy and his/her freedom to expression or as a mode of converting citizens into mere "consumers", if surveillance is used to inculcate an attitude of self-censorship in its citizens and to erode democratic values, then surveillance indeed gives rise to a totalitarian state with absolute state monopoly over both the public and private spheres of its citizens' lives.

On the contrary, if the state uses surveillance to fight against anti-national elements, respecting all of its citizens' rights and liberties with an intention to create a good and responsible citizenry, then it does help in meeting the needs of the citizens in a proper way. But, for a citizenry that is governed by such well intentioned government, it is important to understand and internalize the fact that a certain level of intrusion into one's privacy for the sake of national defence or proper law enforcement is not an act of state repression; it is instead an attempt to deliver the best possible conditions of life for each and every citizen of the country; it is an attempt to attain greater good.

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Gandhism: Relevance in Contemporary India

- Iffat Ara Parveen

"We have a big war going on today between world peace and world war, between the force of mind and force of materialism, between democracy and totalitarianism" – 14th Dalai Lama.

It is to fight these big wars that the common man today needs Gandhism.

Before we seek to analyse the relevance of Gandhism in contemporary India, we should first understand the difference between the concepts:

- Gandhi- A mortal man
- Gandhism- A set of immortal ideas followed by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Gandhi's ideas were neither original nor unique to him. It comprised of principles and morals that have been preached by thinkers and philosophers since ancient times. Gandhi picked what he believed to be the best, and interpreted and practiced them in his own unique way, in order to meet challenges present during his time.

Gandhism is a holistic ideology that encompasses all aspects of human life: religion, polity, economy, society, nutrition and ecology. One must realise that these principles of Gandhi are important to the society in place today as they preach not only at the societal level, but at an individual level too.

1. Gandhism advocates that all political activities, political leaders and political institutions should function in an *ethical manner, so that ends and means are good*. This will enable the nation to progress in all fields- political and economical, social and spiritual.

There are several instances of crafty scandals occurring in the society today - be it a taxi-driver manipulating the meter to jack-up the reading or a government officer openly asking for a bribe to promptly transfer a file to the next department or even the common people instantly offering a bribe to the cops on jumping a red light. Corruption emanates from the grass-root level.

India has recently unearthed scams like the 2G spectrum scam, Commonwealth Game scam, Telgi scam, IPL scam, Satyam scam, The Fodder scam, Bofors scam etc. It is at this point that one realizes the money meant for the development and well-being of the nation goes into the wrong pockets while the nation suffers. In this context, the Gandhian principle is relevant and should be followed, as it explains the ethical principles which results in good ends and means. If this principle is followed it will bring about a progress of the nation.

2. Gandhism propagates the idea of *honesty* and the element of *truth*. It believes that 'Truth is God'.

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always." – Mahatma Gandhi

Looking at it from a practical point of view, it certainly is not an easy thing to accept. No matter how difficult it may be to follow this principle, a person is appreciated if he/she follows this principle. Such a person will not be pointed against, questioned or doubted, whereas someone who lies and deceives others will be disliked and not respected.

Truth is often painful but it is also regarded as a strong weapon that no canon or nuclear technology can replace. Deciding whether to speak the truth or not depends on the honesty to one's self. Truth can either enhance or destroy a relationship. Revealing harsh or controversial truth is hard and can often be manipulated according to one's own convenience. Truth will be harsh but it is this truth that sets one free. Thus is the power of truth.

As the saying goes, honesty is the best policy. Honesty is a virtue that enhances the character of a person. It can be as basic as being honest to the job or the task an individual takes up. If in today's world, one is honest and truthful, then perhaps, the amount of corruption would have been a lot lesser. Thus, the Gandhian principle of being honest and truthful plays an important role in today's world.

3. Gandhism believed in the concept of *Sarvodaya* which is a combination of two words: sarva meaning 'all' and udaya meaning 'rise'. Sarvodaya therefore means 'the rise or upliftment of all'.

It is an attitude which leads an individual to think and speak the words and perform those actions which result in the upliftment of mankind. Sarvodaya seeks to do well to all and harm to none. It is a healthy mix of the ideas of individualism and communitarianism. This is because it believes that upliftment must be experienced by every individual as it leads to the rise of a community as a whole.

