

Politics-A revealing fact

At one time, politics was an honorable profession - when one was elected to represent people he did right and held his head up proudly. They used to do it with a philanthropic sensibility and asked little in return. They were often a 'leader' deserving respect; we could tell our children this is a person to follow suit. When we take a look today, no such leader appears in public office, we would tell our children to be like him. Why? Because the ethics of political values have degraded and now no more they work for the real cause of the people but to create vote banks. To remain glued to the musical chairs they claim to be a champion of the 'people' projecting themselves as 'Pitamah' like that of 'Mahabharata' in the passing era of the 'Kalyug'. They are always in constant run up to establish themselves as 'Demi-Gods' as savior of souls on the cosmos and 'Political Super Heroes' of the world, whereas on home ground they are propagated as 'Pappu', 'Feku', 'Mufflerman', etc. The bygone leaders were scripted by writers in their songs and poems only due to the reasons of their altruistic attitude and some of them were regarded so much that they came to be known as 'Bapu', 'Chacha', 'Amma' etc. The political leaders of the present arena are now mentioned in satires and cartoons. Students working on political systems are grappling with a subject 'Degrading Ethics of Politics' that is today in constant flux. Politicians are known for their rhetoric, as in speeches or campaign advertisements. They are especially known for using common themes that allow them to develop their political positions. Politicians of today are expert users of the media to remain relevant as a political face at the cost of the taxpayers' money (TPM). Instead of politically arousing the voters, making them understand the power of vote, the power hungry politicians are working much as how to make them blind followers. This way they are instrumental in making the Parliament, a sacred place, the shelter homes for tainted (Out of 539 winners analyzed in Lok Sabha 2019, 233 MPs have declared criminal cases against themselves. This is an increase of 44 per cent in the number of MPs with declared criminal cases since 2009) and in providing 'Immunity Cover' to 'Law Breakers' by making them as 'Law Makers' (Of the 78 Ministers, as many as 33 ministers (42 per cent) have criminal cases against them. Of these, 24 have serious ones related to murder, attempt to murder and robbery; a report published by poll rights group Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)'. How with this number tainted in Parliament and thousands in every State Assemblies', we are going to establish as 'Vishav - Guru', is beyond the imagination of a common man in a country that has an external debt of US\$ 570.0 billion at the end of March 2021. Most of the emerging economies have government debt that is around 40 per cent to 50 per cent of their GDP. Compared to that, India's debt is around 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the country's GDP. So the 'Vishav-Guru' dreams sold out to Indians are nothing more than an inflated ball thrown in the public minds to keep it tossing. Are people insensitive to falsehoods? Do they not know whether things are true or false? Do people no longer care about truth? These questions require public debate. Although representative ability is not guaranteed by any method of selection, it is more likely to be found where there is free will of voters deprived of any temptations and freedoms from any political party or contesting candidates. The rise of new media has complicated the political system for common man and biased channels are playing a disastrous role in brain wash of the voters who have become dumb nil to speak or understand the importance of the vote. To reform politics is a herculean task. Consciousness can benefit the people to fight for the reforms and force the government to bring about legal reforms. This can however be done by sensitizing the people about their rights as well as electing the right representatives who can enforce the political changes for the greater public good. To reform politics the will of the people plays an important role whereas politicians often want to maintain the status quo in the prevailing system that suits them the best.

Concluding, like me, many, may be looking for the solace, to the words of 'Lord Krishna' as mentioned in 'Bhagavad Gita' Chapter 4 Verse 7-8, in Sanskrit, 'Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya Glanirbhavati Bharata - Abhiyuttanam Adharmasya Tadaatmanaam Srujamyaham', meaning whenever there is downfall of 'Dharma' and 'Adharma' prevails, I reincarnate myself on this abode earth for the well being of mankind.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Practise Eco-philosophy, celebrate life

The value of life has perhaps not been understood as well as it has been in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Indicators of materialistic progress, like GDP and GNP, have receded before life's love for life. Governments have put their country's economic plans and programmes on hold, giving precedence to saving lives.

Life loves life, a notion emanating from the eco-philosophy of Henryk Skolimowski, is a universal law. Since life loves to love life, life loves to see life everywhere. -- not just human life, but life in its in the biosphere. Life wishes to see life even beyond Earth, a dream that one day may come true. Other planets in the cosmos where possibilities of life to evolve exist have always engaged our attention. Life wills life to prevail as intensively as possible!

