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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The Indian Ocean Conference, which the Foundation organised with its partners, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore; Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo at Singapore (September 1 and 2, 2016) attracted a lot of attention in the strategic community across the world. Newspaper columns and web commentaries appreciated this initiative, noting that this reflected India's attempt to help set the agenda of the expected Asian century.

Clearly there is trepidation that any significant shift in the global, or extra-regional preponderance of power should not lead to the kind of blood-letting set in motion by Germany's rise in the late 18th century/early 19th century. It culminated in the two world wars, which so horrified the world community that it created the United Nations to prevent such conflagrations. While localised conflicts continued and in phases, accelerated, the fact is the period since the end of World War II has seen the least deaths by violence globally since the Middle Ages.

The conference would not be seen as a success if it was not to attract speakers and participants from over twenty countries. The presence of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, former President of Maldives and ministerial representatives from Singapore, Bangladesh, Thailand, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Japan, Malaysia besides India demonstrated the importance governments gave to the issues raised and the possibilities of this conference emerging as a non-confrontational platform that could help develop comity and reduce possibilities of misunderstanding and conflict. The United States and France, both extra-regional powers who have a substantial presence in the Indian Ocean sent senior official representatives.

This issue, therefore, unusual in our established pattern, returns to the same topic as the immediate previous one. We present edited excerpts of a number of speeches and interventions so that our readers, who were not present at Singapore, could get a flavour of the proceedings. We also carry different articles, mostly by young contributors who bring their own perspectives to the table.



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Global Power Transition and the Indian Ocean

*Ranil Wickremesinghe



Over the past 500 years, the Indian Ocean region lost control of its geo-political and geo-economic relevance. First the entire region was subjugated to colonial dictates, and then in the post-colonial era, to cold war concerns and global power plays. You will agree with me that currently the global political and economic balance of power is undergoing tectonic shifts and major re-adjustments are in the offing. Single power and duopoly appear to be a thing of the past, and for the first time in five centuries economic power in the world is moving again towards Asia.

The global financial system is moving away from a single currency (the dollar) dominated international system towards a multi-currency

international system. New sources of investment capital are reducing western dominance. New consumer markets and the expansion of the Asian middle class are changing the traditional focus of markets.

Several megatrends are also poised to enhance on this shift.

First, it is expected that the individual will be empowered due to reduction in poverty, rise of the middle classes, the ICT revolution and widespread use of communication technology, social media and better health care.

Second, there will be a diffusion of power with the uni-polar world - giving way to a multi-polar one - based on networks, coalitions and alliances.

**This article is the gist of the inaugural address by Shri Ranil Wickremesinghe, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Sri Lanka at the Indian Ocean Conference at Singapore on 1st September 2016*

Third, demographic changes and aging populations will impact economic growth of certain countries.

Fourth, the demand for food, water and energy resources will increase substantially with the growth of global population.

And fifth, climate change and shifts in environment will impact on economies across regions. This re-adjustment is increasingly evident in the economic forecast for the next few decades.

We can all tangibly feel how Asia is growing at a tremendous pace.

The wealth and technology gap between the West and the East has narrowed significantly by the sheer weight of numbers in Asia. By the year 2030, it is estimated that Asia will surpass North America and Europe combined, in terms of global power based on GDP, population size, military spending and technological investment. Of the four largest economies of the world – China, US, India and Japan, three are located in Asia.

This global power transition to Asia creates both opportunities and challenges for Asia as whole and the Indian Ocean in particular. This Conference, therefore, is timely and significant.

This transition in global power can be traced to the economic awakening of East Asia, driven by the growth of China and the complementary growth of ASEAN countries - particularly Indonesia and Vietnam. Yet, parallel to that, the US had built close economic alliances and military arrangements with Asia-Pacific countries.

Of course by 2008 there were setbacks suffered by the Western economies. This then challenged the western dominance of the global

order and has led to an emerging multi-polar global order.

Now, the US is proposing the furtherance of a single combined security strategy for the two Asian oceans – the Indian and the Pacific.

Will this create a super region with Maritime Asia at its centre? Obviously this will have new implications for Asian security.

This is highlighted by the emergence of such concepts as the Indo-Pacific and more recently the Indo-Asia-Pacific.

The question that remains is - whether such a region - on the scale of the Indo-Pacific or the Indo-Asia-Pacific is viable?

The leading American political scientist and political economist, Francis Fukuyama in a recent interview remarked and I quote:

“Asia is polycentric, multipolar, and constantly evolving. There is no uniformity in Asia in terms of geopolitics and culture and each of those countries is a separate world to itself, even as it overlaps in trade and commerce with its neighbors and with the United States. It is a challenge for Americans to keep up with that region.”

The disparate nature of Asia not only in terms of size, resources, diversity and interests of both regional and extra regional states, but also growing militarisation, historical disputes and strategic mistrust, pose serious challenges to the emergence of a viable and sustainable strategic security order.

There will be resistance to any single country attempting to unilaterally shape the strategic order of the region. Yet building political will and strategic trust and the institution of institutional structures are all prerequisites for such an inclusive multilateral

strategic security order that can respond in case of any emergency.

But in reality, these two oceans of Asia also make for two distinct spheres of influence within the Asian continent, each maintaining separate sophisticated trading and political systems while interacting with each other.

The Indian Ocean still has a heavy British influence- the Pacific has taken to American practices. We play cricket, they play baseball, the rest play football.

For instance, unlike the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Region has been intrinsic to US security. For this reason US Administrations from Presidents Franklin D Roosevelt to George W Bush have treated these two areas separately.

On the other hand - the countries in the Indian Ocean Region have historically been reluctant to join power blocs. Despite superior economic and military might, even during colonial times it was difficult to dictate the future of the Indian Ocean Region. The countries of the region have historically played a significant role in global trade and commerce, given rise to some of the great civilizations and religions of the world, and are home to unique and diverse cultures and histories. Whilst partnership and collaborative relationships were built with countries and civilizations outside the region, the region maintained its multi-polar characteristic.

To my mind, the notion of Indo-Pacific or the Indo Asia-Pacific appears destined to remain a more conceptual rather than a realistic premise. The collapse of the Trans Pacific Partnership has further weakened the arguments for it.

In contrast, the Indian Ocean has emerged as one of the world's busiest and most critical trade corridors, rapidly surpassing the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Covering a vast global expanse - extending to East Africa in the West, Australia in the East, South Africa in the South, the Indian Ocean is well poised to regain its influence in world politics and the global economy.

The Indian Ocean Region has always been a significant playing field for big powers. Historically it has also been a bridge between the East and the West.

Today the region is acquiring an intrinsic significance of its own. The Atlantic basin is declining. Central Asia and Africa have yet to evolve into mature political economies. The Middle East is in turmoil and Latin America is also undergoing a somewhat troubled growth. The Pacific basin - particularly the Eastern Pacific is very dynamic but it has its own latent instabilities such as the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes, developments in North Korea, increasing militarisation of disputes and the absence as yet of regional institutions to bring coherence to the political economy of the area. So it is possible to argue that the Indian Ocean Region has an extraordinary opportunity to create something new in the global context and something historically uniquely beneficial to its people.

Already, the ASEAN nations are on the ascent in the eastern side of the Indian Ocean. Three ASEAN members control the sea-lanes linking the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

South Asia is one of the fastest growing regions of the world. Since South Asia dominates the Indian

Ocean and therefore this power transition in the Indian Ocean will be heavily influenced by South Asian developments.

Consequently, I see the South Asia and ASEAN countries presenting an emerging opportunity that can bring with it benefits similar to those that came in the past to the Atlantic and Pacific basins.

That is the challenge of the next decade or two.

Our responses will shape our destiny in the 21st Century. The cooperation and coordination between ASEAN and SAARC including the Ramayana Connection have given us strong cultural affinities. We have similar Governmental institutions and commercial practices. The English language is a link language. We have a huge cohort of youth more regionally conscious than their parents. We also have a lot of work to do in bringing these two groups together. More frank in-depth discussions; on-going dialogue at the highest levels. We must not allow the internal disputes and differences of these multilateral organisations to impede the collective relationships between the two groups. It also challenges SAARC to reach a higher level of cooperation than what we have been able to achieve so far. The opportunities are there - waiting to be exploited – and with ingenuity we should be able to forge ahead.

The multi-polar world we live in will be dominated by the competition among the five or six major global powers during the next two decades. It may well be a protracted undetermined contest. The Indian Ocean will be a major theatre of competition. But the multiplicity of contestants gives us - in the region - a margin of flexibility, which we must utilise to determine the regional order.

We must commit ourselves to an order based on the rights of all States to the freedom of navigation - the unimpeded lawful maritime commerce and over-flight. Our own futures and the futures of our extra-regional partners are therefore heavily invested in how strategic security is managed in the region. Many countries remain dependent on energy supplies and traded goods that are carried across the region.

Those who are geographically located in the region have a primary interest in the security of the Ocean, which is more often than not linked to their economies and the livelihoods of their people.

Managing competition and strengthening cooperation would be essential given both these economic and strategic security factors, which have a direct impact on the future of this region. This is something we cannot do alone.

There are major power interests at play particularly those of China and Japan. Middle power interest such as those of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia. Nor have the US and the European entity relinquished their interest in the region.

As Fukuyama states, the West led by US will continue to project a tremendous amount of soft power globally due to strong institutions, continued stability and prosperity, high per capita GDP, dominance of the English language, technological lead, democratic traditions and culture.

It is time for Indian Ocean countries especially Asian nations to take the lead in determining their own future. It is our belief that an Indian Ocean Order needs to be crafted with accepted rules and agreements that would guide interactions between states.

This Order needs to be built on a consensual agreement and no singular State should dominate the system. The Indian Ocean Order would have the primary responsibility of upholding the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean, ensuring that shipping and air routes to East Asia and beyond are kept open, building closer economic cooperation amongst countries in the region, incorporating an Indian Ocean Development Fund for development of the region, and in particular, establishing a strong Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management mechanism to deal with natural and manmade disasters.

Today, IORA (the Indian Ocean Rim Association) the regional organization is not an effective force and has fallen short of expected levels of delivery with regard to regional cooperation. It is dormant when the strategic concepts concerning the Indian Ocean are being discussed.

What is required as a start is a dialogue between SAARC and ASEAN leaders. Indonesia, an ASEAN member also the current Chair of the IORA, can initiate this dialogue – spanning the IORA and all the interested major and middle powers.

The final objective will be the agreement on an Indian Ocean Order. A settled arrangement guiding the interaction between states to ensure the safety and security of the Indian Ocean and its lanes of communications. An Order established

by consensual agreement for a peaceful maritime security space and the strengthening of Maritime Security cooperation for mutual benefit.

Such an Indian Ocean Order can only be consolidated by strong and meaningful regional cooperation. IORA's present scope of meeting at official and ministerial level is insufficient for this purpose. This is where organizations such as the India Foundation have a role to play; to present proposals for closer cooperation.

Two of the areas requiring your efforts will be - firstly the establishment of an Indian Ocean Assembly. An Assembly which brings together inter alia Heads of States and Governments, leaders of political parties, officials, academics, intellectuals, non-governmental sectors, cultural and commercial leaders, media representatives, youth groups, in order to recommend measures for consideration by the Indian Ocean region.

Secondly, a programme for cooperation in Education and Human Capital Development. This single measure will make a significant contribution to the rapid development of the region.

Our task, then, is to begin building a political eco-system that is both prescriptive and preventive; prescriptive in that it creates a structure out of the natural affinities of geography, culture and resources that already exist; preventive in that it contains the inevitable local disputes and prevents them from disrupting or spilling over on to a common Indian Ocean agenda.



The Rise of the Indian Ocean Region – India's Challenges and Responsibilities

*Dr. S. Jaishankar



In his eminently readable account of the history of the Indian Ocean and its invaders, Richard Hall begins by declaring that “Now the monsoons of history are blowing afresh, as the balance of world power swings back to the East. The start of the twenty first century is seen as ushering in a new ‘Age of Asia’, in which the natural unity of the Indian Ocean can once more assert itself.” Reflecting on this observation may well be a good way of beginning the Indian Ocean conference.

Hall’s remarks raise a number of questions. Is the Indian Ocean more than geography? Was it really so before and can it be so again? Should it be so and in whose interest? What does it take to

create a stronger Indian Ocean identity? How do we address the challenges of connectivity, economy, security, politics, culture and identity – all of which are critical elements to its possible re-emergence? And of course, what are India’s views, interests and capabilities in this process? These are some of the issues that I will address in my remarks.

There is considerable historical evidence to suggest that the Indian Ocean ‘world’ did have an essential unity that was based on maritime trade rhythms. We also know that it was indeed a self-sustaining world, albeit with natural and flexible boundaries, that set it apart from other proximate worlds. The association of maritime trade with

**Edited version of keynote address delivered at Indian Ocean Conference at Singapore on 1st October 2016*

cultural influence was both graphic and pervasive across the ocean. As a result, traditions, practices, faiths and commerce created a virtual connectivity that overcame distance. Yet, it must be admitted that the romance of history gave way to the realities of international relations. The arrival of the Europeans fragmented the ocean and its littoral. The post-colonial world also created new national, and thereafter, regional identities that put the ocean in the shade. Moreover, economic activity and cultural habits specific to the coast in the Indian Ocean did not always extend very far inland. This lack of depth perhaps also contributed to the reduction of an entire eco-system into a water space.

Before addressing the challenges of reviving the Indian Ocean as a geo-political concept, let us examine the arguments in its favour. It is not coincidental that Hall was connecting the unity of the Indian Ocean to the age of Asia, or indeed to the balance of world power. If we all accept, as I assume we do, that there is a global rebalancing underway driven by Asia's revival, then we must definitely examine the contribution that Indian Ocean can make to this process. Is the Asia we promote merely a littoral one or should its progress and prosperity extend into the seas that are part of it? Is our continent better served by a fuller identity or a narrower one? If both the world and Asia are heading in the direction of greater multi-polarity and multilateralism, is a broader spectrum not in our collective interest? And looking beyond, surely a more integrated view of the Indian Ocean also brings the proximate continents of Australia and Africa at its two ends much closer. Let me also make a security argument: are we not safer if

Asia's sense of itself extends seamlessly to the waterways so essential to our commerce? Or for that matter, are narrow nationalism and sharp regionalism not better harmonised in a pan-oceanic framework? There is even an economic argument today to look at the Indian Ocean in a more composite way. The blue economy is an important 'over the horizon' opportunity that is waiting to be tapped. In essence, the case for approaching the Indian Ocean in a less disaggregated manner is strong. The challenge is to translate these arguments into a regional order.

A key step in that direction is to create the connectivity that promotes a sharper Indian Ocean personality to emerge. It is obviously unrealistic to just fall back on the past monsoon-driven one, though we should not underestimate the attractions of soft connectivity. The problem is that littoral nations, in the last five decades, have each joined a regional grouping, some of them more than one. Encouraging them to work towards a composite Indian Ocean one is, therefore, not easy. None probably would be opposed but few actually have the necessary enthusiasm or appetite. At a diplomatic level, promoting greater interaction among these groupings would itself make an important contribution to the Indian Ocean. But more important, it is necessary to bridge physically the boundaries between them. A good example is the India-Myanmar border where the SAARC meets ASEAN. While land connectivity is obviously critical, we must also recognise that the under-development of maritime infrastructure is itself largely responsible for the profile of the Indian Ocean.

No less significant is hinterland development. Part of the Indian Ocean's limitation was the narrowness of its coastal culture. As unified national societies emerged in Asia, the psychological distance from the ocean has also narrowed. Hinterland economies have increasingly become linked to maritime trade. It is apparent today that the development of their infrastructure that can be a game changer in elevating the importance of the Indian Ocean. Let me offer examples from India itself in support of this line of thinking. We are working on ambitious plans for port and port-led development that would make our 7500 km coastline more relevant to the future of the Indian Ocean and India. We are similarly looking at more aggressively developing some of our 1200 islands. Road and rail development projects are improving internal logistical efficiency. Of particular significance is the steady unfolding of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. We expect this to be followed by an eastern corridor and a southern one covering Bengaluru to Chennai. If you juxtapose these infrastructure initiatives with the 'Make in India' programme, the implications for the Indian Ocean are quite evident.

We know that historically, the Indian Ocean was a 'highway' linking great multitudes across vast geographies. As our connectivity vision and capabilities expand, this critical role can actually be played once again. For the Indian Ocean to attain its true potential, it is imperative that India, which is its centre of gravity, should be a facilitator rather than an obstruction. That requires a smoother movement of goods and people within India but also to its immediate neighbourhood. And

beyond. Not coincidentally, stronger connectivity is at the heart of the 'Neighbourhood First' policy of the Modi Government. Whether it is the Kaladan transport project leading to Sittwe port in Myanmar; or the Trilateral Highway to Thailand; railway modernisation, inland waterways, coastal shipping, or port development in Bangladesh, or in Sri Lanka; today, better logistics is the dominant theme of India's neighbourhood outreach.