However statistics claim otherwise as India today has the unique distinction of having the richest man in the world while at the same time about 30 per cent of its population lives below the poverty line. Three thousand children die every year in India, despite economic growth. Over seven thousand Indians die of hunger every day. This brings to notice another Gandhian principle that says *an individual must only possess the amount of wealth that is essential for his moral, mental and physical well being*.

Following this principle, one can bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the economy becomes equitable and efficient, every individual gets proper standards of living and the society progresses as a whole. Thus, the Gandhian principle of Sarvodaya can play a major role in the upliftment of today's society.

4. Gandhism emphasizes on *Ahimsa* that is 'non-violence' and *Satyagraha* which means the demand for truth.

Ahimsa or 'non violence' is a major way to bring about a successful revolution. Ahimsa does not only refer to physical non violence, it has a greater meaning as it refers to a three-fold form of ahimsa: non-violence of thought, speech and deed.

On the other hand, Satya means 'truth' and agraha means 'force'. Satyagraha therefore means 'soul-force'. Satyagraha is a way of resisting the evil and unjust by love, self-suffering and self-purification. Satyagraha cannot be achieved in the absence of ahimsa and sarvodaya because these help an individual to realize all that is true, right and good, and gives one the courage to stand by the truth.

Whether we look into the Kashmir imbroglio, the Iraq takeover, the recent Lebanon-Israeli crisis or the Godhra riots, violence has never been the solution to any problem, but it has only created further conflicts. It's only the belief and path of ahimsa and satyagraha that can survive all the upheavals in society.

When two communities fight, it creates jealousy and hatred which results in revenge and mass destruction. But instead, if a path of ahimsa can lessen all this unnecessary fighting and help achieve victory in a peaceful and non-violent way. A potent example of this would be the Delhi rape case, where the protestors took the path of 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha', in demanding speedy justice for the victim.

Gandhi successfully demonstrated to a world weary with wars and constant destruction that adherence to truth and non-violence is not only applicable at the micro level, i.e. the level of an individual but it holds equally true at the macro level. Thus these principles of Gandhism are very relevant even in today's world.

5. Gandhi propagated the idea of '*Swaraj*' or self rule. Gandhi clarified the meaning of swaraj, saying that it was much more than simple "*wanting systems of English rule without the Englishman; the tiger's nature but not the tiger*"

The call for swaraj is an attempt to have control over the 'self'- self respect, self responsibility and self realization. In this contemporary world, one must know their potential and work towards developing and sharpening it, to achieve the maximum benefit. One may feel that South Asia (along with the rest of the world) is facing a tremendous crisis. It is easy to think about the symptoms of this crisis but it is equally important to understand its roots. One must intelligently analyze the matter; look into its consequences on

the economic, political, social, and educational systems, without keeping ourselves blind about the past of so-called untouched or pristine traditions.

From these careful analyses, we must come up with new systems, spaces and new processes - based on the holistic and moral ideas of human potential and progress, which can lead one out of the global self-destruction. We must negotiate our own roles, while asking ourselves how we as individuals are either working for a solution or contributing to making the crisis worse.

Thus, in the modern context, the principle of 'swaraj' plays a significant role.

6. Gandhism envisioned a free India that would work towards international peace and fraternity. Gandhism believes in love for one's nation that co exists with the love for all mankind-also known as *Internationalism*.

This ideology does not believe in any dichotomy between nationalism and internationalism. It advocates that the goal of nationalism is impossible to achieve unless there is peace and brotherhood in the world, which only internationalism can provide. At the same time, internationalism cannot be achieved unless one first knows how to love and respect his countrymen. Thus nationalism and internationalism are not antithetical rather they go hand in hand just as micro and macro concepts are interdependent. This ideal has found place in Article 51 of the Indian Constitution.

In this modern world, there is always a struggle for power and rifts between nations regarding scarce resources, be it the oil and petroleum war between Iraq and USA that led to disruption of the global oil and natural gas market or the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan and India that affects the national security. Here we see that none of the nations follow the principle of peaceful co-existence which may lead to an emergence of a third world war. Thus, the Gandhian principle of internationalism, the idea of humane love and brotherhood plays a significant role in creating world peace.

7. Gandhi propagated the idea of '*Swadeshi*' which means 'of one's own country'. This is a practical idea that seeks to improve the Indian economy in that era. However, we need to accept that this ideology of his does not have much relevance in today's era.