Monocultures are not life-enabling. It tends to evolve and blossom in diversity, in heterogeneity. Not a single species is independent in itself. Every species and every individual of every species is dependent on numerous other species. The higher the level of biodiversity, greater the degree of resilience and

sustainability. When we talk about life, we look deeply into our dependence on all life forms prevailing on Earth.

Exploration of other planets with even smallest fraction of similarity with Earth excites entire humanity because, life loves to love life. Our excitement and curiosity know no bounds when even a rudimentary hint of life comes to the fore. We feel thrilled when we look at footprints of what seems like rivers on the surface of the Red Planet; that perhaps there was once life on Mars! Maybe even now there are some microbes present, we don't know.

When we observed the Venus Transit, rare cosmic events that occurred in 2004 and 2012, we celebrated the event with joy. When Apollo 11 landed on the Moon and human footprints were left on the lunar surface in 1969, we felt on top of the world.

Here is a poem, titled 'Life Loves Life,' written by Juanita Skolimowski, as tribute to her husband, Henryk Skolimowski, who passionately embraced and promoted sustainable living, conservation of life, and light as life-sustaining energy.

Vir Singh

Modi redefined, refined & reoriented reforms Economic restructuring was simplified & development story rejigged by BJP Government with emphasis on delivery

■ SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

Before a lesser-known Narendra Modi took over as chief minister of Gujarat on October 7, 2001, the state had a notorious history of droughts and other natural calamities. Its growth engine had stopped whirring. It is common knowledge now that Modi transformed the state and made it synonymous with development and prosperity. Gujarat was not only the envy of other Indian states, its rapid progress also became a talking point outside India. After becoming the longest serving chief minister of Gujarat, he took over as the Prime Minister of the country seven years ago. His uninterrupted 20 years in public office has firmly established him as a man of development. His economic vision unfolded his idea of reform, which laid heavy emphasis on delivery to the lowest common denominator.

After he assumed power in Delhi, the Indian electorate saw Modi as a mass leader but perhaps never expected much in terms of reforms from his government. In order to achieve his goals he streamlined administration, underpinning his philosophy of minimum government and maximum governance. He got rid of corruption and provided a clean governance.

It was no easy feat for Modi, considering the 10-year rule of UPA was riddled with corruption, scandals and financial frauds. Dr Manmohan Singh's government was in comatose mode, as it was inflected with a policy paralysis never seen before in India's post-independence history. His coalition politics pulled the administration in different directions and it certainly needed a massive administrative overhaul. In this context, Modi's successes seem more appreciable. Indeed, the people of India were not let down by Narendra Modi. He kept at bay powerful dealmakers and lobbyists with clout. He quietly set in motion reforms that hitherto were even unimaginable by the grand old party and its Harvard-trained, so-called 'reform brigade' that aggressively defined economic restructuring as 'striking sweetheart deals' favouring chosen few industrialists, multinational corporations and market makers sans transparency.

Economic, administrative and governance reforms were reoriented by the Modi government in the last seven years to take fruits of opening up to the last man standing, as it firmly believed in the Bharatiya concept of Antyodaya. Scores of examples can be offered to illustrate how governance was taken to grassroots and rewards of reforms were provided to the poorest, who were left uncared for: Congress Governments that were hitherto wedded to Nehruvian socialism fell flat owing to out-dated policy frameworks and then being unable to calibrate reforms to benefit millions of vulnerable people that were left gasping for breath.

The Modi era reforms are working. That's because the focus areas were clearly defined and the emphasis was on delivery. Taking banking to people's doorstep through Jan-Dhanyojana by opening 43.29 crore accounts with over 1.26 lakh bank Mitras working round the clock in unbanked areas. Not many gave this government a chance when Prime Minister Modi announced 'clean' cooking gas connections for all under his signature project, Ujjwala Yojana. It has been a roaring success with over 81.665 million cooking gas connections provided to mostly women

How to become an IAS-IPS officer?

■ R K SINHA

Recently, the latest results of the Civil Services Examination of UPSC 2020 have been announced. The candidates who have been successful in these examinations will become Class 9 cadre IAS, IPS, and IFS officers, etc. of all the centers of the central services. Ultimately it will be their responsibility to actively implement the programmes and schemes of the central Government. The lifeblood of any democratic country is its bureaucracy.