Our experience towards our west is less positive for reasons you all appreciate. Nevertheless, the understanding on the Chabahar port project with Iran and the sea access it can provide for Afghanistan represent important openings. We appreciate Iran's considerable potential as a transit corridor even to Eurasia and Europe. Among the projects we are working on with them is the International North-South Transport Corridor for which a test run was just done in transporting goods all the way to St. Petersburg. India is also desirous of joining the Ashgabat Agreement that connects the Indian Ocean to Central Asia.

It would, therefore, come as no surprise to all of you that we see the re-energising of SAARC as one of our key foreign policy priorities. India is very conscious that South Asia is among the least integrated regions of the world. This not only damages the growth prospects of SAARC members but is also a drag on the larger rise of Asia and the Indian Ocean that I have spoken about. Consequently, we are pressing now to broaden cooperation among SAARC members, including through new initiatives in fields like weather forecasting, disaster management or satellite capabilities. As I underlined, we also are

working towards greater connectivity and promote expanding people-to-people contacts. Admittedly, there are challenges as not all SAARC members are on the same ambitious page. To overcome that, we have also conceptualised groupings like BBIN that plurilaterally take forward sectors like motor transport and railways. BIMSTEC is another relevant grouping with reference to the Bay of Bengal. We look forward to its developing a more robust agenda.

Our interest is not limited to the immediate region. We positively evaluate the prospects of working with Japan on the Mekong-Dawei initiative that could further connect to southern India. Studies are already underway on the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar BCIM corridor. And in the ocean itself, our interest in enhancing maritime logistics in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles remain strong and will extend further in due course.

The overall contribution that connectivity can make to economic growth and development is hard to overstate. The examples I have cited in my own country and beyond make a powerful case for an open mind in this regard. Yet, we cannot ignore the fact that precisely because improved connectivity opens up so many new possibilities, it can also have strategic connotations. Consequently, it is vital that trans-national initiatives should be the outcome of broad-based consultative processes. It is also very important that the yardstick to judge their viability should essentially be a commercial one. At the end of the day, connectivity should contribute to the cooperative spirit of this region.

A resurgence of the Indian Ocean must

necessarily be predicated on its economic revival. Only then would any expectation of coherence and cooperation in the Indian Ocean become realistic. There is a strong case for greater intra-ocean trade and investment and indeed, some progress to report in that regard. If India's economic growth in the last two decades has been catalysed by its 'Look East' policy, it can be taken to new levels by a 'Think West' one that leverages the huge energy assets in the Gulf region. In recent months, the two fronts are competing vigorously for attention. Taken together, they help politically shrink the distances that were elongated by the past fragmentation of the ocean.

For a community sense in the Indian Ocean to grow, more effective intra-regional cooperation is as important as the inter-regional one. This realisation is increasingly sharply felt in Indian policy and we are among the most prominent development assistance partners of our immediate neighbours. To illustrate, grants and loans extended to Bangladesh are estimated at over USD 3 billion, to Sri Lanka at USD 2.7 billion, to Myanmar at USD 1.75 billion, to Mauritius at USD 960 million, to Maldives at USD 128 million, to Seychelles at USD 60 million. In addition, we have a USD 10 billion line of credit to Africa offered last year that follows upon an earlier one of USD 5 billion. People-to-people exchanges accompanying the development assistance is equally strong. It is reflected in training and professional exchanges, as well as in medical treatment. Programmes offered formally by the Indian Government cover thousands and are further supplemented by market-based efforts. We believe that these efforts

respond to local conditions and requirements of our partners, thereby strengthening a sense of solidarity and goodwill.

Growing awareness of the ocean's economic potential when combined with sustainability and localisation concerns has given rise to blue economy initiatives. India is already engaging many of our neighbours in that regard, underlining our commitment to SDG 14. The OECD report 'Ocean Economy by 2030' brings out its tremendous economic and employment potential. We consequently seek to work more closely with others on marine bio-technology, exploitation of ocean minerals and harnessing ocean energy.

The centrality of the Indian Ocean to global trade and development is not a new development. After all, it covers one-fifth of the world's total ocean area and encapsulates coastlines of almost 70,000 kms. But more than the expanse, it is about location. With Asia's economic revival, whether we see the region as markets or production centres, transportation of goods has only acquired greater salience. The flow of natural resources is correspondingly growing with this ocean now accounting for two-thirds of the world's maritime oil trade. We are also all aware that more than two-fifths of the world's population lives around the ocean.

Ensuring the smooth and uninterrupted flow of one-third of the world's bulk cargo and half its container traffic is not a small responsibility. With the passage of time, it must also become an increasingly collective one. India takes this challenge seriously and is prepared to shoulder its responsibilities fully. We have started to conclude

white shipping agreements and cooperate on coastal and EEZ surveillance with some of our immediate neighbours. India participates in arrangements like the ReCAAP and the SOMS mechanism for maritime safety. We have also taken an active role in fighting piracy, both to our west and east. Since 2008, we have continued to conduct anti-piracy patrols in Gulf of Aden and other maritime routes in the region. The Indian Navy has undertaken about 50 anti-piracy escort missions. It has contributed overall to greater maritime safety in the region and enabled the reduction of the High Risk Area in December 2015, thereby reducing shipping insurance costs.

Not all threats are traditional and in recent times, the importance of HADR operations in the Indian Ocean has been increasingly appreciated. Building on its 2004 tsunami relief experience, India today has undertaken a wide range of HADR operations, from major evacuation efforts in Yemen to bringing drinking water to the Maldives and providing relief supplies by air to Fiji and Sri Lanka.

Security challenges in the Indian Ocean are addressed by different countries in different ways. In India's case, they are essentially an outcome of national capabilities, buttressed by participation in relevant regional platforms. The ASEAN Regional Forum, in particular, is evaluated highly by us as a forum to share perspectives. Closer to home, we are developing trilateral cooperation with Sri Lanka and Maldives. Where naval interests are concerned, the steady growth of the 35-nation Indian Ocean Naval Symposium over the last decade has been a very encouraging development. It has helped to promote a shared understanding

of maritime issues, enhance regional maritime security, strengthen capabilities, establish cooperative mechanisms, develop inter-operability and provide speedy HADR responses.

Moving from policy to performance, we also believe that navies working together in pursuit of shared security goals have a stabilising impact. India participates in a number of bilateral exercises with Singapore, Sri Lanka, France and Australia amongst others. In addition, we partner the US and Japan for the Malabar set of exercises. The Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean that was agreed to in January 2015 during President Obama's visit to India is another example of our openness to international cooperation in this sphere. With some of the Indian Ocean island states, notably Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles, we have supplied naval equipment, provided training and undertaken hydrographic services. We remain open to working with other partners in this ocean, including in East Africa.

Recognising the growing importance of maritime trade in an increasingly globalised world, India supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS. India also believes that States should resolve disputes through peaceful means without threat or use of force and exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability. Sea lanes of communication are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development. As a State Party to the UNCLOS,

India urges all parties to show utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which establishes the international legal order of the seas and oceans. In that connection, the authority of Annex VII Tribunal and its awards is recognised in Part XV of the UNCLOS itself. India's own record in this regard is also well known.

If the Indian Ocean is now to occupy a more prominent place in the global political discourse, its best hope is the further development of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Over two decades, it has harmonised multiple diversities to create a common ethos. With its 21 members, 7 dialogue partners and two observers, IORA is the most obvious platform for trade, socio-economic and cultural cooperation. It creates common ground for regional economic cooperation and provides opportunities to develop shared interests. It also encourages close interaction of business, academic institutions, scholars and the peoples of the member states. India is committed to building up IORA in line with its own expanding bilateral ties in the region. We will be supportive in the expansion and further invigoration of its activities, from renewable energy and the blue economy to maritime safety and security, water science and greater institutional and think-tank networking.

Given the history and traditions of the Indian Ocean, it is but appropriate that any serious effort at promoting its coherence would address issues of its unity and identity. We must take full advantage of the ties of kinship and family that span the Indian Ocean and are an important part of its history. But more active initiatives are also needed and I would draw attention to Project

Mausam, whose very nomenclature based on the distinctive wind system of the Indian Ocean signifies our interest in the characteristics of the region. The project promotes archaeological and historical research on cultural, commercial and religious interactions. It has become a vehicle for knowledge exchanges, networking and publications. If this is an example of a contemporary initiative to revive the ocean's identity, let me emphasise that there are many other supporting endeavours that contribute to the same objective. By raising interest in traditional knowledge and practices such as ayurveda and yoga, by rekindling interest in the journey of faiths like Buddhism or Sufism, or by utilising powerful symbols like Nalanda or Ramayana to promote human exchanges, we are step-by-step adding to the consciousness of an eco-system that was once secure in its vibrancy.

In any defined framework in international relations, those who constitute it generally expect and are expected to shoulder primary responsibility. There is no reason why the Indian Ocean should be any different. Yet, in this day and age, reality must also take into account expressions of globalisation. Acceptability is as much a function

of following norms and rules as it is in developing an interest. Why the behaviour of some states is more reassuring than others – a subject that was incidentally commented upon by Lee Kuan Yew – is worth reflecting upon.

In March 2015, Prime Minister Modi, while visiting Mauritius, laid out our vision for the Indian Ocean region. He declared that it was rooted in advancing cooperation and using our capabilities for larger benefit. This vision had four key elements:

- (i) To safeguard our mainland and islands, defend our interests, ensure a safe secure and stable Indian Ocean, and make available our capabilities to others.
- (ii) Deepen economic and security cooperation with our maritime neighbours and strengthen their capacities.
- (iii) Envisage collective action and cooperation to advance peace and security and respond to emergencies, and
- (iv) Seek a more integrated and cooperative future for the region that enhances sustainable development.

We stand ready to work with all nations on that basis to create a prosperous, secure and developed Indian Ocean.



Vision of SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region

*Nitin Gadkari



With a coastline of 7500 km and 1200 island territories, India is and always has been a maritime nation. Our central location in the IOR (Indian Ocean Region) has connected us with other cultures, shaped our maritime trade routes and influenced India's strategic thought.

For example, Lothal in Gujarat was one of the earliest seaports in the world and our ancient Sanskrit texts refer to oceans as the storehouse of Chaturdashanam Ratnam: the 14 gems. 90% of India's trade by volume and 90% of our oil imports are carried on the seas. India has also been a net provider of security and force for stability in the region. These three pillars of Culture,

Commerce and Comity are also the central themes of this conference.

We live in a world where the strategic and economic pivots are shifting to make the Indo-Pacific generally and the IOR more specifically the centre stage of virtually every major power. However, while the attention of other countries on IOR is fairly recent, India has maintained trade and civilizational links with other countries in the region since time immemorial. These links were developed without recourse to military conquest, instead by people-to-people engagements.

For example, merchants and artisans who settled in these regions over millennia brought with them their cultural ethos and traditions. The host

**This article is the gist of the speech delivered by Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport, Highways & Shipping, Govt. of India at the Indian Ocean Conference at Singapore on 1st September, 2016*

societies throughout the region accepted these visitors as their own and in turn, the fusion that arose saw the creation of amazing shared cultures that we can all be proud of, not bound by political boundaries or the monopoly of any single nation. Diversity and pluralism developed according to local genius over time.

There was considerable to-and-fro movement, so much so, that we are informed by the author and researcher Sanjeev Sanyal in his latest book, “The Ocean of Churn”, that there was a period in the history of Tamil Nadu when the Pallava dynasty had succession problems. So they invited a prince from Cambodia to take-over their kingdom, reciprocating the gesture of an earlier Pallava prince who had gone to Cambodia, married a local Naga princess and established a dynasty.

This was the extent of acceptance and familiarity across geographical distances that we can only wonder about. The result was the emergence of extensive trading networks that led to economic prosperity and made our region attractive to outside powers that had less benign intentions.

The result was the unfortunate disruption of our links as imperial powers established their colonies and shifted the focus of our economies, our trading patterns and even our cultural discourse, away from each other to one directed towards the colonial powers. Our mutually beneficial economic and cultural networks got so extensively disrupted that they could not be fully re-established even after our countries got independence.

This needs to change so that countries of the region can become the masters of their fate once again, not dictated by superior military powers from outside. Rather we should strive to develop peace

and harmony amongst all stakeholders based on rules that we have drawn up ourselves.

Hon’ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi says that Blue Chakra of India’s national flag represents the potential of the Blue Economy and my Ministry is committed to realize its full potential.

We want to create a model of port-led development for India through the **Sagarmala Port Development Project** which will establish new ports and modernise old ones to link our coastal and island territories with the hinterland. The Sagarmala Project is based on four pillars:

- Optimising multi-modal transport to reduce cost of domestic cargo by leveraging inland waterways
- Minimizing time and cost of export-import cargo logistics
- Lowering costs for bulk industries by locating them closer to the coast
- Improving export competitiveness by locating discrete manufacturing clusters near ports.

We have identified 173 projects under the Sagarmala program with a total outlay of USD 60 billion under the following four archetypes:

- Port modernization
- Port connectivity improvement
- Port-led industrial development
- Coastal community development

We aim to complete all these projects by 2020. When completed, they will have created 10 million new jobs and increased our coastal shipping volumes by five times from the current levels of 60 million tonnes per annum. Most importantly Sagarmala Program will also save India close to USD 6 billion in logistics costs every year.

I have decided to benchmark performance of major ports to the best in category international ports and learn from international best practices. For example, our port in Haldia uses bio-diesel, while our ports in Tuticorn, Ennore and Chenanai use solar and wind power which reduces logistics cost resulting in growth and jobs. As a result of all our efforts, I am happy to tell you that all ports and companies under Shipping Ministry are now in profits (net profit to be INR 3000 crore).

My government believes that our neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean littoral can be partners in India's growth story to fuel their own economic growth and bring sustainability to the IOR. Therefore, beyond the Sagarmala, we are also committed to building infrastructure in other littoral countries to create onward connectivity from India. We have established a Special Purpose Vehicle to take up maritime projects overseas. We have also signed a coastal shipping agreement with Bangladesh and are developing the Chahbahar port in Iran, which would act as the gateway to the world not only for Afghanistan but also for the Central Asian Republics.

India is currently going through a phase of rapid transformation under PM Modi's leadership and it is an exciting time to partner with us. Make in India, Smart Cities, Clean India, Skill India- these are all initiatives that can resonate and be replicated to varying degrees in littoral countries. We are offering our regional satellite navigation system NavIC to our neighbours, sharing capacity enhancement in digital space, linking centres of higher education and research across the SAARC

countries and meeting growing demands for quality healthcare from surrounding regions.

These are all initiatives for stepping up India's growth story, and can very well be a vehicle for strengthening partnership in the region. None of us can grow in isolation, and building synergies has always been a win-win situation for all partners. Your development priorities will guide our engagement; not our perception of your needs.

Indic world view of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam— concept of whole world as a family – is perhaps most acutely experienced on oceans. As I explained earlier, the Indian Ocean has always been about diversity and pluralism, different cultures and civilizations, and political and economic systems that found ways to co-habit and complement each other through connectivity, trade and enhancement of synergies. Our government's Project Mausam is aimed at revisiting these ancient maritime routes and cultural links with other countries in the region. Indian Ocean is critical to the future of the world. Its waters touch the shores of over 40 countries and nearly 40% of the world population. Two-thirds of the world's oil shipments and one-third of the bulk cargo cross the Indian Ocean. Our future cannot be a zero-sum game. IOR is our common maritime home and our vision for this region is best summarized in the Hon'ble Prime-Minister's phrase of SAGAR- Security and Growth for All in the Region.

India is committed to use its capabilities and central location in the region to ensure a safe, secure and stable Indian Ocean Region that takes us all to the shore of prosperity.



India as Pivotal Power

*M J Akbar

It is my privilege to welcome you all at this Conference on the Indian Ocean. Spearheaded by The India Foundation, this effort, in partnership with the Rajaratnam School for International Studies in Singapore (RISS), the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) and the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), is based on our deeply held conviction that the world is a family. Sensible families sit together to find solutions. Land has boundaries; oceans have none, but that hardly means that they are not the source of disputes. Shared space needs shared intellect for a route map that can ensure equitable prosperity.