The British would procure raw materials from India at cheap rates, and ship it to England where the finished good would be made and brought back to India to be sold at higher prices. Years of such practices drained the wealth of the nation, while the British became increasingly prosperous. This enabled the British to strengthen its political control over India thereby exploiting India economically.

Hence the Swadeshi movement encouraged people not to purchase goods that were manufactured outside India, particularly in Britain. However, this principle of Gandhism does not prove to be relevant in today's world where globalisation and liberalisation have fetched greater returns. For the economy to flourish and for international relations to bloom, one country cannot independently follow this idea of swadeshi. For example, if India plans to produce everything within the country and avoids international trade, then the Indian economy will not be able to allocate all its resources properly and the benefits of production and efficiency like lower prices and better quality which are available only due to international trade would not be available for India. Thus the concept of swadeshi does not help to flourish the economy of a nation and is not relevant in today's contemporary world.

Gandhism is criticized greatly for being very idealistic and the degree of its relevance is difficult to gauge because even though the common man tends to agree with Gandhian principles and even certifies them as 'good', 'moral' and 'the correct way to live', sometimes he finds it difficult to practice it. For example, absolute non violence of thought is easy to preach but it is difficult to achieve. Hence, although Gandhism survives in spirit, it appears to be almost extinct in practice. However, that does not mean that these principles are not practiced at all.

Gandhi's *desire for village autonomy* was partly realized when the Parliament gave the Panchayati Raj system a Constitutional backing. Gandhi's ideal of internationalism is an important determinant of Indian

Foreign Policy even today. The Indian prison is also based on Gandhi's principle of reformation rather than punishment, wherein prisoners are given vocational training, spiritual guidance and class-room teaching in order to motivate them to lead a normal life on release. Vestiges of Gandhism, therefore, are a part of the functioning of Indian society, polity, and economy even today.

If we say that the twenty-first century is the century of the common man and modernity, then we see that Gandhism has even more relevance in this age, and these principles will inspire generations of individuals who wish to fight for the betterment of the society.

In conclusion, one recalls the famous saying by the Vietnamese Buddhist leader, Thich Nhat Kanh –

"I think we may fail in our attempt to do things, yet we may succeed in correct action when the action is authentically non violent, based on understanding, based on love."

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Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities

- *Safiullah*

Afghanistan is an Asian country located in the south west part of the continent. It shares its border with six countries namely, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the Republic of China. Its longest border is that with Pakistan. Afghanistan is a mountainous country with thirty-four provinces and each province is further divided into districts and villages.

Afghanistan attained independence from Great Britain on 19th August, 1919 following which it was ruled by King Amanullah Khan. Until 1973, Afghanistan was a monarchy after which it became a *democratic republic* with its first elected President being Sardar Mohammad Dawood Khan. The current President of Afghanistan is Hamid Karzai.

Presidential elections are held every five years and Afghanistan, like India has a Parliament with 102 members in the Upper House and 249 members in the Lower House. The Parliamentary elections are held every four years.

To speak of the current situation and the difficulties that Afghanistan is facing, there is a lot to be restored in this country, which was once basking in its cultural heritage. Unfortunately, the Cold War has badly affected the situation in Afghanistan - politically, economically, and socially.

The problems of Afghanistan can be enlisted as - poor administration, failing polity at the domestic level and an unstable international scenario. These adverse conditions have paved way for other problems and difficulties like corruption, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, disease, inflation, breach of law, loss of national sovereignty by the intervention of neighbouring countries, lack of transparency in government policies and lack of trust between the people and the government.

This article would focus on three areas of Afghanistan politics - administration, domestic and foreign policies. Given the personal knowledge constraints, one shall enumerate below the solutions for these three entities in the Afghanistan government.

1. The government needs to establish a good and successful administration, sound domestic and foreign policies to save Afghanistan from this crisis.
2. The government must aim at achieving transparency in the implementation of policies and strategies for the present as well as the future.
3. War against Taliban and terrorism is not solving the problem as it doesn't bring peace to the country as a whole. Instead, good and clear communication with the Taliban terrorists and usage of government machinery is an apt solution to stabilise the situation.
4. The Afghanistan government should ensure strong unity in the Afghan society, inclusive of the people from the different ethnicities in the country as without unity, peace can also not be achieved. Unity brings people together, and it decreases disagreements amongst the people.