If they do their work with diligence and the right attitude, then the country is bound to start its journey on the path of progress and development. However, if they become corrupt and incapacitated, the country will undeniably suffer a great loss. This is a fact known to all. At present, the process of congratulating the successful candidates is underway. Their real challenge will commence once they are posted in their respective districts or departments following their training. When the Civil Services were initially conceptualized in India during the British era, its main purpose was for these officers to help in strengthening the British Raj and easing the process of strictly implementing British policies. That is why at the outset they had made a policy of posting only British officials in all the high-ranking posts and positions. Thus, in the beginning, mostly Britishers were inducted in the IPS and ICS.

It is said that those British who were posted as district officers used to know every inch of that district at the back of their hand. They knew the types of agricultural lands in the district, the portion which was fertile, how much was barren, how much was irrigated, how much was not irrigated, what were the various species of trees and plants indigenous to that area, what was the population of each village, what were its prevalent social and economic composition, how many rivers and streams there were in the district and what was the average annual rainfall received? How many officers of today will know about these things? Let alone the district. They do not have sufficient knowledge of the number of localities in the city in which they are posted. However, this also does not imply that there were no skilled and qualified officers in India after independence. The country has seen several capable government officers after independence. In this context, from Jagmohan to K Subramaniam and A K Damodaran to L P Singh and T N Seshan, J N Dixit, hundreds of highly intellectual, knowledgeable, and capable officers can be named. But there are many officers who have also proved to be incapable. They have also indulged in malpractices and corruption. A thought that needs immediate attention and understanding is that if we expect our government officials to work fearlessly, then we have to give them the necessary environment for that. We have to provide them protection & security. It is often observed that only the officers who walk on the path of truth and righteousness, have to face numerous obstacles and hindrances. Does society or the government give them adequate protection or respect? Honest officers have to wander throughout their lives. They are denied promotions without any reason, and the threat of being transferred always looms over them.

Haryana cadre's IAS officer, Ashok Khemka had to pay a heavy

YOUR COLUMN

Repair lanes and drains in Digana, ward no 45

Dear Editor,

Condition of roads in Diagiana, has deteriorated to such a state that it has become difficult to ply vehicles as most of lanes are in deplorable condition.

The lanes and by-lanes in our area have not been repaired after digging for laying of sewage pipes. The entire road stretches have become bumpy and there are numerous uneven patches in the middle of the roads and lanes making it difficult for residents to move out. The roads and lanes in our area were dug up around five-six months ago but have not been repaired making them prone to accidents.

Digging was done here quite long but now it seems the concerned

that struggled to cook square meals each day. In fact, Ujjwala scheme 2.0 was also launched with another 1.669 million cooking gas connections provided till September 7, 2021.

While Manmohan Singh emphasised tackling macro-economic restructuring issues, the Modi government served the fruits of reforms and the India growth story to the people. There is no doubt that achieving financial inclusion is the biggest reform success story globally, over Rs 15 lakh crore were spent on 28.68 crore beneficiaries to strengthen the grassroots entrepreneurship over the last six-odd years is unparalleled in banking history worldwide. But that is a well-established fact of the Modi era

Providing safe drinking water to the common man was never prioritised in 75 years after independence, leading to millions of water-borne diseases every year. It may not count as a big reform for laptop economists that run from one conference room to another with no time to reflect. But the Jal Jeevan Mission is the biggest reform that any country even dared to launch. Thanks to the dedicated mission, top-end priority in Prime Minister Modi's scheme of things, 8.18 crore households today have access to clean drinking water. Out of this, over 4.94 crore households got water connections only after August 15, 2019 when the water mission became operative. Could Nehruvian neo-liberalists have imagined the idea of a new India where every family has a roof over their head? They would have conveniently come up with scores of excuses from fund crunch to limited economic absorption capacity for not delivering on the 'welfare state' that they propound within and outside the country.

Here's a government that was so unfairly attacked as 'Soot Boot Ki Sarkar'. And, it had the gumption to announce 54 lakh houses for people in cities and one crore more for the poor in the villages. If housing for all is not a people-oriented reform measure, then what else is?