India has travelled through the Indian Ocean from a time beyond surviving historical records carrying its literature, learning and trade both to the east and the known west. India has contributed what might be described as a philosophical diaspora in the region, highlighting the advantages of common wisdom, fair trade and syncretic culture. The rest of the world understood the importance of this ocean. Ptolemy's Geography, written around 150 AD, described the Indian Ocean as "an enormous lake, with southern Africa running right round the bottom half of the map to join an increasingly speculative Asia east of the Malaysian peninsula". Abbasid Caliph Al Mamun commissioned the first known world map in the first quarter of the 9th century; it showed the Indian Ocean running into the Pacific.

Oceans, the most powerful and creative force and gift of nature, have been a source of prosperity when ruled by the philosophy of cooperation; they have become regions of confrontation, conflict and conquest when misused by nations in search of domination. Domination has disappeared from the agenda of world affairs in an age of equal nations infused by the democratic spirit. History indicates that dynamics of the Indian Ocean can lead in both directions. The sea-lanes of the future must avoid both conflict on the surface and dangerous currents below in order to create new communication lines towards collective prosperity.

The greatest threat to the sea has been from inhabitants of land. The Indian Ocean straddles the vast land mass called Asia [the wife of Prometheus, the god of forethought who gifted fire to man]. Asia is at a unique moment in the evolution of its geopolitics.

Asia has split into two horizons. India sits in the middle.

Look east from India to Japan: There is a diverse range of people, religions, languages, cultures, polities and nations. But there is one powerful factor in common: each nation is rising from problems of the past in the search for economic growth, stability, social order and cohesion. This is the Phoenix Horizon.

Look west from India: Within the variety of nations and peoples the one focal factor is conflict, with some islands of relative calm struggling to

**This article is the gist of the welcome address made by Shri M.J. Akbar, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Govt. of India at the inaugural session of the Indian Ocean Conference at Singapore on 1st September, 2016*

retain their composure in a region pockmarked by war and terrorism. The rise of contemporary terrorism originates with sanctuary provided to the most vicious and barbaric terrorist individuals and organizations by our immediate western neighbour. This is compounded by radicalisation, terrorism, quasi-religious, multi-ethnic and tribal contradictions; while seepage and spread of a radical ideology that distorts Islam has incubated groups like Daesh. This is the Toxic Horizon.

India, geopolitically in the centre, has become the Pivotal Power of Asia. India is the western frontier of peace, and the eastern frontier of war.

The world must recognize India's critical role in both the quest for prosperity, and the existential struggle to eliminate what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has eloquently described terrorism as "the gravest threat since World War II." India's dual ability to emancipate the Asian economy in partnership with those who seek a better life; and its determination to confront today's merchants of death, will determine whether the 21st century belongs to Asia. India has the strength and conviction to stop the spreading scourge of radicalisation because India also has an ideological answer to this menace, for we offer the template of a democratic polity and modernity to counter regressive jihadism and terrorism.

Prime Minister Modi knows his mind; he recognizes the dimensions of both challenge and opportunity. He is the leader that India needs at this swivel moment in our individual and collective fortunes. He has reached out with his Act East policy; and he has no illusions about the threat from terrorism and its malevolent sponsors, who seem to be unaware that they are committing strategic suicide.

Geography is a constant. But I would also like to suggest that the real dynamism of India as the Pivot Power comes from its contribution towards the demographics of the region; its promise in both productive capacity and as an enormous market. This complements the traditional trade routes, and the rising aspiration of partner nations willing to work in harmony. The Phoenix Horizon is blessed with comity and cross-cultural influences that have grown into identities along the Indian Ocean over centuries. India both complements and protects rising Asia, with its powerful economies like those of Japan and China and, even more so, the growing capacities of the littoral nations across the Indian Ocean, to foster economic growth and stability through mutually beneficial cooperation.

I can say this for my country: only those who do not know India, underestimate India. India will tilt towards its deepest philosophical and historical traditions, towards peace and shared prosperity.

Common sense insists that this search for prosperity must be driven by best practices across the Indian Ocean. India's policy objectives are transparent: we seek measures that will facilitate the natural flow of peaceful inter-action and consequent growth through cooperation. We do not believe that regional confrontational attitudes are helpful in the ocean, or extended regions like the South China Sea, to give one instance. Law must be respected; after all, law preserves order.

I hope that our discussions will deliberate on both the heritage and the reality of the Indian Ocean as we look to comity, commerce and culture as the core elements that cement and strengthen economic growth, peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region.



Indian Ocean: Cultural Capital for a Creative Economy

*Vira Rojpojchanarat

I was born in the North of Thailand. I was given a name, Vira, borrowed from a Sanskrit word. The word 'Vira', as most of you know, means 'the brave one'. The use of Indian-style names is indeed an important cultural practice among the Thai people and is one of the many significant Indian cultural contributions that has deeply diffused into Southeast Asia.

Not only linguistic contributions, India has also created and passed on its cultural assets to Southeast Asian people such as philosophy, beliefs and religions especially Buddhism and Hinduism to people of Southeast Asia. These have become the basis of many Southeast Asian cultural expressions both tangible and intangible including Buddhist arts, Ramayana interpretation, cuisine, costumes, commerce as well as state or royal ceremonies. Thailand is a good example as it has embraced and adopted Indian culture over a millennium which can now be seen through many Thai traditions and rituals such as the Royal Ploughing Ceremony, the Royal Barge Procession, Loy Krathong Festival, Visakha Day. Moreover, the Indian civilisation heritage is traceable in Thai historic sites which have also become the world heritage.

Intercultural relations are naturally determined by the geographical location of the region. The location of Southeast Asia and Thailand, situated in between the world's two great oceans, namely the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, is indeed key to the rich cultural and commercial interchanges since

ancient time. This location is also where the two seasonal monsoon winds known as the "trade winds" meet. The ancient mariners' knowledge about these trade winds enabled Southeast Asia to enjoy a very long and rich cultural and commercial relations with the lands across these two oceans and beyond.

In the past, the term "Indianisation" was used with reference to the Southeast Asian states. Evidently, the influence of civilization that spread from India and from the lands beyond India, into this sub-region, dating to the first or second century, left many tangible and durable marks in our sub-region.

The term "indianisation" was first used by the French archaeologist and Southeast Asian expert, George Coedes, as seen in his book published in 1944. This term was defined as 'the expansion of an organised culture' that was formed upon Indian conceptions of kingship, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the Sanskrit language. A number of well-known kingdoms or empires in the early history of Southeast Asia, such as Funan, Chenla, Champa, Khmer, and Srivijaya, was therefore called "Indianised Kingdoms" by western historians.

However, over the past decades, the use of this term has been revisited by many scholars. New investigations indicated that the "Indianisation process" in Southeast Asia was not through force, imposition, or colonisation. Rather, 'Indian influences' offered inspirations to the indigenous peoples, and were thus selected and adapted to

**This article is the gist of the keynote address delivered by H.E. Mr.Vira Rojpojchanarat, Minister of Culture of Thailand at the plenary Culture Session at Indian Ocean Conference on 2nd September 2016*

suit the local contexts of pre-existing and well-developed cultural bases in the sub-region.

Southeast Asian nations are not just the receivers of cultural heritage, but have also exchanged their accumulatively enriched and diverse culture back to the South Asian region. A couple of examples can be seen through the introduction of Lanka Nikaya Buddhism from Sri Lanka in Thailand and, later, the re-introduction of Thailand's 'Siam Nikaya order' of Buddhism in Sri Lanka are the evidence of interchangeable cultural contribution within the region. Also, the Indian Ocean is no stranger to ancient Siamese merchants who exported the Celadon, or Thai porcelains across the ocean to India and as far as to Persia. Many historic incidents that originated in South Asia have affected the society and culture of Southeast Asia until the present day such as King Ashoka's Buddhist emissaries who travelled to Suvarnabhumi region during the 3rd century BC. Apart from the historically significant people, ordinary individuals from two sides of the Indian Ocean have continuously connected to one another through maritime trade, cultural and commercial exchange making these people the real contributors to our shared history.

At present, the world has opened the new era of the 'Asian Century' whereby Asia, once again, has a crucial role in socio-cultural dialogues. Thailand, as an ASEAN member country, strives to move forward by engaging in the cooperation with countries and institutions outside the region for regional and global sustainable development. I am delighted that, next year, ASEAN will celebrate

the 25th Anniversary of diplomatic relations with India, together with the continuing partnership for development. Also, the Mekong-Ganga cooperation in the cultural framework has flourished since its start in 2000. Added to the sub-regional cooperation, Thailand and India are moving towards the bilateral governmental programme of Cultural Exchange in the next three years.

Not only preserving the past, Thailand has also moved forward by recapturing the ancient Indian cultural heritage and transforming it into cultural capital for creative economy. From ASEAN cultural exhibitions, ASEAN film festivals and many more, these cultural activities are presentation of ASEAN identities which have been creatively developed from Indian cultural heritage.

On the special occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of Thailand-India diplomatic relations in 2017, Thailand reaffirms her readiness and willingness to continue to strengthen and further enhance cultural relations with India. As part of the celebration, Thailand, in appreciation of India's cooperation, is mounting a temporary exhibition of the precious artefacts on loan by India, which would be put on public display. This exhibition will be an important testimony to the fruitful cultural cooperation and exchange between our two nations, which will also greatly benefit our respective peoples.

I strongly believe that the vision and the geocultural issues and challenges discussed during this Conference will lead to the expected goals of regional sustainable development and peace in the wider Indian Ocean Region in the long run.



We must follow the Path of Cooperation and Collaboration

*Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali



It is a timely initiative to bring together important states and principal maritime partners of the Indian Ocean Region for consolidating maritime partnership to ensure peace, security and development.

The Oceans and Seas constitute critical 'global commons' for our civilization. The Oceans and Seas have been serving as an important component for economic prosperity throughout history. Over the years, increasing dependence on ocean and seas for effective transportation has resulted in greater concern for ensuring the safety and

security of the sea lines of communications.

Indian Ocean has remained at the centre of interest to the major players of the world because of its strategic location and natural resources. Indian Ocean Region has also emerged as the most prominent global economic highway. 66% of the world's oil shipments, 33% of its bulk cargo and 50% of the world's container traffic pass through its waters. The oil arteries of the world flow through the Indian Ocean.

It is not only trade and economy, competition among some of the major powers in securing visible

**This article is the gist of remarks made by Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Govt. of Bangladesh as the Chair of the 'Plenary on Comity' at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016 at Singapore on 2nd September, 2016.*

and credible presence in the Indian Ocean has shaped the dynamics of the Indian Ocean region. We see growing interests among countries in the region to develop new infrastructures in the Indian Ocean. Countries also seek to build, expand and strengthen their naval infrastructures in the Indian Ocean. Efforts are also to be made for further cementing existing alliances and forming new alliances to ensure safety, security and development of the region. Overlapping territorial claims and disputes have added new dimension to this evolving security scenario.

While we recognise the strategic and economic importance of the Indian Ocean, we must not lose sight of the host of challenges it presents. Countries in Asia and the Pacific are four times more likely to be affected by a natural catastrophe than those in Africa, and 25 times more vulnerable than Europe and North America. The climate change impacts and resultant sea level rise have further enhanced the risks and vulnerabilities of the Indian Ocean countries.

We should also recognise a variety of security threats, posing danger to maritime peace and stability. Piracy continues to remain as one of the most worrisome maritime security challenges to date. Maritime terrorism has also surfaced as an omnipresent global and regional threat. Human trafficking and drug smuggling are the twin issues that have lately re-captured global attention.

Maritime peace, security and stability are essential for our development, progress and prosperity. It however requires strong commitment from all the nations of the Indian Ocean region and beyond towards achieving this shared objective.

Let me thanks the Speakers for their very insightful deliberations, presentations and analyses, highlighting potentials, issues and challenges for maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Let me summarise their views and add my own perspectives to those.

First, the centre of gravity is being shifted to Asia. International relations are, perhaps, in a state of dynamic transition. The geopolitical game in the Asia-Pacific region is taking a new turn. Focus has been shifted from 'Asia-Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific'. 'Rebalancing Asia' or 'Pivot to Asia' manifests the changing nature of power matrix in the region. Therefore, the role of the Indian Ocean is critically important in this equation.

Second, strategic equations in the Indian Ocean is increasingly becoming complex with major powers competing each other's for more prominence and visibility. This presents enormous challenges, so are the opportunities. It is, therefore, crucial for us to understand the character, dimension and magnitude of this competition to appropriately choreograph our respective positions vis-à-vis others.

Third, to adequately harness the potentials of oceans and seas, we need to effectively address the maritime boundary related issues. Bangladesh has been able to amicably resolve its maritime disputes with both of its neighbours-India and Myanmar. This has unleashed tremendous possibilities for all of us to exploit the vast resources that we have in our maritime territory including the hydrocarbon reserves.

Four, Maritime security and freedom of navigation are essential as well for enhanced

international trade and economic cooperation. The capacity of regional organisations including Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) could be further strengthened to manage security related challenges. A collective security architecture based on mutual trust and partnership may be envisioned in this regard.

Five, Many countries of the Indian Ocean region are the worst victims of climate change. It is an imperative for us to coordinate our resources, synergise our strength and share our best practices into minimizing adversities of climate change, with special focus on adaptation measures.

Six, Capacity building of the Indian Ocean countries is a precondition for better utilization of ocean resources. Capacity has to be built across the academia, research institutions, national regulatory bodies and mechanisms. Due priority should be accorded to the transfer of technology and mobilisation of financial resources among and between the Indian Ocean countries. LDCs and

Land Locked countries should be given special preference.

Last but not the least, we need to maintain ocean health by striking a balance between conservation, exploitation and utilisation of marine resources. This would eventually contribute towards building an inclusive, equitable and sustainable society, as envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) adopted in September 2015. I am convinced that we must follow the path of cooperation and collaboration, not competition and conflict, in tapping the full potentials of the Indian Ocean. Let me conclude quoting the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, “Blue economy concept has ushered in a new horizon for economic development through utilizing the sea and marine resources at national and international level. History of development of many countries tells us that the countries which utilised the sea and its resources became economically more prosperous than others”.



Indo-Pacific: Rule of Law at Sea - Key to Stability and Growth

*Nobuo Kishi



This meeting is made possible by the valuable collaboration by the leading think tanks in Asia. This meeting is very timely, for it allows government policy planners engage in a frank exchange of views on how to ensure stability in the Indian Ocean. The Indo-Pacific region is now the growth center of the global economy. Ensuring open and stable sea in the region is vital for the peace and stability of the region and the entire international community.

For Japan, the Indian Ocean was traditionally important as a sea lane for its energy import, for it transported about 90 percent of the crude oil to Japan. However, today, the Indian Ocean is playing

a much important role as a sea of trade for everyone. It is supporting all the trade transportation and value-chains among East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East and Africa, where greater economic growth is expected. At the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), held in Kenya last weekend, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the “Free and Open India and Pacific Strategy” as Japan’s new diplomatic policy.

The key of the stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by the synergy between the “two continents”- Asia, which is recording remarkable growth, and

*This article is the gist of remarks made by Mr. Nobuo Kishi, Hon’ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Govt. of Japan at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016 at Singapore on 2nd September, 2016.

Africa, which is full with potentials – and two free and open seas – the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. By regarding these continents and seas as an integrated region, Japan intends to open up a new frontier of Japanese diplomacy.

The ASEAN countries, including Singapore where we are today, are located where the two Oceans meet. For this reason, It is important for everyone in this region to share the common goal of strengthening maritime security and connectivity.

However, in recent years in the seas of Asia, we have been witnessing scenes of increasing tensions between States. The international community is seriously concerned. Japan would like to emphasize the importance of observing international laws, including UNCLOS, “Constitution of the Oceans,” and of taking concrete actions and engaging in cooperation based on such laws.

Prime Minister Abe proposed the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea” at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2014.

- 1) States should make and clarify their claims based on international law;
- 2) States should not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims, and;
- 3) States should seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.

I believe, now is the time to thoroughly implement these principles.

These principles have received robust support from many states concerned, including those in Asia. Also at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit held in May, the importance of the three principles was reaffirmed. The G7 Foreign Ministers emphasized, in their Declaration on Maritime Security in April,

that coastal states should refrain from any unilateral actions that would cause permanent physical changes to the marine environment in the area pending delimitation, regardless of whether they are for military or civilian purposes.

In particular, the G7 countries shared serious concerns over any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo. They emphasized the importance of peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, including through arbitration proceedings.

The ruling issued in the arbitration case between the Philippines and China is legally binding for both countries concerned. Japan hopes that compliance by the two countries with this ruling will lead to peaceful resolution of disputes related to the South China Sea.