5. According to the present situation of Afghanistan, two areas need to be developed to improve its economy. First, the exploitation of natural resources like fuel, copper, natural gas, iron, marble etc must be curtailed. Afghanistan can provide raw materials from natural resources to other countries for the production of goods, especially to the neighbouring regions. Second, provision of transportation and transmission facilities is essential because Afghanistan is located in the heart of Asia. It is easily connectable to many countries in the region. India can buy electricity and natural gas from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan can also transfer gas pipe lines from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This will help the economy improve and increase the GDP. This will also decrease unemployment as it will provide a lot of job opportunities for the people of Afghanistan. This in turn will bring peace in Afghanistan also, because when Afghanistan improves economically, it will positively impact many other sectors in the country like education, military, infrastructure etc.
6. According to the author, as a citizen of that country, there is no scope of democracy as its implementation is impossible. Afghanistan needs a dictatorship regime which will curb the activities of the people who are causing problems as they work for simply private gains. They just want power and money; they always betray Afghanistan to other countries and always create problems and difficulties for Afghanistan.
7. Through good administration, the Afghanistan government must establish a good relationship between the three main organs - legislature, judiciary and the executive to enable them to work together.
8. Afghanistan's government must try to establish a good relationship with the people to work together for the development of Afghanistan.
9. Afghanistan's government must try to establish and invest a lot in educational institutions to fight illiteracy and to open the minds of the people. This will lead to the development of the knowledge of the people regarding law and the Constitution in order to accept, respect and implement it.
10. Afghanistan's government must attempt to make good and strong domestic policies that will make people trust it and follow the rules and regulations. It should start with the process of nation building so that people would be patriotic, self disciplined and hardworking.
11. Afghanistan's government must try to establish good and strong foreign policies to have friendly relations with other countries that will in turn ensure the fulfilment of the needs and wants of Afghanistan and cater to the national interest.
12. Afghanistan's government must try to establish a tax culture and a proper tax system in the country and make people pay taxes. The government must in turn, spend this money for the welfare of the people. With the implementation of this tax system, the government must try to decrease the corruption within the governmental structure thus improving the country's financial condition.

Given that the current situation in the country and the hurdles that lie ahead of us are immense and difficult to tackle, one hopes that Afghanistan will someday have a leader who will be able to solve the problems and difficulties and ensure a good, strong administration and polity to save this country.

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UPA's Direct Cash Transfer Scheme: Pro-Poor or Political Manoeuvre?

- *Om Nirvan Bhoyroo*

In Budget 2013, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government reiterated its commitment to the Direct Cash Transfer (DCT) scheme. One hopes that the scheme will achieve its purported intent of ending the policy paralysis facing India and place the country on the right track to development and prosperity. However, one is cautioned by the opinion of the several political analysts who have suggested that the DCT is yet another intricate manoeuvre to gain political mileage, and in the end, just another populist move. With this scheme, the people at the bottom of the pyramid would finally live a better and dignified life; however, a number of discrepancies remain which could jeopardise the very purpose of this policy.

The scheme by itself is very simple and straightforward. The Direct Cash Transfer is a new system under which the beneficiaries receive cash directly in their bank accounts; it is expected to enable delivery of the government's subsidies and welfare measures to the intended targets without pilferage. To make things simpler, instead of fuel, fertiliser and food subsidies given to BPL families, the scheme will involve direct cash transfer to their bank account of Rs. 32,000 per year. As per this scheme, the government has fixed the poverty line at Rs. 66.10 per day for urban areas and Rs. 35.10 for rural regions.

It is an undeniable fact that logistics is a formidable problem in this country; between the Prime Ministers' office and the Parliament which passes such bills, there is a long way until the money is routed to the concerned individuals. This long and sometimes tedious route is exactly what directs the funds into the pockets of some vile individuals. This is the exact conundrum that the government is trying to curtail and in such an endeavour, it wishes to implement this new scheme. To empower the poor and guide them towards prosperity was one of the major points of the Indian National Congress' (INC) manifesto. This scheme is rumoured to be the next big reform after the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act that shall attempt to bring an end to India's poverty situation. Notwithstanding, let us above all remind ourselves that we are living in a democracy and we are allowed to debate each and every policy and have our very own views. In this spirit of freedom, we assess the credibility and efficiency of such a policy.