In addition, Japan is strongly hoping for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the early establishment of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). In light of the increasingly severe security environment, Japan will implement various policy measures under the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace.”

Piracy is a critical challenge for all countries that enjoy the benefits of maritime trade. Japan is actively involved in dealing with piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden and in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Japanese Self-Defense Forces has been conducting antipiracy operations without interruption since 2009. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the conclusion of the ReCAAP. Japan will actively support the activities of the Information Sharing Center, for example by sending successive Executive Directors.

Disasters relief is another important issue. In the cases of the disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia aircraft in 2014, Japan immediately dispatched vessels and aircraft of the Self-Defense Forces to conduct search and rescue activities. Based on these experiences, we stress the importance of further strengthening international cooperation in HA/DR activities in Asia. To respond to increasing sea-related challenges, countries need to work together.

Japan will make best use of multilateral and trilateral dialogues, such as Japan-India-US and Japan-Australia-US dialogues, and welcomes US active engagement in this region. Japan also spares no effort to support coastal States in Asia, by providing seamless assistance through a combination of various measures, including ODA, defense equipment cooperation and capacity building assistance. For the economic prosperity of the Indian Ocean, it is critically important to enhance connectivity from East Asia through South Asia to the Middle East and Africa region.

From this viewpoint, Prime Minister Abe announced the “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” in May 2015 and the “Expanded

Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative” in May 2016.

Japan will steadily implement these initiatives in accordance with the G7 Ise-Shima Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment, which underline;

- 1) economic efficiency in view of life-cycle cost;
- 2) safety and resilience;
- 3) job creation and capacity building;
- 4) consideration for social and environmental impact, and;
- 5) alignment with economic and development strategies.

The key to prosperity of the international community is to unlock the dynamism created by the synergy between “two continents” — Asia and Africa —, and two free and open seas — the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. To this end, ensuring the maritime security and stability based on the rule of law, as well as further cooperation among us is essential. Japan will make every possible effort and cooperate with all the countries concerned to achieve this common goal of our future.



Indo-Pacific Regional Connectivity, Commerce and Cooperation

*Nisha Desai Biswal



Today, I'll talk about why the United States supports greater economic connectivity in the Indian Ocean region, some recent developments, and then some areas for future work.

My country has long recognized the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean. Well over one hundred years ago, Admiral Alfred Mahan – one of the most important American strategists of the nineteenth century – said that the destiny of the world will be decided on the waters of the Indian Ocean.

The question we then face is – How will we write that destiny? Will it be a story of friendly cooperation and mutual benefit, or one of adversarial competition and unnecessary conflict? A story where many millions of people are lifted out of poverty, or one where millions are condemned to suffer the consequences of our inaction? Starkly different outcomes, and we believe that only a strong, transparent, rules-based architecture can bring about the peace and prosperity that all will benefit from.

**This article is the gist of remarks made by Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, USA at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016 at Singapore on 2nd September, 2016.*

That means a system where all countries pursue their territorial claims in accordance with international law. It also means a system that engenders greater cooperation on natural disasters, maritime security, and mitigating the effects of climate change. And it means a system that enhances regional economic connectivity across the entire Indian Ocean region, and in particular South Asia, so that goods and services can move at faster speeds, in greater numbers, and at lower costs.

The statistics show just how much needs to be done: South Asia is one of the least economically integrated regions in the world, with less than six percent of its total trade and less than one percent of its investment flows occurring within the region.

Compare that to North America, where over 50 percent of total exports are sold within the region – or Europe, where the same figure has averaged more than 70 percent over the last 20 years – and you can see what is possible. Indeed, one look outside of this building's windows shows what can be accomplished when a country decides that its future will be built on trade and commerce.

So we know what better economic connectivity can do for the countries of South Asia and the entire Indo-Pacific. And the United States also has a stake in the region's success – not only because we seek to strengthen our business ties, whether it's trade in consumer goods, financial services, technology, energy, or education – but also because we know that prosperity is linked to security and stability. This is the basis behind President Obama's rebalance to Asia and the Joint Strategic Vision that the United States and India put forward last year, showing that our leaders

recognize how much more can be accomplished when we work in partnership.

And, as my colleague Rear Admiral Gabrielson rightly pointed out in the last panel, the stability of the Indo-Pacific and the safety of its sea lanes are vital U.S. interests. Twenty five percent of the world's traded goods and seaborne oil crosses the Strait of Malacca, visible from Singapore's skyscrapers. That means that one-quarter of the global economy is dependent on the security of a stretch of ocean which, at its narrowest, is only one-and-a-half miles wide.

I think that covers the "why", but we're really here to talk about the "how". Greater connectivity requires infrastructure, and infrastructure requires investment: \$2.5 *trillion* over the next ten years in South Asia alone, according to the World Bank. Roughly speaking, one-third for transport, another third to electricity, and the last third to critical services like water, sanitation, and telecommunications.

It's a tall order, but with smart investments from the right stakeholders, it can be fulfilled. Asian powers like Japan, India, and China are stepping up, and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been working on this challenge for decades. Public-private partnerships are also increasingly filling in the gaps.

But greater economic connectivity will take more than just the new hardware of roads, rails, and ports. It will also require better infrastructure "software" – meaning improved regulatory frameworks, more capable institutions, and better-networked businesses and people.

That's where we think the United States government can add value, and that's where we've focused our efforts. We see ourselves as a convener and a partner. We can help identify projects that have multiplier effects, bring all stakeholders to the table, support and catalyze the early stages of development, and provide the necessary technical support to make sure it gets done right.

Through an initiative we call the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, or IPEC, we're helping create new energy linkages, open up trade and transport corridors, streamline customs procedures and border crossings, and connect entrepreneurs and businesses throughout South Asia and beyond.

On energy alone, there is tremendous potential for expanded trade within South Asia. One example is the 500 megawatt energy link between India and Bangladesh; the U.S. conducted the initial feasibility study that showed the viability of the line, and it's now being expanded to 1000 megawatts. It's a true proof-of-concept for what can be accomplished when a multi-stakeholder project is pursued with transparency, quality, and good-faith cooperation.

While relatively modest, IPEC projects like these are emblematic of the vision we are working to build – a vision of a connected Indo-Pacific, of a region that is at the epicenter of global trade and commerce, a region that has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and drives economic growth in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

And we see the region embracing this vision.

Through its Act East policy, India is improving relations with its neighbors and overcoming long-

standing disagreements.

Bangladesh has been a willing partner, and together with India has peacefully resolved age-old land and maritime border disputes, which will allow for greater investment and the freer, faster, and cheaper movement of goods, services, and people.

Burma's democratic transition has created new opportunities for investment, and it is working with Bangladesh and India to open up trade corridors into Southeast Asia. Just a week ago, India and Burma signed agreements to complete the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport project and the trilateral highway to Thailand, which will have a profound impact on the movement of goods and services between South and Southeast Asia.

Sri Lanka has the potential to become a global transit and commercial hub: ninety percent of the oil destined for China and Japan, and seventy percent of all Indian Ocean maritime traffic, pass within 12 miles of Sri Lanka's southern coastline.

Colombo is already among the top 15 ports in the world for trans-shipment traffic, and top 30 for total container volume. It is now seeking a partner from the Indian subcontinent to finish a mega-terminal that will accommodate the world's largest container vessels.

And better regional economic connectivity also begets closer cooperation on other cross-cutting issues like maritime security, natural disasters, trafficking and piracy, and environmental protection. These are problems that affect all of our countries, and we can most effectively address them when we recognize our common interests and work together toward common goals.

The United States also believes that harnessing the economic benefits of the ocean – including fisheries, tourism, energy, and transportation – requires responsible investments in sustainability and environmental protection. To put it simply, if we want these resources to last, we have to take care of them. And that requires cooperation, because we all share the same ocean.

In a couple weeks, Secretary Kerry will host the Our Ocean conference in Washington, with a focus on marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and climate-related impacts on the ocean. The future of the blue economy depends on how we address these issues together, and inaction is no longer an option. President Obama took the lead last week when he created the world’s largest ecologically protected area in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, declaring that “it is in the public interest to preserve the marine environment” – and we

know that it is in the global interest too.

We also share an interest in seeing organizations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association strengthened, to help build consensus on pressing regional challenges. IORA presents an opportunity for the Indian Ocean region to craft its own identity – to set its own priorities, build its own connections, set its own peaceful and transparent norms, and strengthen its own common voice – just as other regional organizations have done before.

To conclude, we’ll continue to strengthen and expand our work to promote regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, and we believe that it can create fair, broad, and sustainable growth, underpinning the region’s prosperity, security and stability. The United States has an unwavering commitment to this region’s success because, in the words of President Obama, “in an interconnected world, we all rise and fall together.”



Taiwan and the Indian Ocean

*Dr. Hung Mao Tien



Ocean and sea are growing in importance in a globalized economy

- They provide the trading route and enhance globalized economy's activities; multi-purposes for communications among nations and continents.
- Fishing activities expanding, disputes over territorial waters and exclusive economic zones add to ever complexity of nations' quarrels.
- Natural resources — water beds contain rich reserves of oil, gas, and other minerals resources.
- Old rivalries, territorial disputes, counter terrorism, humanitarian assistance as well

as disaster relief, and maritime energy security all require creation of regional cooperation mechanism; and multilateral forum such as this one is an important step in the right direction.

- The above factors, hence, attract multinational interests in attempts to formulate globalized or regional cooperation frameworks to ensure orderly and fair access among all interested parties

Indian Ocean has always been important in East-West trading system; it becomes more so in recent decades as world-wide interactions and communications have grossly multiplied:

- Estimated 80% of the world's oil

**This article is the gist of the remarks made by Dr Hung Mao Tien, Chairman of the Board, Institute for National Policy Research, Taiwan at the Indian Ocean Conference at Singapore on 2nd September, 2016.*

transactions sail through the Indian Ocean, the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea to reach Northeast Asia, China proper and the west coast of Canada and the United States. Total volumes of annual trade passage, including oil amounts to about \$5.3 trillion at present.

- As India and perhaps other South Asia countries adopt a “Look East” policy, efforts to protect the sea lanes become much more important to them.
- Indian Navy has begun to operate in the Western Pacific especially in cooperation with the military exercises of the U.S. and Japan. Secure safe passage through the South China Sea becomes a necessity for security reason.
- In short, the Indian Ocean in junction with the rising status of India are geostrategically important for global trade, maritime safety, and many aspects of regional security consideration.

Moreover, Asia — including Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia — has emerged as perhaps the most vital economic region in global economy; put together, their aggregate GDP now surpasses other global regions. The combined GDP of the ASEAN and India stands at US\$4.5 trillion. Their aggregate annual trade figures amount to US\$3 trillion. And the future prospects for further growth and favorable demographic trend look very promising for this region to sustain its importance

in trade and security, among others.

These factors motivate Taiwan’s new government as well as the private business sectors to make plans for what is known as the “Southbound” initiatives following the general election early this year.

Foreign trade and fishing industries are crucial aspects of Taiwan economy. Its business sectors have already actively invested in and traded with the ASEAN countries for almost half-a-century. Total investments in the ASEAN countries in the last two decades are estimated in excess of US\$45 billion.

In recent years, more companies begin to target the Indian Ocean rim countries for investment and trade, especially India.

The recently elected Democratic Progressive Party administration under President Dr. Tsai Ing-wen leadership maps out a comprehensive plan to deepen and broaden economic connectivity with ASEAN, South Asia, Australia, and N.Z.

The plan charts out an overall strategy of fostering linkages with 18 countries in this region. The new initiatives emphasize Southbound links in such sectors as textiles, shoes, medical care, education, internet technology, ICT supply chains, petrochemical, financial services, green agriculture and exchanges of human resources, for instances.

In conclusion, both official and private sectors have recently revitalized their great interests in all aspects of dialogue and broad economic relationship in regard to subject matters being addressed to in this Indian Ocean Conference.



Draft New Education Policy 2016: What does it have in store for School Education!

*Aaditya Tiwari

No country can ignore education, particularly if around 65% of its population are youth. The risk otherwise is of converting its huge demographic dividend into a curse. Education plays a vital role in building a country. It is at the root of a strong economy. Even before independence, education was a topic of debate and discussion. Gandhiji's *Nayi Taleem* was a vision statement and instrument of change for independent India.

Government of India set-up Education Commissions which submitted their reports in 1966 and 1986 (modified further in 1992) to transform education and these did achieve some results. At the time of independence, the literacy rate in India was around 12% which rose to 75% at present; school going children in 1947 were around 18%, presently over 90% children go to schools. Despite these achievements, the truth of education in our country is that 4% of our children never start school, 58% do not complete primary schools and 90% do not complete school.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) published each year by Pratham shows the sad state of our education. With the Narendra Modi government coming to New Delhi on the high tide of aspirations and development, it was but obvious that it would work to transform the education landscape of the country. Also there have been many innovations and research in the field of education since the last Revised Education Policy of 1992. Ours is a digital world where technology influences every aspect of life and the

Education Policy should mirror these changing times.

The education sector in the country has not always got the attention it needed by successive governments. School education and primary education in particular faced the brunt of this failure. Right from the First Five-Year Plan, the focus has been on building higher education institutions.

The inputs for the draft of New Education Policy, 2016 (*from here on to be referred as draft*) rightly analyses that without intervention at primary school level it is not possible to improve higher education in the country. Hence, the announcement to develop a New Education Policy brought in hope and was also a reflection of changing priorities.

A closer look at the draft reveals that it is in line with the Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning'. The framers of the New Education Policy 2016 claim that the "*thrust of this policy is on quality of education, as the country has already been witnessing the benefits of on-going efforts for expanding access and increasing inclusion. Employability is a matter of great concern which also has been given due attention. Given the global changes and technological advancements, some new areas are also brought forth to realize the various objectives.*" It also tells that "*the policy envisages broadening the scope of*

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education to facilitate various pathways to learning depending on learners' choice and potential and in relation with skills required for the world of work while ensuring recognition and certification of learning outcomes acquired by learners through formal and non-formal learning modalities, including open and distance learning modes."

It is heartening to see that the framers of the draft have recognized the concerns of the people related to education field and taken note of them. It talks about all the major concerns varying from pre-school education to curriculum, teacher training to school leadership, school governance and management to accreditation of schools and colleges & making entire processes more transparent and accountable. While these issues were addressed by previous policies too, one can hope that the detailed New Education Policy that would emerge out of the draft after due consideration would have implementable actions resolving these concerns. The draft also recognizes the federal nature of our polity where formulation of strategies and plans are indicated at national, state and district levels but implementation happens at the local levels. This would give schools liberty to innovate and find solutions to problems which are unique to them.

For clear understanding of the draft here I shall restrict the analysis to Schools and School Education. School as an entity has multiple dimensions and therefore problems associated are also varying. But at the very core of a school lies the student, the teacher, learning environment, school leadership and the local community with which the school interacts. So to understand what this policy brings in for schools we need to understand what it has in store for these components.

Student

The major challenge before policy makers was to bring students to school and make schools accessible for all. With the implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, enrolment in primary schools at present is around 96%. But statistics suggest that despite this, the absolute number of non-literates above the age of seven in India is around 282.6 million as of 2011, the highest number of adult illiterates in the world.

The draft talks of challenges with regard to participation due to lack of pre-school education, retention of students after elementary education and their enrolment in secondary education. There is a huge population of out-of-school children in India. The draft also identifies urban poor, children of migrant labourers and girls apart from traditionally disadvantaged groups to be the worst sufferers.

The draft proposes to involve Aanganwadi workers and the existing infrastructure of schools to develop a program related to pre-school education. A child's capacity to learn is best during the early years and this plays an important role in developing skills for life-long learning. This gap in pre-school education also determines the gap in performance. Students belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society usually suffer the most due to lack of pre-school education. For pre-school education, state governments would be required to prepare cadres and create facilities for in-service trainings. This suggestion was also a part of 1986 policy which talked of Early Childhood Care and Education but did not yield much result. We need a rigorous campaign like '*School Chale Ham*' to create awareness about pre-school education.

To retain students after primary school and ensure they enrol for secondary education

successful programmes like the Mid-Day Meal programme would be extended to cover students of secondary schools. Various studies have credited Mid-Day meal scheme for bringing in children to schools. The scope of the Right to Education Act is proposed to be extended to be age-appropriate for covering secondary level education. It also talks of Open School facilities for dropouts and working children like previous commissions suggested. For tribal children there is a provision to make instruction multilingual for sustaining interest in education. The draft talks about addressing regional imbalances by having *differentiated policies for different terrains like hilly areas, tribal areas, desert areas and coastal areas*.