Probably, one of the major flaws of this policy is its timing; while some will see this as the end of the policy paralysis, others will see the makings of a very intricate strategy by the INC which aims to gain political mileage in states like Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat at a time when the state elections were just around the corner. Expectedly, the BJP was quick to oppose the scheme. Although this might seem like a desperate tactic on their part it nevertheless legitimates and accentuates the fact that dirty politics seems to be at play here instead of genuinely attempting to improve the situation of the needy and destitute. Indeed, this move comes at a time when both parties are fighting to keep up their vote banks and acquire new ones and this policy might just be the INC coup de grace that shall curtail the BJP's influence upon these minority communities. Incidentally, after pleasing the commonly business corporate known as India Inc, the Congress has decided to please its largest vote bank namely the minority communities.

Another major drawback in this new policy is that one cannot entirely rely upon technology as very often it fails leading to complaints on numerous occasions. However, a second issue which is far more intrinsic in nature could severely cripple this project. The government intends to transfer the funds and the needy shall collect the same through their Aadhaar cards and bank accounts. However, one cannot but feel that the government has hastened itself in such a noble cause. First of all, the number of people in India who possess

the Aadhaar cards is well below the desired levels and cannot possibly be brought up to these levels within a month when the policy is expected to be implemented. Secondly, 60 percent of the Indian population have no bank accounts and do not know how these operate. Even our good old banking system does not have the capacity to increase the number of accounts and to handle them within just a month's time.

Though this policy might have been born from a very noble intention and aims to curtail poverty in this country, one cannot help but wonder why the government is taking such risks.

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Maharashtra after Bal Thackeray

- Prashansa Ranjan

“What India really needs is a dictator who will rule benevolently, but with an iron hand.” - Late Shri Bal Thackeray

Popularly known as the ‘Hindu Hriday Samrat’ (Emperor of Hindu hearts) and the ‘Sitting Duck’ (by David Headley), a great admirer of Hitler and the protector of Marathi Manos (Marathi people), Bal Keshav Thackeray was born to Keshav Sitaram Thackeray (also called as Prabodhankar Thackeray) in Pune on January 23, 1926 in a Marathi Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu family. He started his career as a cartoonist with the English language daily ‘The Free Press Journal’ in Mumbai but left it in 1960 to form his own political journal ‘Marmik’. The creation of ‘Saamana’, a Marathi newspaper and ‘Dopahar ka Saamana’, its Hindi version can also be credited to him.

However, the limelight he has received has been not only due to his achievements but also controversies including the attacks on the youth during Valentine’s Day celebrations, inciting violence against minority communities during the 1992-1993 Mumbai riots, the controversial statement made against Abu Azmi and in favour of Mumbaikars (as he called them) in the wake of July 11, 2006 bomb blasts, an editorial titled ‘*Ek Bihari, Sau Bimari*’ stating that Biharis were ‘an unwanted lot’ in Maharashtra or demanding protection money from Gujarati and Marwari business leaders, to name a few. Interestingly, over these many years and controversies, Thackeray came to be recognised for his ability to not create but even end conflicts. It is widely observed that in the final years of his life, Balasaheb prevented several hostile situations from escalating to violence.

The death of Bal Thackeray on the 17th of November, 2012 due to a cardiac arrest brought not only Mumbai but the whole of Maharashtra to a virtual halt. The shops were closed down, all upcoming concerts and performances were put on hold and high alert was declared in the whole city, which was very well expected as Balasaheb was the political leader who had had a strong hold on the masses for the past four decades.

The questions that arose after the leader’s death was what would happen to the future of Maharashtra, the Navanirman Sena and the Shiv Sena. Would Raj Thackeray take the lead or would it be Uddhav Thackeray who took the Tiger’s seat or apart from all, would the Shiv Sena come to a halt?

It is said that the youth represents the future of a country; it is they who can shape and dismantle the politics of the nation. Hence, a survey was conducted amongst a few of the colleges in Maharashtra, where the questions as mentioned above were posed to the students and the results obtained were as follows:

NAME OF COLLEGE	RAJ THACKERAY	UDDHAV THACKERAY	AT A HALT
SYMBIOSIS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND COMMERCE,PUNE	23%	56%	21%
FERGUSSON COLLEGE,PUNE	42%	55%	3%
BHARATHI VIDYAPEETH,PUNE	37%	48%	15%

NARSEE MONJEE COLLEGE OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMICS,MUMBAI	20%	47%	33%
SRM ENGINEERING COLLEGE,MUMBAI	22%	53%	23%
NIT,NAGPUR	45%	47%	8%
CUMMINS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING FOR WOMEN,PUNE	45%	49%	6%

On analysing the above figures, the conclusion can be drawn that a majority of the people want Uddhav Thackeray to be the successor to the throne. Also, it was found that a handful of the youth wanted the Shiv Sena to be replaced by the Maharashtra Navanirman Sena.