Many students face difficulty in schools as they suffer from learning disabilities, which goes undetected and causes poor academic performance. This affects the confidence of the child. The draft mentions these issues and talks of addressing them with the help of doctors and experts at school level.

A lot of students drop out of school as they see no link between what is being taught and its relevance in getting a job. The policy talks of linking school curriculum with vocational skills and developing a mechanism to certify various skills. Recognising that poverty and lack of resources act as an impediment for many students. National Fellowship Fund to support tuition fees, learning materials and living expenses of economically weaker section students has been proposed.

The purpose of any policy is to facilitate ease and not act as hindrance in matters of access. The Right to Education Act is proposed to be amended to recognize alternative schools which offer interventions at local levels. Also, clause 12 (1) (c) of the RTE which talks of 25% reservation for

the economically backward in schools would be amended to include government-aided minority institutions.

Teacher

The teacher plays a central role in a student's life. The role is not merely confined to completing the curriculum but goes beyond to building individuals of character. For this we need motivated persons as teachers. Any policy related to education has to address teacher issues. These largely include problems of non-transparent selection and lack of career opportunities. There is also a need for teacher training and assessment. These issues have plagued teacher's performance for long and have not been duly addressed. Having said that, teacher absenteeism is also a serious concern for our country.

Mapping of schools not only for inadequate infrastructure but also for insufficient number of teachers in accordance with the subjects they teach is important. This would help in allocation of teachers in a transparent and effective manner. The draft recommends recruitment of teachers by independent commissions to bring in transparency and merit in selection. As regards disciplinary powers, they would be vested with the School Management Committees (SMCs) for primary schools; head teachers/ principals would deal with absenteeism and indiscipline for upper primary and secondary schools. Technologies like biometric devices would be used to deal with these issues.

The draft policy has provision for mandatory training for teachers every three years. Building Teacher Education Universities at national and local levels is a right step towards building quality teachers. Like other professions, teachers too need to constantly upgrade their skills and knowledge

with changing times and introduction of new methodologies. These universities can also act in building India's soft power where India can provide quality teachers to the world. Here instead of creating separate universities for teachers, building centres of learning for teachers in the existing universities as state of the art facilities would give them more holistic view. Apart from teacher training, another important aspect that is left out due to strong teacher unions is teacher assessment. The draft talks of periodic assessment of teachers on skills and knowledge every five years.

The job of a teacher is often considered thankless. While there are teachers who put in huge efforts despite the lack of support in the system, this is seldom reciprocated by the system or by the larger society. Teachers also need appropriate incentives for better performance. For this purpose, the draft talks of awarding teachers not only at National level but also at the state and district levels. The New Education Policy should develop a method where the best practices used by awarded teachers are recorded and shared on open source platforms like the YouTube for everyone to access.

The draft also reiterates past policy decisions of having Indian Education Services like other services. It is important that a part of such services be reserved for existing teachers. Such a move will create empathy for the job of a teacher in the administration and bring in domain expertise. Usually policy makers lack this empathy due to zero or non-significant exposure to ground realities. Also it would be a step ahead towards National Integration which the 1968 Education Policy envisioned.

Another relief for teachers mentioned in the draft is that they would no longer be involved with the task of supervising mid day meals; meals shall

be provided through centralised kitchens. Though the very decision to have centralised or localised kitchens could be debated, there is no doubt that teachers should not be involved in supervision work, unrelated to teaching.

Learning Environment:

The learning environment largely include building a safe environment for the child, effective curriculum and pedagogy, and a system of evaluation which does not merely assesses the rote skills and child's ability to reproduce content but also comprehensively and continuously assesses child's skills in both scholastic and co-scholastic domains. This includes building a system which not only promotes ability to learn but also to unlearn and relearn in order to adapt with changing times.

To create a safe learning environment for the child, self-learning online programmes on child rights is proposed to be developed for the benefit of students, teachers and parents. Schools would engage trained counsellors to confidentially advise parents and teachers on adolescence problems faced by growing boys and girls. There should be strict provisions against corporal punishment; this would include emotional harassment too.

As regards pre-school education the draft states that there is a need to develop curriculum which is not merely a downward extension of primary education but also focuses on cognitive and language skills. Even the school curriculum needs to be expanded to include life skills like creativity, critical thinking, communication and problem solving abilities.

To keep up with technology advancement in society, the draft talks of introducing digital literacy with focus on practical aspects of information and communication technology at earlier stages.

In a country as vast and diverse as India every region is unique and has a rich culture and history. The debates have gone on for long as to why a child in Nagaland or Kashmir or in the South should study history which is very Delhi centric. A very progressive step in the draft is that it talks of having a common national curriculum for subjects like Science, Math and English while only a part of the Social Science curriculum is common, designing the rest is at the discretion of states.

English medium education in schools has been for long at the centre of various debates. The draft offers a choice of instruction in mother tongue, local or regional language till primary education which is in accordance with the Right to Education Act and research worldwide. Simultaneously, recognizing the importance of English language the draft also talks of having English as second language in primary education. The draft also talks about the importance of Sanskrit in the development of most Indian languages and hence the need to develop facilities for teaching it. It talks about using curriculum for national integration and harmony and at the same time addressing the issues of gender, social, cultural and regional disparities.

With regards to school examinations, the draft brings clarity on the much debated 'No Detention Policy' and talks of having it only till class V. No detention policy had been blamed for poor academic performance in elementary classes.

With multiple boards and varying examination patterns it is hard to get a comparative idea of student achievement levels across boards and across years. The draft talks of exploring methodologies which give a fair idea on academic achievement levels of students. Another far reaching proposal in the draft is addressing the high failure rate in class X. It has been noted that most failures in class X are in the subjects of Math,

Science and English. Therefore the policy proposes to create two levels of difficulty for these subjects and students in accordance to their interest and future plan can take the exams accordingly. A prerequisite for implementing this proposal successfully is making the student aware of her interests and potential. Hence there is a scheme of aptitude tests of students to identify their interests and with the help of experts exploring their potential over the period of school education.

There is no mechanism in India to assess and recognize prior learning skills and competencies. The draft talks about developing a mechanism to recognise and certify such skills. This would help in honing such skills and to develop entrepreneurship and improve employment opportunities.

The draft talks of setting up an Education Commission which would comprise of academic experts every five years to assist the Ministry of HRD *in identifying new knowledge areas/ disciplines/ domains as well as pedagogic, curricular and assessment reforms at the global level, which will help to keep up with the change in global scenario and national aspirations*. Also it recommends that periodic renewal of curricula and pedagogy be done by NCERT. Here involvement of State Boards is also very important.

School Leadership & Management:

There has been a growing realisation among experts that a School Principal/School Leader plays a very important role in building school culture and an environment of learning. There is a need to expand the role of school leader to improve school governance. The draft talks of *articulating a school leader competency framework, introducing a robust and transparent process*

of selection of principals/head teachers and induction programme for school leaders, and providing opportunities for continuing professional development with well-defined pathways for career growth. Accountability also comes with responsibility. The school principals/head teachers would now be held accountable for the academic performance of the schools and its improvement. They shall be given security of tenure but would have to deliver results.

Involving Society

To make parents more aware of the schools and protect them from false claims and promises that schools make, the draft proposes developing a framework for evaluation, grading and ranking of schools. It talks of making the School Management Committees more transparent with clear guidelines for selection, tenure, role and responsibilities, ensuring their training and providing grants on time for School Development Plans.

But the draft falls short in both imagination and provisions for engaging the local community and the larger society. There is no provision in the draft to train parents for pre-school education or creating empathy in the society for the role of teacher and problems of schools. One step could have been to involve retired government officials/working professionals in teaching or making provisions for involving corporates to adopt schools.

The New Education Policy, 2016 has been the most widely deliberated education policy when compared with previous ones. The Committee headed by TSR Subramanian met some 500 experts and received 29109 suggestions. This report should be seen in continuity to previous reports which talk of the concerns of existing times. Like the 1986 report talked about Population Education, teaching students about family planning while this report

has no mention of family planning. The draft on the other hand talks of present day concerns like physical and sexual abuse. It goes beyond inclusion and quality of education to include innovation. The committee recognizes the fundamental importance of education in nation building and is designed to make India great again.

The draft has been widely accepted and well praised but has also been criticised on a few fronts. One of the major criticisms of the draft is that it has no achievable vision unlike previous reports. The draft talks a lot about many points but skips the specifics. It is hoped that after due deliberation, government develops a Policy which has achievable targets with a concrete roadmap. Unlike the 1986 report which talked separately about women, SC/ST and minorities, the draft makes no such categorisation. It has been claimed that the draft would dilute the RTE by including alternate schools. Also, while the RTE has been extended to secondary schools, it is not clear why it does not include the entire school. The draft lays a lot of stress on Information and Communication Technology but it is important to realize that mere access to these technologies is no guarantee for better quality of education. Also, the provision of having aptitude tests should in no way bracket or limit the child or the choices she makes in life. The draft also falls short on opening up our systems to international evaluation.

Late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam used to say that “(We) will be remembered only if we give to our younger generation a prosperous and safe India, resulting out of economic prosperity coupled with civilisational heritage.” The draft too strives to create an ecosystem which creates proud Indians and better individuals. The key though shall always lie on how well the draft shall be implemented on ground.



Brahmaputra: The Great Chinese Diversion

*Sourav Agarwal

In the wake of India's newly re-imagined policy towards the neighbouring country, conducting precision strikes across the Line of Control (LoC), reviewing the 'Most Favoured Nation' status tag, and organising high-level meets to discuss withdrawal from the Indus Waters Treaty, China has taken a step by blocking tributary of the Yarlung Zangbo River (a tributary of Brahmaputra) to facilitate work on of its expensive hydropower projects in Tibet on September 30, 2016. The 4.95-billion-yuan project (\$740 million) can store up to 295 million cubic meters of water.

China's dam-building agenda has created apprehension within India about the risk of flash floods and landslides affecting millions downstream. In 2013, India complained to China about its expensive hydropower projects announced in the Brahmaputra region citing 'irreparable damage' to the Indian basin and also the impact it would have on the physical land and surrounding regions. China only assured that these projects would not have a negative impact. South Asia is one of the regions to be adversely affected by China's proposed diversion of waters from the Tibetan plateau which is the 'Principal Asian watershed' and source of ten major rivers.¹ Tibet's water travel to almost eleven countries and are said to bring fresh water to over 85% of Asian population, approximately 50% of world's population.² South Asia is mainly concerned with Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, Arun and Karnali whose water is life line for more than

one billion people living downstream.

Climate change, depleting aquifers, rapid population growth and urbanisation are placing pressure on scarce water resources within the two countries of China and India. China's increasing water scarcity is a complex web of pollution, energy, urbanisation and climate change. With high rates of population growth and urban development, China has an insatiable demand for energy, food and water. Water scarcity threatens the supply of all three of these needs. The Chinese Government must meet the water demands of its rapidly increasing urban population and its industrial sector without compromising agricultural production and food security. Therefore, it is presently toying with massive inter-basin and inter-river water transfer projects.

For South Asia and more particularly for India, the enormity of the scheme and its closeness to the Indian border cannot be ignored. If it is accomplished, it will have ominous consequences for millions of people downstream.³ These also raise the larger question about the cumulative impact of massive dam-building projects across the entire Himalayan region and the consequences of such intensive interventions in a region that is ecologically fragile. The dangers of water accumulation behind dams could also induce devastating artificial earthquakes. The creation of a huge artificial lake on the Tibetan plateau inundating vast areas of virgin forest within the

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canyon and beyond, home to rare species of flora and fauna within the canyon which is at stake.

In the geo-dynamically active Himalayas, earthquakes are an ever-present danger with a recorded history going back to the 13th century. A sobering reminder is the devastating earthquake of 1950 in Assam in which the Brahmaputra Valley suffered the most damage.⁴ A vast and densely populated region of North-east India that depends on water from Brahmaputra and its tributaries feels agitated over China's ambitious efforts to redraw its water map. China's reported plan to divert the Brahmaputra from its upper reaches is seen as a direct affront to India and a violation of international norms of sharing river waters. Once the construction of dam is complete, the control on the water of Brahmaputra would be in the hands of China. As Brahmaputra is the lifeline of the North East India, the life and environment in the region would be adversely affected by this development.

Besides India which in talks with the Chinese leadership, raised the issue of construction of a dam on the river Brahmaputra many times, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia had expressed similar concerns over eight dams being built on the Mekong River. China's accelerating programme of damming every major river flowing from the Tibetan plateau would trigger

environmental imbalance, natural disasters, degrade fragile ecologies, and divert vital water supplies. China's vast thirst for power and water, its control over the sources of rivers and its ever-growing political clout make it a singular target of criticism and suspicion.

Although China has said that it was constructing the dam to produce power, there are fears about hidden agendas associated with it. China has assured India that nothing would be done that would affect India's interest. India's official narrative has largely tended to downplay many of these concerns with official pronouncements that India "trusts China".⁵

In 2013, Beijing and New Delhi had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), recognising that trans-boundary rivers are an important asset for the development agendas of all riparian countries. Both countries agreed to strengthen communication and strategic trust. China had agreed to provide more hydrological information to India at the start of the flood season. The international community's attention needs to be attracted and India needs a totally different tactic to tackle the situation and maintain goodwill. Only a combination of bilateral co-operation and strong leadership with demand- and supply-side management can influence the future and reduce the potential for a Sino-Indian water conflict.

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¹ Claude Arpi, *Born in Sin: The Panchsheel Agreement : the Sacrifice of Tibet*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, (1st edn., 2004) at 173.

² Bharat Verma, *Threat From China*, Lancer Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, (2013).

³ *The Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Jaswant Singh, speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the*

President's Address, March 5, 2008 said, "Sir, it is about the External Affairs Minister again. It is a very intriguing thing. I should not really be raising it until the discussion takes place on his statement. There is just one rather concise but intriguing sentence that the honorable Prime Minister made during his visit to the People's Republic of China. This is exactly what it says, "PM also took up the issue of trans-border rivers." I would like to caution you, Sir, that the question of Brahmaputra and the great bend of the Brahmaputra before it debouches into Assam in the North East is a serious situation. "Sir, I have obtained for myself maps from the Space Research Organization and they show that this gorge of the Yarlung Tsangpo and thereafter the Namca Barwa Mountain, has drop of 2,000 meters. It is a narrow gorge, and 2,000 metres in a distance of 15 km, which gives an enormous resource intimate to the people of China. I know there are plans to build a dam there. I would like to know what the response of the People's Republic of China is about that."

⁴ Nimmi Kurian, *Downstream concerns on the Brahmaputra*, *The Hindu* (November 3, 2015), available at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/columns/downstream-concerns-on-the-brahmaputra/article7834154.ece> (last visited on October 13, 2016).

⁵ All India, *Press Trust of India, India to take up with China blocking of Brahmaputra River*, *NDTV*, (October 7, 2016), available at <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-to-take-up-with-china-blocking-of-brahmaputra-tributary-1471221> (last visited on October 12, 2016).



Lessons from Sri Lankan Success over Malaria

*Akhil Neelam

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Sri Lanka to be Malaria-free by certifying that the life-threatening disease which long affected the island nation has been completely eliminated. The announcement was made at the 69th session of WHO Regional Committee for South East Asia held in Colombo this month (September 2016). ‘Sri Lanka’s achievement is truly remarkable. In the mid-20th century it was among the most malaria-affected countries, but now it is malaria-free’, noted WHO Regional Director, Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh.

Sri Lanka and Malaria

“Malaria, the bane of the Island and protean in its forms, claimed about the usual number of victims, especially in less advanced provinces. The mortality large as it is, is not the only evil. Every death represents many attacks, meaning an incalculable amount of suffering and racial deterioration and sapping of life and vigour of the people” – Census of Ceylon, 1901

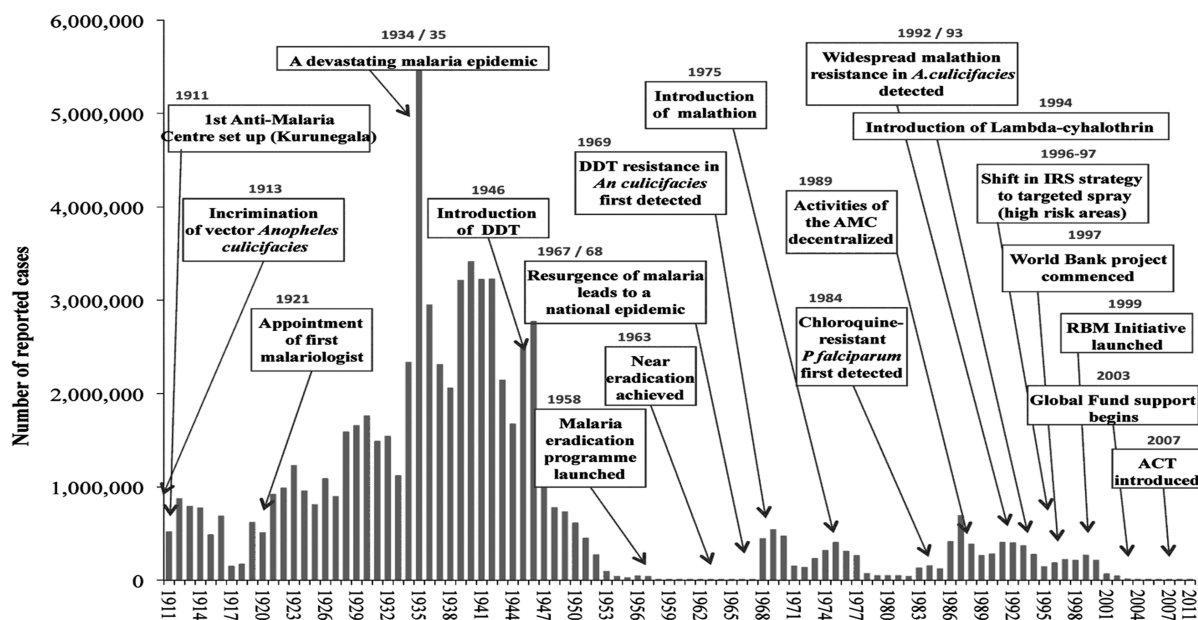
Malaria had been the subject of attention from early colonial times and has found references in the literature as ‘agues and fevers’ until the twentieth century when it came to be popularly called as Malaria. It came to be recognised as a killer disease in 1934-35 when it affected many parts of the country and caused an estimated death toll of around 1,00,000 people within the space of 8 months. That translates to 1.5% of total population

of Sri Lanka i.e., 5.5 million during that time. Sri Lanka’s fight against malaria completed 100 years in 2011. It launched Anti-Malaria Campaign (AMC) in 1911 and since then, it has been responsible for the control of the disease in the country. Currently, there is a specialised campaign run by Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka. The main objectives of this programme to eliminate indigenous *P. falciparum* malaria transmission by the end 2012 and indigenous *P. vivax* malaria transmission by 2014; to maintain zero mortality from malaria and to prevent reintroduction of malaria into the country. As a result, since October 2012 the indigenous cases were down to zero. But the road to malaria elimination was tough and unique and therefore, can serve as a model for other nations who are still grappling with the disease including India.

After three decades of the fight against malaria since 1934 epidemic, the number of cases were down to just 17 in 1963 with zero mortality. But Sri Lanka failed to sustain control measures due to lack of funds or funds being directed to other programmes which led to resurgence of malaria epidemic in various parts of the country. The number of malaria cases recorded in 1967 and 1968 was 3,466 and 4,40,644 respectively.

It is only after the resurgence of malaria in the 1960s and 1970s that Sri Lanka realised the complexities in controlling the disease and adjusted its strategies to become highly effective. It started

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focusing on targeting parasite along with conventional methods of DDT application for killing the mosquito. Mobile malaria clinics were also set up in order to diagnose people in the early stages to prevent further transmission. Effective surveillance, implementing epidemic preparedness and response strategies were part of the campaign that brought down cases to less than 1000 by the year 2006. It required government's will to control the epidemic outbreaks even during the decades' long conflict during the 1990s and 2000s.

India and Malaria

In India too, malaria is a serious health problem in various parts of the country. The malaria-affected regions are evenly distributed across India and about 95% population resides in malaria endemic areas. Further, 80% of malaria are reported from areas where only 20% of the population resides, namely tribal, hilly, difficult and inaccessible areas. Despite all challenges, India

has made progress in tackling malaria by reducing the number of cases from two million in 2000 to 8,82,000 in 2013. India aims to eliminate malaria completely by 2030 through *National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) in India 2016-2030* which was developed after extensive consultations with officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), experts from the Indian Council of Medical Research, WHO and representatives from civil society institutions. This is in line with WHO's recently developed *Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030* which advocates global acceleration of malaria elimination efforts by 2030. On similar lines, the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA), of which India is a member, has set a target for malaria elimination in all countries of Asia Pacific by 2030. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi was among the 18 leaders, who endorsed the APLMA Malaria

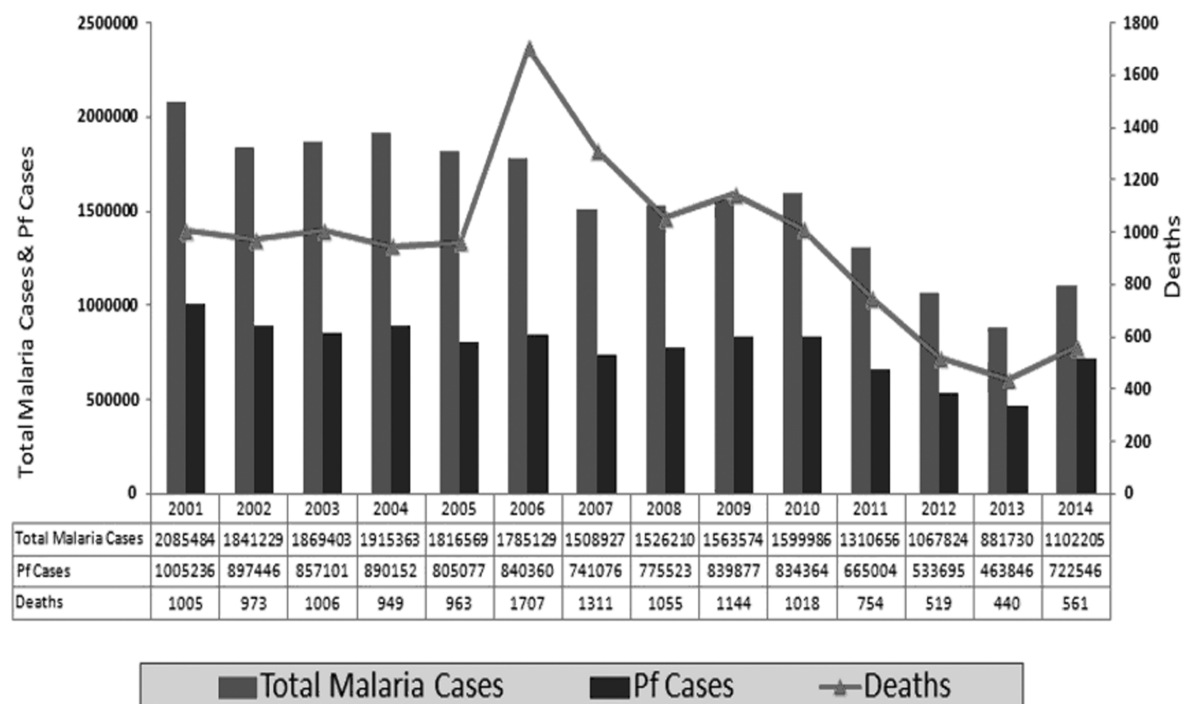


Image Source: <http://nvbdcp.gov.in/malaria3.html>

Elimination Roadmap at the ASEAN summit held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2015.

These statistics show how India's performance has improved in controlling malaria, especially in the last decade. In the last five years, malaria deaths were reduced to less than 1000, though the scenario is far from elimination. The specific strategies that are adopted under the new framework include considering district as a unit of planning and implementation, focussing on high transmission areas and adopting aspecial strategy for elimination of *P.vivax* cases.

What India can learn from its neighbour?

India contributes to 70% of the total malaria cases in the South East Asia region of which Sri

Lanka now contributes zero. Therefore, the success story of Sri Lanka is worth having a look. One of the major challenges in malaria control according to Health Ministry is insecticide resistance. The extensive usage of insecticides, particularly DDT, under the Vector control programme controlled malaria to a great extent but helped vectors develop resistance. In this regard, Sri Lanka adopted an unorthodox strategy to hunt down on parasites to the last extent possible. The Sri Lanka story tells us that malaria elimination was absolutely a prioritised issue backed up with strong political will. During the times of ethnic conflict, government convinced the LTTE to co-operate with malaria control measures so that last mile delivery of healthcare was ensured. India too finally gained political commitment after

the PM endorsed APLMA roadmap. Mobile malaria clinics were one of the success symbols of Sri Lanka's anti-malaria campaign. Considering India's vast territory, it is often difficult to implement mobile measures during population movement between states and union territories. However, these must be implemented in high transmission areas or in least accessible areas.

Malaria is not just a serious health issue, it

adversely affects socio-economic conditions of the communities. Hence, India should really accelerate its measures to eliminate the disease as soon as possible.

India should prioritise the issue and spend a considerable proportion of the country's overall expenditure on health. India too hopefully learns from its neighbour invoking health diplomacy and get rid of this deadly disease in the coming years.

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Nepal: One Year Later.....Has Anything Changed?

*Sanjal Shastri

A year back, in September 2015, Nepal's new Constitution was welcomed with hope and jubilation. As September turned into October, this jubilation and hope soon turned into despair. Now one year since, Nepal has witnessed a series of protests, a border blockade and seen two different prime ministers. As we enter October 2016, what remains of the hope and jubilation that initially greeted the Constitution? Following the lows of early 2016, where is Nepal on its journey to establish a national consensus? Are India-Nepal relations on the road to recovery? In tackling these questions, the commentary takes a look at the recent developments and considers possible future course of events.

The road towards drawing up the new Constitution lasted eight years. When it was finally implemented on 20 September 2015, the reception was not on expected lines. While a section of the Nepali population along with China was thrilled, the Madhesis in the Terai and the Indian Government were not that welcoming. Coming just on the heels of the April 2015 earthquake, the Madhesi led protests and border blockade was the last thing Nepal needed, at a time when focus on implementing the Constitution and providing earthquake relief should have been the primary goal. Ties with its long-standing partner India were also a casualty of the ten-month long period of turmoil.

As we mark one year since the adoption of

the new Constitution, Nepal is on the slow but steady road to recovery. When the Madhesi agitation was initially called off in February, there ensued an atmosphere of positivity. This period saw some progress including three Constitutional amendments; key issues relating to citizenship and division of provinces were not settled though. The protests lead by Madhesis and Janajatis which rocked Kathmandu in May 2016, appeared to be a sign that agitating groups had joined hands to pressurise the government.

The protests in Kathmandu never materialised and failed to have an impact like the border blockade. The second round of protests failed due to the choice of location. The Madhesis had hoped that joining with the Janajatis and taking the agitation to the capital city might have a greater impact. However, unlike the previous protests and border blockade, this protest did not impact the flow of basic supplies. The protesters as a result had a smaller bargaining power.

More positive signs about a national consensus have emerged after Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) took over as the Prime Minister. Firstly Prachanda's government has the support of the Madhesi parties in the national parliament. He became the Prime Minister based on his promise to come up to a national compromise on the Constitution. As a result Prachanda is obliged to work towards a national consensus that is acceptable to all.

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Two months into his tenure, all indications point towards a constructive dialogue to iron out differences. The government has already taken steps to appoint a commission, which will probe into the atrocities committed by the police during the protests. A proper compensation package is also being worked out for the families of those killed and the injured during the protests. While these measures would not resolve the crisis, they are small but important steps in addressing the trust deficit. Giving paramount importance to dialogue with the Madhesis, Prachanda's decided to skip the UN General Assembly meeting, in order to focus on discussions regarding the Constitution.

While these are highly positive signs, it is important to exercise cautious optimism. The dialogue process has been painfully slow. Considering the crucial phase that Nepal is going through, a quicker consensus would help in strengthening confidence in the new system. Importantly, the current dialogue is only an informal dialogue, the formal talks have to still begin. Finally, there is the pressing question if the Constitutional amendments can actually be passed. Any Constitutional amendment requires two-thirds support in the parliament. Prachanda's party is the third largest party in the house. One cannot help but question if the government can actually garner the support to pass the amendments.

Given Nepal's location and its diplomatic history, the constitutional crisis had significant international ramifications. The most crucial one was its impact on India-Nepal relations. Since India is a very close ally and an indispensable trade partner, good relations with India is an important

factor in Nepal's experiment with democracy becoming a success. The last one-year has been a torrid time for India-Nepal relations. What started off with India's cold response to the Constitution, snowballed into India being accused of starting an unofficial border blockade. The rocky times in the relations was largely due to India's mishandling of the situation and former Prime Minister K.P. Oli's hostile stand vis-à-vis India.

Under Prachanda significant progress has been made to mend fences. His recent state visit to India proved to be very successful with India agreeing to step up assistance. Indications have also emerged that India is more open to the Constitution and throwing its weight behind the dialogue. Like the process of building a national consensus, mending India-Nepal relations is also going to be long drawn process. The damage done over the last one year cannot be rectified in the span of a few months.

The last one-year has been a turbulent one for Nepal. It has witnessed a border blockade, seen two Prime Ministers in office and witnessed ties with a crucial neighbor nosedive. In the two months since Prachanda has taken office, Nepal seems to be flying in calmer skies. An informal dialogue has already commenced, in the hope of coming up to a consensus.

This period has also witnessed a marked improvement in India-Nepal ties. At this point in time, it would be prudent to exercise a cautious optimism. Over the next few months, once more progress is made in the dialogue, a lot of the jubilation and hope that one saw in September 2015, would begin to re-emerge.



Strategising the Uniform Civil Code

*Vikramjit Banerjee

Now that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) debate is once more upon us it is time that those of us committed to the idea of an UCC think about what should be our strategy to achieve that objective.

It is important to note right at the beginning that the UCC was inserted as a Directive Principle of State Policy (Article 44) at the time of the formation of the Constitution. It was then perceived to be a strongly liberal and modernist provision in the Constitution. Till the 1970s the provisions regarding UCC was right on top of the agenda of the leftists and liberals. Even during the 1980s the UCC was the demand of the leftists and liberals who perceived it to be a panacea for all ills arising out of traditional backwardness and religiosity.

The entire fiasco of the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 and the Shah Bano judgement arose out of the perception of the liberal intelligentsia that the key to modernisation of Indian society was modernisation of personal laws. The liberal intelligentsia in the sequence of incidents came up against the whirlwind of Islamic fundamentalism which in the 1980s was emerging as a key opponent to modernism. That specific incident and the craven surrender of a supposedly liberal and modernist government to the threat of violence by Islamic fundamentalists resounded all over the world. In global politics that surrender was followed by the issuance of a fatwa against Salman Rushdie and resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism as an ideology and a method of governance.

In the face of this resurgence it was surprising

that instead of confronting this completely illiberal resistance to liberalism and modernisation, the liberals in fact switched over to supporting the Islamic fundamentalist position in relation to the UCC. In fact so complete was the switchover that the liberals, during this high noon of Islamic fundamentalism, actually started equating the UCC with manifestation of religious majoritarianism in India. This resulted in a strange situation where only the nationalists were left with supporting the UCC. In fact this issue had become so radioactive that when the NDA government was formed, it was widely perceived to have put the issue of implementation of the UCC on the backburner. Large parts of the liberal intelligentsia thought that this was a positive development.

It seems that the country is going through another discussion in relation to the UCC. This discussion would mean that besides the nationalists there would be different voices which would have a role in deciding the trajectory of the UCC debate. The rest of the present article would consist of broadly discussing the positions of different groups of people who could be expected to be a part of this debate.

The first would be the liberals. As mentioned before, the liberals have continuously prevaricated about their actual standing in relation to the UCC. While in the first 40 years of independence, UCC was a major objective in their manifesto to make India a modern state, in the subsequent 27 years they have treated the UCC as an exercise in majoritarianism. It seems that there is again a turn in the liberal position where there seems to be an increasing section which now realises that the first

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proposition was possibly the correct position considering the way Islamic fundamentalism subsequently evolved. It can be expected that sections of the liberals would be more forthcoming and helpful in the formation of the UCC now than they were at any time in the last 30 years.

The second would be the feminists. The feminists are also in a dilemma and along with the liberals have also gone through the long arc of first backing and then dissociating themselves from the UCC. At first the UCC was seen as an emancipatory legislation. Subsequently, it was perceived to be a majoritarian attempt to dominate the feminist discourse. The argument put forward was that societies and especially minority communities had to reform from within and women's rights had to be contextualised in terms of the culture of the minority group. This resulted in the anomalous position whereby feminist groups would promote radical gender equality amongst the majority community while supporting open discrimination as long as the same was practised by the religious minority. However it seems also that this time some of the feminist groups may be willing to come out and support a UCC or a legislation which would have a similar objective.