A few reasons that can be noted down for such unevenness in the results are:

1. The Shiv Sena has done a lot for its Marathi Manooos.
2. They were not radical and lovers of violence, just ethnocentric.
3. The Thackeray's are the ones who gave Mumbai its political and geographical rights.
4. Shiv Sena was the party that targeted the Mumbai underworld through legal means.
5. Shiv Sena believed that the Hindus had to be strong enough to oppose the people who disregarded their identity and religion.

A glimpse can be seen, of whom the citizens want to take over and what should happen to the political condition of the state, from the data collected. Nevertheless, the state as a whole is yet to decide the verdict.

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China-India Conflict: What Started it All

- *Sailja Behera*

India and China are presently the fastest growing economies of the world. India-China relations, often known as Sino-India relations have always been ridden with suspicion. India-China relations can be traced back to the ancient times when trade relations were established via the Silk Route. Geographically, India and China are separated by obstacles of the Himalayan mountain chain. Today they share a border along the Himalayas and Nepal and Bhutan - the two states lying along the Himalayan range which act as buffer states. The disputed Kashmir province of India also borders China, along with Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal.

India and China have had border conflicts for over fifty long years. This unnecessary dispute was converted into a war which took place in 1962. According to some sources, these problems were initiated because of a misunderstanding among leaders. People still believe that China betrayed Indian trust and attacked our defenses in Ladakh and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) region. The most significant reason of our defeat is that the political leadership failed that time in India. At that time, our Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru formulated the country's foreign policy in consultation with his Defense Minister, V. K Krishna Menon. V.K Krishna Menon's belief was that they could solve the crisis through diplomacy and China will not attack India due to the Forward Policy. Independence of India came in with the fact of a boundary problem and Nehru and his advisers were fully aware of it. It did not come in all of a sudden. Problems cropped up at the Mc Mahon Line, Aksai Chin in Ladakh region and Karakorum Pass. India has the Mc Mahon Line and China has the Xinjiang-Tibet road so the interests of each side were non-negotiable yet reconcilable. The Government of India led by Jawaharlal Nehru confidently walked into this tragic conflict with its eyes wide open. Another important factor behind the flaring up of border war between India and China was China's unfounded perception of Indian plans to seize Tibet. The Mc Mahon Line, which settles with Tibetans is a treaty line but parties do not define it. They drew a line on the map with red ink which left much scope for dispute. Nehru himself stated during a Parliament session that Aksai Chin region was of no importance because of its high altitude, inaccessibility and barren nature. From archival material the status of the area can be summed up as follows:

1. The Ladakh-Tibet treaty of 1842 did not define the boundary between the two regions.
2. There existed a no-man's land in this region.
3. The boundary preferred by the British was the Karakorum watershed, claimed by China, not the Kuen Lun watershed which India belatedly claimed.
4. China too was not certain about its own boundary.
5. The boundaries had no legal or moral sanctions.

Nehru refused to negotiate with Premier Zhou Enlai even after the latter's request for talks and meetings. To this, Nehru responded by imposing unrealistic points to the Premier. Moreover the war took place in harsh climatic conditions.

Other issues have also played an important role alongside the border conflict. The huge influx of Tibetans into India with their spiritual leader the 14th Dalai Lama worsened the situation. China accused India's expansionist design of playing a role in this. The results of the war were very devastating to Nehru's India. Many people see it as national humiliation especially after being aware of the 'Panchasheel' pact. It is often said by the general media in both the west and in India that the war of 1962 was started after China 'invaded' or 'attacked' India. There are many examples of this and it is rare to see a media article about the war that doesn't explicitly imply that the war was China's fault. However, blame must also be placed on

India's poor handling of the situation. Future efforts towards restructuring India-China relations should be geared towards avoiding knee-jerk reactions to perceived provocation so that the relationship can break free from the hostilities of the past and build towards a shared goal of future peace.

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