The third group would be Muslim women's groups who have been agitating for equality within Muslim law. Needless to say how far this group would be willing to support a UCC is something which needs to be tested. This is especially relevant considering that the attempt of the traditionalists would be to paint the UCC as a majoritarian project.

The fourth group would be the Muslim traditionalists who may be divided into two groups; the first completely rejecting any intervention in the personal law of Muslims and the second, who would like to carve out an exception for Muslim

law but also, would accept incorporation of progressive elements within the law. Historically, the latter group has been more powerful politically and the former more powerful socially within the Muslim community.

There would also be various different groups from within various religious minorities and even from within the religious Hindu majority who would be opposed to a UCC on the ground that the same would possibly destroy the sanctity of personal law as well as the distinctiveness of various groups and their ancient practises. The arguments would possibly be made on the grounds of plurality. It is surmised that the whole overwhelming objection would come from traditional elements within such groups who would perceive the UCC as a threat to their control of the lives of the members of their groups. Needless to say that during the last attempt to legislate a Hindu code, there was great resistance from the Hindu community itself.

The broad question Constitutional question at the centre of the debate would be as to whether equality is an absolute value or as the Supreme Court has said numerously, existence of equality can only be amongst equals, and that all communities are different.

Broadly there seems to be two possible methods to deal with the issue of incorporating greater egalitarianism within various personal laws. The first is the UCC and the second is a judicial process.

If we adopt the first, then it is very important that the nationalists would need to create a broad coalition to bring on-board various groups, described above, in different compositions. This would also mean taking on board the concerns of the different groups. If the UCC is to succeed, under no circumstances can the UCC have the flavour of being partial to any religious group. This

would mean that the process of evolution of the UCC would ensure a constant conflict between those who perceive the society as an aspirational, uniform entity and those who perceive society to be an association of various groups. Under the circumstances any concession to any group would result in other groups perceiving that they were being discriminated against. More than consensus on the idea of UCC which itself is debatable, there would be even greater conflict on what would be the actual provisions of the UCC. Even if all groups were to actually agree to an UCC, it would be very difficult to get them to agree to a draft bill acceptable to all.

It is therefore suggested that a better way may be to approach personal laws through the prism of civil liberties legislation in the area of personal law. The strategy of the said Bill would be to do away with any inequality to any individual in any of the different personal law. It would be a statute which would strictly be based on Constitutional values. This would also effectively mean that the law would ensure that specific exceptions in personal law which create inequalities are either done away with or are equalised. For example in a divorce all grounds which are available to a Hindu male should be available to a Hindu female, and similarly the same would be applicable to divorce and polygamy in Muslim law and tribal customs. This would ensure that specific groups would not be able to make an argument that the law is skewed towards the agenda of any of the groups while bringing personal laws in consonance with the Constitution.

The other option is to bring in this radical equality through judicial interpretation where the Courts can make personal laws subject to fundamental rights, which as of now, they are not. The Courts can also apply fundamental rights to

all personal laws, especially the Right to Equality. The Right to Equality is fundamental to our Constitution and there can be very little objection in granting equal status to all persons within specific groups. No one can justify heavenly ordained discrimination because it would go against the principles on which the State is governed, namely the Constitution of India. If there is one agreement amongst all the above groups it is about the primacy of the Constitution. However this is a strategy which requires strong judicial will and whether the judiciary would be able or willing to take such a strong stand after the fiasco of Shah Bano remains to be seen.

The present government, committed to the new aspirational Indian, is obligated to ensure that no person is discriminated against. Equality before law of every person in society regardless of his/her individual background is the key to create a modern state and economy. Multiplicity of laws and legal regimes in relation to property holding, individual relationships and property rights are fetters on social and economic progress. Social, political, religious and personal discrimination is anathema to the ethos of the egalitarian and emancipatory vision of the Constitution and on that ground alone, discriminatory personal laws have no place in the legal regime.

However India having a storied history and an ancient civilisation, personal laws are tied with prickly sensitivities. This is specially so because they have served as the basis of the old colonial policy of 'divide and rule' and have been deeply politicised. Therefore, the initiation of the debate on UCC is to be greatly appreciated because it is the first step towards confronting an issue which is clearly holding back Indian society from growing into an egalitarian and modern one.



Indus Water Treaty Reconsideration and Ramification

*Akhil Neelam & Swathi Pottabathini

The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is under the scanner, unlike several times earlier, due to the deteriorating political and diplomatic ties between India and Pakistan—exemplified by the recent Uri attack in September. The only difference now is the strong stand of the present government in terms of security and strategy that has opened new avenues for talks on the reconsideration of this six-decade long treaty. The impetus is further emphasised by the deferring of the meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission. There was speculation of even suspension of the treaty, with the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Vikas Swarup cryptically hinting, “For any such treaty to work, it is important there must be mutual trust and cooperation. It can’t be a one-sided affair.”

Acknowledging the gravity of any reconsideration of the treaty, numerous opinions and debates have been thrown up which suggests various improvisations and additions which could be incorporated in the Treaty. Abrogation of the treaty is another radical idea floated, extrapolating the “offensive defence” strategy. Through the article, we explore some significant and diverse approaches to the reconsideration of the treaty, and also discuss possible ramifications.

Historical Background

IWT, signed on September 1960, is a “treaty between the government of India and the

government of Pakistan concerning the most complete and satisfactory utilisation of the waters of the Indus system of rivers.”^[1] It is considered as one of the most successful stories of water diplomacy, as even amidst military stand-offs and the wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999—when the atmosphere of enmity and distrust had reached the peak—both the countries abided by the bilateral commitments. The World Bank played a crucial role by acting as a broker and a mediator during the decade long negotiations leading to the signing of the Treaty.

The water-sharing treaty called for the division of the rivers into two categories, the ‘eastern rivers’ and ‘western rivers’, with the former comprising of the Beas, Ravi and Sutlej rivers allocated to India and the latter comprising Indus, Chenab and Jhelum rivers allocated to Pakistan. The treaty imposed certain restrictions on India which include severe limitations with regards to the building of ‘storages’ on the western rivers, and the extension of irrigational development in India. It also institutionalised a Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the treaty, exchange and evaluation of data on water usage, works impinging on the water flows, drainage, storage, etc. of the Indus system and deliberate on issues which may arise incidental to the treaty’s functioning.^[2] Further various provisions for dispute resolution are stated, specifically the appointment of a Neutral Expert

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(NE) if ‘difference’ of matter occurs between the governments of the two countries.

Dissatisfaction among Stakeholders

The treaty specifies the sharing of the waters of the western rivers of Indus according to the 80% - 20% rule, wherein 80% goes to Pakistan and 20% to India. This has been an issue of contention, where both the countries have expressed dissatisfaction. India says 20% is a meagre amount quantitatively, while Pakistan uses a historical argument that territories which fell into India after Partition had always used less than 10% of the waters and thus, the treaty is generous to India.^[3] Further, ‘India’s dissatisfaction arises from the stalling of its projects on the western rivers by Pakistan, due to the ambiguous meanings of words used in the document such as ‘storage’ and ‘run of river’ — both of which point to the circular argument of India not being allowed to build storages on the western rivers, and since any run of the river project would have some unavoidable storage, it creates vicissitudes.

Moreover, the document is highly technical in terms of the language used and the connotations attached with it, when juxtaposed with other treaties such as India’s treaty with Nepal on Mahakali River and India’s treaty with Bangladesh on Ganges River. The technicalities of the document lead to multiple interpretations by engineers, which are then translated into weapons in the political arena. Thus, a simplified version with specific and unambiguous content should be crafted.

Another important stakeholder in this treaty is the state of Jammu & Kashmir, whose needs are not sufficiently catered to. Not enough has been done in terms of providing irrigation facilities,

hydroelectric power and navigation to the state through development of infrastructural projects.

Western Rivers’ Utilisation

According to the treaty, India is restricted to use the western rivers only for the purposes of “domestic”, “non-consumptive use” and building storages of capacity of 3.6 million acre feet (MAF), but till date India has not build any such storage. India is allowed to irrigate up to 9.1 lakh acres of land using water from the western rivers, with an additional 4.3 lakh acres allowed if India shares more water with Pakistan. But currently, India uses these rivers to irrigate only 8 lakh acres of land. Furthermore, analysts have estimated that within the treaty specification, the western rivers can yield to India 18,600 MW of hydropower. India is presently generating only 3,034 MW from these rivers, with another projects to generate another 8,372 MW in the pipeline.^[4]

It could be well argued that India should maximise its use of the western rivers through construction of hydel projects, expediting the construction of dams such as Tulbul River Project, Pakal-Dol, Sawalkot and Bursar. Pakistan might raise objections as earlier seen during the development of projects such as Kishanganga and Baglihar, but a review of the treaty on these lines could definitely be considered, besides the alternative of implementing them under the ambits of the present treaty.

Further, Ramaswamy R. Iyer, a water policy expert proposes the idea of “integrated” and “holistic” sharing of the waters of each of the rivers, but this might lead to future disputes as it would change the status quo.

Reconsideration from the lens of Climate Change

As the treaty was finalised in 1960, it lacks the climate change element. Recent studies reveal that Himalayan glaciers would continue to retreat drastically as a result of change in climatic conditions. This would have significant effect on flow patterns of Himalayan Rivers including those of the Indus system. In the short term, the water flow might increase with the formation of glacial lakes but the long term impact would be a decrease in river flow pattern. Also, the increasing frequency of flash floods and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) are a cause of concern and both the large riparian countries, India and Pakistan—and also China—should cooperate on issues such as disaster management and early warning systems.^[5] Therefore, there is an urgent need for reconsideration of the treaty from the lens of climate change.

Alternative of Abrogation

In the wake of reconsideration of the IWT, there are views expressed in favour of complete abrogation of the treaty as well. “The IWT has become an albatross around India’s neck. If India wishes to dissuade Pakistan from continuing with its proxy war, it must link the IWT’s future to Islamabad honouring its anti-terror commitment, or else the treaty collapses”, argues Brahma Chellaney, professor at the Centre for Policy Research. But, this is easier said than done. India unilaterally abrogating the treaty would not only

earn a bad international image, but also would be a cause of worry for neighbours—Nepal and Bangladesh with whom India has similar water sharing agreements. Where the IWT to be abrogated, it would be difficult to rework such a treaty, despite whosoever the mediator might be this time. Since, Pakistan regularly violates ceasefire agreement on a daily basis and dishonouring the commitment of acting against terror, it would become even more difficult to conduct talks in future between the two countries.

Conclusion

Since the present government has extensively engaged with its neighbours under the ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and has carved a niche foreign policy, abrogation would certainly not be a considered option. Reconsideration through renegotiation would be a better alternative as a part of the multi-pronged response to the recurrent terror attacks which India faces from Pakistan. The proposed constitution of an inter-ministerial commission to study the intricacies of the treaty and recommend amendments would be a substantive initiative undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This decision however should be implemented diligently whilst consulting all the stakeholders, and also to incorporate concerns raised by the Sustainable Development Goals. This would not only improvise India’s stature immensely at the global level, but also implicitly act as a handle to mend Pakistan’s behaviour, if used wisely.

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Arabization of Indian Muslims?

*Rajat Sethi

Religion and religious practices often dictate lifestyles, choices and forms of representation. Clearly, all religious practices across history and in the geographical spread have adapted themselves to local customs and traditions and have enriched themselves by a syncretic effort to unite. Islam has been no exception in how it lends an identity to a practising Muslim. But true to the concept of adaptation and universal appeal, Islam in Egypt, Myanmar, India, Afghanistan, Malaysia and many other places has been different in practice. However, noted scholars and theorists have pointed out to the recent but proliferating phenomenon among Muslims across the world to imitate the Arabs.

It is as if a stamp of approval from the Arab world and practices of Arabic Islam is what is needed to guarantee the Muslims their sense of identity. The concept of purity in the version of Islam followed in the Arab world is what seems to threaten the plurality that any universal religion advocates. In this article, I wish to contextualise this argument within the Indian frame of reference.

Symbols code the world around us. Culture is symbolically coded. The society we inhabit is symbolically represented. In that respect, the logo of an organisation is a powerful introduction and marker of its intent and identity. It carries a strong message elaborating on its vision and mission. The symbols embedded in a logo are carefully picked to appeal to and inspire its immediate audience.

University logos are no different in their symbolic signatures and socio-political gesticulations. A university logo is expected to be a well thought out manifestation of the learning goals of the institution it represents. It might be intriguing to look at the website of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). The logo of AMU is a stark image of a 'date palm tree'. The palm tree is at the centre of the logo with a crescent moon and a book adorning the sides.

What could a palm tree signify in the logo of one of the highest citadels of Muslim learning in India? It is noteworthy that AMU has no more than a few countable ornamental palm trees in its campus. What was, then, the inspiration behind this choice? Dr SS Gupta, in his book titled *Muslim*



(1) Logo of Aligarh Muslim University



(2) Logo of Jamia Millia Islamia



(3) Logo of Annamalai University

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Politics, while commenting on the misplaced symbolism in the AMU notes, “If one looks to the institutional song and flag of Aligarh Muslim University there is hardly anything which is rooted to Indian tradition and culture. The university Tarana (song) does not contain a single word in praise of India but it glorifies such things as the evening of Egypt and the mornings of Shiraz.”

Further research reveals that except AMU, Jamia Millia Islamia University and Annamalai University, no other university in India has date palm on its logo. In fact, even in one of the most reputed universities in Islamic studies, International Islamic University, in Malaysia, date palm tree does not figure in its logo. Neither does it find mention in the national symbols of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, or Iran. In fact, the only place where palm trees have been prominently used are in the institutions of the Arab world - on the national emblem of Saudi Arabia, on the currency notes of the country and, of course, on university logos in universities like the King Saud University, the King Khalid University and the Al Imam Islamic University - to name a few.

The reason why palm trees figure as symbols or logos in the Arab world is by the nature of their ubiquity in these coastal geographies which informs the usage of the plant as a logo. Similarly, to some extent, Annamalai University’s usage of the palm trees stands justified. Therefore, it needs to be noted that the selection of palm tree as a logo has mostly to do with geography.

Saudi date palm’s entry in Indian educational psyche is an interesting topic of sociological inquiry. The usage of the Arab world logos, symptomatic of the growing cultural consciousness of the Arabic world not just in India but also world wide marks a

definite shift in the worldview of Muslims. But it must be understood that this has not been a watertight and a recent shift from history in India but has been a gradual move. Muslim intelligentsia from its rootedness in Indic awareness to its looking up to the Arab world for some kind of glorified acceptance is a phenomenon that needs intellectual enquiry. It is an assertion of some lacunae in the Indic conception of Islam, a suggestion towards a cultural inferiority complex and a conscious effort to move away from something which is less Islamic to something which is more Islamic, therefore, purer and better.

Hence, it needs to be appreciated that this process of symbolism, by virtue of its nature in being representative, has to undergo a process of discovery and analysis. While somewhere geography has played a role, at other places cultural and social tendencies have informed the selection of a logo or a symbol. It has not been created at random by just anyone but has come from some top Muslim intellectuals or cultural stalwarts signifying something else than the apparent.

This self-identification with Arabs is not limited to logos and symbols. The growing trend of keeping a beard, wearing skull caps and longer kurtas – shorter pyjama by men and hijab by women, using Arabic-enriched local language in conversation and to mimic Arabic pronunciations and opposing Indian traditions and customs have been the result of a phenomenon that many scholars have called Arabisation. It must be noted that this process is being consciously and consistently linked with Islamic revivalism.

Capturing this trend, historian Irfan Habib has tried to theorise the phenomenon and has called this as the “Ashrafisation of Indian Muslims”

(something similar to Sanskritisation in the Hindu context). The psychological fear and cultural insecurity among minority Muslims to be considered as Azlafs (lower Muslims) by Ashrafs ('puritan' Arabs) has pushed the Indian Muslims to silently disown their identity markers and adopt those of their Arab counterparts. This process of shunning of an existential reality and donning a new one is a mark of appropriation of a culturally alien world order, affected by strict regimentation - imported from the religious culture of Arabs. Gradually, it has become aspirational and desirable to sound, dress, pray and behave like an Arab.

The process of Arabisation and Islamic revivalism seeping in the symbolic traditions of the Muslim Universities in Delhi and Aligarh is informed by a memory that is manufactured and totally disconnected with reality. This is a memory that was gradually cultivated over generations after Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, a reputed Ulema in the second half of the eighteenth century AD, sowed the first seeds of Wahhabism in India. He, thereby, laid the ideological foundation for Arabisation of Muslims in India. Over time, this has dealt a suicidal blow to the local character of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. The flavour of Islam in India has been substituted by a more centralised and a more utopian vision of how pan-Islamism should look like in its tone and tenor. Globally, there has been a race to replace any 'mutations' with a 'purer' version of Islam. This has affected various cultural practices in various sects of Muslims around the world. It should be a matter of introspection for Indian Islamic scholars and Muslim intelligentsia to figure out if it is culturally viable to distance oneself from the *Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb* like

syncretism and pluralism of Islam in India. We need to reflect on the larger implications of giving mention to a regimented idea of Islamic symbolism that finds resonance only in the history, culture and lifestyle of Saudi Arabia. We also need to reflect on this totalitarianism to appropriate Islam within a specific geopolitical-scape mixing their articulations with local symbols in such a way that the mere entry of a local trait becomes a point of cultural conflict. How do we explain the psyche which emanates from Saudi Arabia and marches against the syncretic tradition of Indian Islam? How do we explain a systemic correction of Ramzan to Ramadan and Khuda Hafiz to Allah Hafiz?

In a typical poetic, Shakespearean way one may ask, "What's in a name" and scuttle away from the questions around the logo. But if a logo were to represent the collective dreams and ideals of a group of people, then it is time to ensure that these symbols represent the collective aspirations of the same group.

Shoaib Daniyal, in an article in Scroll, points out - "Twisting the pronunciation of Ramzan does not serve any explicit theological purpose, but it does serve as a rather prominent cultural marker, signalling a significant change in the way Indian Muslims – specifically Urdu-speaking Muslims – look at their culture." Is this longing for Saudi culture and aspiration for Saudi brand of Islam merely a reflection of an inferiority complex of local Muslims? Or is this an off-shoot of a larger plot in the wake of the recent geopolitical conflict and/or civilisational war? In any case, should there be no nationalistic challenge from within the community against this external co-option of our culture?



Tamil Nadu Young Thinker's Meet - 2016

*K.S. Yashaswini



The first edition of the Tamil Nadu Young Thinkers Meet (TNYTM) organized by the India Foundation took place in Chennai, on September 30, 2016 with the inaugural session by Shri Dattatreya Hosabale (Joint General Secretary, RSS). Shri Hosabale's talk, titled 'Tamil Nadu- A Dharmic Responsibility Beckons', touched upon how the *dharmic* traditions shunned hollow intellectualism, and always emphasized on well thought out and coordinated actions following thinking and ideation processes. He emphasized on the need to expand the scope of one's thought and include a vision for the revival of Tamil Nadu's rich heritage and culture. Citing examples from Swami Vivekananda's and Rishi Aurobindo's works, he called out the myth of the Aryan invasion theory. Shri Hosabale reiterated that the *dharmic*

responsibility lays equal importance on *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma*. Shri Hosabale concluded by asking the participants to take up the role of being intellectual warriors and address the political, social, cultural and ideological struggles currently confronting our nation.

Day one of the TNYTM began with a keynote address by Shri Swapan Dasgupta (Rajya Sabha MP and Senior Journalist) on 'India at 70 - National Influence of the Dominant Socio-political forces'. Shri Dasgupta questioned the origin, context and the appropriation of the term 'Idea of India'. In his inimitable journalistic style, he drew narratives from the Indian history since the 18th century that have shaped the modern debate, and pointed out at the stark differences between the approaches of the knowledge traditions in the West and in India.

“Self-realisation coupled with national realisation is the only way to rescue people from social degradation”, he emphasized.

Shri Dasgupta highlighted the dominant characteristics of the Indian traditions and lamented that the 1960s-80s was the “dark ages for the evolution of the Indian mindset”. He explained that a “wall” was being erected by the Nehruvian and Left schools of thought between pre-independence and post-independence India. Shri Dasgupta remarked that India is at a political and intellectual cusp now and that Indology as a subject of importance needs to be revived by the Indian right. Shri Dasgupta ended by stating that many “Ideas of India exist and it is never just one Idea of India”.

‘Resurrecting Tamil Identity and Tamil Culture’ was the theme of the next session, addressed by Dr. D. Gnanasundaram (Tamil scholar and linguist). In his highly enlightening speech in Tamil, Dr. Gnanasundaram drew references ranging from Sangam literature to modern day Dravidian movements. He defined Tamil culture as having five important traits—logically understanding that the creation we see around us must have a creator, understanding that nothing lasts permanently, understanding that events of our lives are a function of forces beyond our control and that life as we experience is a process in continuum through rebirths, understanding the importance of education, and having reverence towards our motherland. Dr. Gnanasundaram evocatively rendered quotes and verses ranging from classical literature to contemporary philosophies, and threw light on how Tamil has always co-existed with North Indian language(s), which was also popularized by poets, philosophers and writers of the classical age and

much later by the Bhakti movement. He emphasized on the relevance and importance of Thirukural as an unparalleled treatise on social code of conduct. However, Dr. Gnanasundaram in no small amount expressed the need to retrieve Tamil language from the trap of politics and treat it as an empowering tool to access new portals of knowledge and development.

Post-lunch session was a panel discussion between Prof. Vivek Kumar (Sociology Dept, JNU) and Shri Ramachandran (Tamil research-scholar) on the topic of ‘Social Integration and Distributive Justice’. Prof. Kumar in his address emphatically touched upon how hierarchy in India has been time and again established through man-made order that defies free-will and is no longer established on ‘division of labour’. He mentioned how caste discrimination and exclusion exists even today in at least seven institutions around us—judiciary, polity, bureaucracy, university, industry, civil society and media. He summed up his speech by noting that “caste system is not by default, but by design” and hence, self-representation is the only answer to the challenge of social integration. Prof Vivek Kumar also rejected the simplistic idea of equating representation with reservation. Shri Ramachandran delved deep into the origin and context of the terms Pulaiyan and Valluvar, both now denoting sections of the Scheduled Castes community of Tamil Nadu; he narrated the significant departure from earlier traditions leading to current day aberrations. Shri Ramachandran traced the history of these communities through the times and presented a final comment that the Dravidian parties have misappropriated the caste identities for political reasons. The session ended

with an invigorating round of questions and answers.

The final and pivotal session for the day, ‘Dominating the Intellectual Discourse’, facilitated by Shri R. Jagannathan (Editorial Director, Swarajya) and Shri V. Hari Kiran (Founder, Indic Academy), strung together the reasons for failure in the past, present challenges, and possible way forward for an Indic and *Dharmic* narrative of the Right in the media. Shri Jagannathan quickly summarized the dogma of the Left still prevalent in today’s discourse and how different institutions like businesses, government and media have constantly supported their mutually self-serving narrative. Shri Jagannathan outlined the need to develop a long term strategy akin to how the Church operates in the West, support Indic scholars and preserve our heritage institutions, especially the temples. Shri Jagannathan recounted from personal experience on how the digital media is the only way forward. Shri Hari Kiran touched upon the need to understand the audience, operate from one’s own *swadharma* and follow a sound framework while propagating the Dharmic cause. He emphasized on the need to transform thinkers into scholars and stressed the importance of organizing committed individuals, nurturing networks and promoting platforms for Indic thinkers. The session was well received by the participants who further offered their views to propel the movement.

Day 2

Day two of the TNYTM started with a little brainstorming and planning for the way forward.

Participants suggested the formation of hyper-local groups based on relevant interests and causes, to take forward the activism. Many of the participants pledged to continue their support to activities like temple restoration, checking on forced conversions and presenting the Vedantic and Puranic knowledge to schools and colleges in a contemporary fashion. A few others promised to scale up their writing online to reach out to new media, audience and issues.

The first session for the day was headlined by Swami Mitrananda (Acharya, Chinmaya Mission Chennai) on the ‘Relevance of Bhagavad Gita to Gen-Next’. In an inspiring dialogue, Swami Mitrananda reiterated that the beauty of Hinduism lies in its universality. An under-confident, shaken, insecure Arjuna is a common affliction of the youth today and anybody can relate to the teachings of Bhagavad Gita to transform their lives. Through several examples from the *Mahabharata*, *Puranas* and the *Ramayana*, the participants delved deep into the subject of *dharma* and the challenges of following it in today’s complex scenarios. A key takeaway from Swami Mitrananda’s session was that “Hinduism’s greatest advantage is that contradictory points can peacefully co-exist, without the compulsions to annihilate any view point for the existence or growth of the other; he emphasized that such appreciation for and structure to promote and accommodate diversity has to be converted into our strength.”

Shri Shakti Sinha (Director, Nehru Memorial and Museum & Library) opened the next session on ‘Understanding Economics and Good Governance’ to a thought provoking question on how to empower the private sector. Shri Sinha

highlighted that the private sector was far larger than the sum of the large MNCs or big Indian industrial houses alone; it includes the informal and unorganized traders, vendors, farmers and so many others whose everyday meal depended on their everyday sale. Through the interactions, Shri Sinha outlined the need for a National Water Policy and offered insights into the long-drawn battles over Cauvery between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Shri Sinha mentioned that to ensure that good governance is in place, one must question the status quo constantly lest complacency sets in place.

In the valedictory session for the two day meet, Shri Ram Madhav (National General Secretary, BJP) addressed the participants on 'J&K, North-East and its significance to the rest of India'. Shri Ram Madhav drew from examples of Chanakya and Chandragupta to highlight the need to have strong borders in order to secure our nation. Shri Ram Madhav stressed that in order to ensure that the people of J&K and North East do not succumb to separatist tendencies, and that they pledge their allegiance to India as a whole, the BJP focusses extensively on the development of these regions. While recounting the recent negotiations and political victories in the Northeast, Shri Ram

Madhav explained the need to preserve and promote the local identities and cultures of the people there. Ranging from skill development to infrastructure programs, India has a long way to ensure equitable economic growth in these regions. Shri Ram Madhav urged the participants to travel to these states to get to know the people, their culture and their challenges. In a candid Q&A session, Shri Ram Madhav gave detailed replies on topics ranging from infiltration to proselytisation to rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits and more.

The TNYTM has arrived as a forum for youth from varied professional and personal backgrounds to ideate, express and set the standards for a new discourse of the Right in Tamil Nadu. The Meet had 50 Participants hailing from various districts within Tamil Nadu. A majority of participants had a technical or science background for educational qualification whereas the rest are constituted of graduates from social sciences, law and media studies. Over 60% of the participants are affiliated to NGOs belonging to the socio-spiritual space dealing with a range of issues- from free education to restoration of temples to promoting Indic teachings. About 40% of the participants run their own business or have founded organizations.



BOOK REVIEW

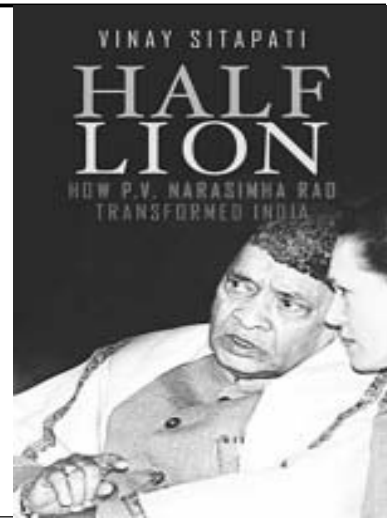
Reticence Personified 'Half Lion - How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India'

Author: **Vinay Sitapati**

Publisher : Penguin Books Limited

Price: Rs.699/-

Book Review by: **Jayraj Pandya***



In a nation obsessed with the utopian vision presented by its founding Prime Minister and carried forward by his dynasty by being in power for all but five years till 1991, it is a highly improbable task to tinker with the status quo let alone bring about a transformation. It requires a man with the audacity of a lion, dwarfed as a mouse but equipped with the shrewdness of a fox, to achieve this improbability. The man who finally achieved this feat was none other than - Pamulaparti Venkata (PV) Narasimha Rao. At the age of 70, and with the intention to retire from active politics and become the head of a Hindu Monastery, Rao was presented with an invaluable opportunity to transform the nation. This book charts the journey of this man, from his origins in rural Andhra to the Prime Minister's Office.

Half Lion is an attempt by its author Vinay Sitapati to put forward an honest account of PV Narasimha Rao's life. For the most part, the author does not get lured into a trap of making it a hagiography. With an extremely dramatic chapter

to begin with (the author uses his journalistic experience to excellent use) he describes the immediate events post the former Prime Minister's death. Throughout the book, the author consistently weaves a narrative highlighting the apathy shown by the country's grand old party for their first non-family Prime Minister to have completed a full term in office. (Late Lal Bahadur Shastri passed away within eighteen months of taking over as Prime Minister). With an access to Rao's private papers, the author literally brings to life, several unknown facets of his subject's life.

Rao's tenure as the PM has been adequately documented and gets regularly featured in media stories but several critical aspects of his life have been mystifyingly neglected. The fact that PV, during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh was a devout socialist and tenuously pursued the cause of land reforms in his state, gives an illustration as to how markedly he moved away from his economic thought-process when he became the Prime Minister.

**Reviewer serves as an Assistant Private Secretary to a Minister of State, Govt. of India. The views expressed here are personal.*

Possessing an acute sense of understanding the need of the hour was a precious gift Rao had.

When the country needed to deliver a message in 1994, despite opposition, Rao sent Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the Head of the Delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva which gave out subtle but clear messages that the country was united on the Kashmir question and that he put national interest above everything else.

This book brings out the ability of Rao to adapt to circumstances. Gauging the fact that the newly elected young Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was not too supportive of the old guard, Rao made the most of the opportunities given to him. It was during his tenure as the Minister for Human Resources Development that the New Education Policy was framed in 1986.

Moreover, Rao realigned his thought process in order to acclimatise to the post Cold War World where free markets shall acquire the center stage based on his understanding of its benefits acquired during his several trips to the United States. His ability to adapt to technology, that too learning complex languages including coding at his age, was a perfect example of his open-mindedness. The book magnifies the most pertinent quality of the former Prime Minister- his reticence. His ability to keep a low profile and conform as an underwhelming achiever gave him the enviable tag of Ajatshatru (One whose enemy is not born). Various accounts from his political life also confirm

the most famous quote associated with him i.e.- “Not taking a decision is also a decision”.

However there were a few areas which deserved a more elaborate description in the book but are missing. The limited references to his family seem a deliberate attempt to keep the nature and behaviour of the family man Rao under wraps.

Moreover, the author who is extremely deft at describing the political struggles of a minority government that Rao ran for a complete tenure of five years, is short of talking about the major allegations levelled against him including the Harshad Mehta scam as well as the JMM imbroglio.

Someone with access to the personal papers of such an compulsive reader and writer, could have surely written more about these aspects of Rao’s life. Or may be as a renowned journalist was famously told by PV himself, “Let me take a few secrets to my grave.” Notwithstanding these limited shortcomings, Half Lion is an outstanding attempt to give a balanced account of the PV Narasimha Rao, who many consider to be the best Congress PM India ever had.

In the conclusion, I would like to mention the most remarkable feature which I felt about the book. Just like the man himself, drawing inference from Hindu scriptures, the author drew a brilliant analogy of the name of the protagonist (Narsimha) with its actual meaning (sixth Avatar of Vishnu) and then with its English translation (Half Lion), literally brought to life his personality- ‘Audacity of a lion warped with the charm of a dead Fish.’



Upcoming Events

One Nation, One Election

26 November, 2016; New Delhi

India Foundation will organise a one-day symposium on One Nation, One Election on the eve of Constitution Day on November 26, 2016 at India International Centre, New Delhi.

There has been a discussion at various levels of the government on holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas. However, several constitutional and legal changes will be needed to conduct simultaneous elections, including possibility of Constitutional amendments to Articles 83, 172, 85 and 174 in order to streamline the process. This symposium will cover the above-mentioned topics.

For further details, please write to
mail@indiafoundation.in

1971 India-Pakistan War: Liberation of Bangladesh

15-16 December, 2016; Delhi

India Foundation is organizing a commemoration programme of the 1971 India – Pakistan war which contributed to the liberation of Bangladesh.

The objective of the programme is to acquaint the youth about the war, felicitate those who contributed to the war effort and brainstorm to draw lessons for the future.

For further details, please write to
mail@indiafoundation.in

Counter Terrorism Conference 2017

08-10 February, 2017; Jaipur

Third **Counter Terrorism Conference (CTC 2017)** will be held at **Jaipur** on **08-10 February, 2017**. This Conference will be attended by participants from all over the world, especially from academia, CT experts, intelligence experts, military and para-military officers, media, politicians and other stake holders in counter- terrorism.

The theme of the conference will be **“Terrorism in Indian Ocean Region”**. The focus areas include Middle East, Central Asia, SAARC, ASEAN and parts of Pacific.

For further details, please write to
ctc@indiafoundation.in