On April 28, 2018 when the last village in Manipur, Leisang was provided electricity, it was a big deal. The Modi government will go down in history of India as the one that provided electricity to all the 5.97 lakh villages after independence. Such initiatives can easily make up to top of the long reforms list unleashed by this government unfairly branded or bracketed as a traders' party. On the contrary, this government has not only achieved what very few did but in the process also redefined reforms. Reforms in the pre-Modi era were defined by opening up the Indian economy to the world, reduction in taxes to the corporates, etc.

Today reforms have been rewritten by making governance simple and delivery oriented with no high sounding Harvard economic theories that continue to be unfathomable jargons of ignominious variety. Simplifying economic reforms and reorienting development parameters does not necessarily mean its anti-markets or anti-industry. Without empowering the ultimate consumer of goods and services, no reform can survive. Industry cannot sustain, markets expand, exports surge or farmers prosper and India's growth story holds on, if reforms were to be narrowly defined.

(The author is an MP, National Spokesperson BJP and former Managing Director, Deutsche Bank, India).

price for his honesty. There have been a lot of Khemka-like officers in this country. Somebody had rightly said that only a few people like bitter medicine and incorruptible officers. Everyone desires a government puppet who works in accordance with their wishes. How many people today remember the story of Satyendra Dubey and Manjunath? Satyendra Dubey was the Project Director at the National Highways Authority of India. He saw closely the corruption that was spread in the Prime Minister's ambitious road plan of the Golden Quadrilateral.

At that time, he wrote a sealed letter to the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in which there was a complete list of corrupt officials involved in the scheme. The names of powerful corrupt officers, engineers, and contractors were clearly listed. Dubey had written that he could not deal with that nexus of corrupt people on his own and that is why he is writing a letter to the Prime Minister asking for additional help and backup. He was soon murdered for having written this letter.

Now let's talk about S Manjunath. He was working in Indian Oil Corporation in the Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh. On September 13, 2005, while inspecting the Petrol Pump 'Mittal AutoMobile', he discovered some discrepancies. The petrol pump was suspended because of his complaint. On November 19, Manjunath again inspected the place. But this time, son of the petrol pump owner along with his companions shot and killed him. That is, in the same way, the honest and dutiful officers have to pay a very high price for being honourable.

Metcalfe House, located in the Civil Lines area of the country's capital, is a very special place for India's peak bureaucracy. It was here that on 21st April 1947 the Iron Man, Sardar Patel gave a speech on the significance of self-governance and a good nation to the first batch of IAS-IPS officers of independent India. That is why 21st April is celebrated as Public Servant Day. Prior 1947, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examinations were conducted in the Metcalfe House. It was here that till 1958, civil service examinations, interviews, and training of successful candidates were held. After that, their training started in Mussorie.

In his statement, Sardar Patel had asked the officers of the country to work in the best interests of the people and to work without any hesitation. Do all the government officials follow the path shown by Sardar Patel nowadays? Isn't it true that when these officers are finally posted in the districts, they should be as close to the general public as they can be, on the contrary, they become further away from them? They live in their palatial government bungalows and have no concern for the public. This situation is dismal and utterly unfortunate. The government should take strict action against those officers who do not perform their duties properly. The officers on whom there are proven corruption charges must be punished severely. It is also seen that many government babus are busy their whole life looking for advantageous postings. In this sequence, they do not refrain from sucking up to the political leaders and powerful ministers. All these practices should be deemed unacceptable. Only then can government officers fulfill their responsibility of public service.

(The author is a senior editor, columnist and former MP).

executing agencies have forgotten to complete the work and have left the lanes in pathetic condition causing apprehensions of serious accidents mainly to two wheeler drivers and elderly people. Almost every lane in the area has deep pits and pot-holes which are posing grave threat for the residents. The condition of streets is so poor that it is hard for residents to move out. The situation further deteriorates during rains and in evening hours, making it almost impossible for children, ladies and old-aged people to come out of houses. We cannot describe in words the complexity we are facing due to the apathetic approach of the concerned agencies, who despite repeated reminders did not pay any attention towards the difficulties faced by the people. It is sad to say that no one bothers to take stock of problems faced by the residents of the area. During rains we cannot move out as the potholes are filled with water and it pose threat to commuters. Through your esteemed daily, I would like to give a reminder to the concerned agencies to pay attention towards the problems being faced by the residents.

Sugam Singh
Ward no 45.

Greening Highways- Need of hour

■ G L KHAJURIA

Roads are the lifeline arteries which carry the lifeblood of the economy relating to trade and commerce to every nook and corner of the country. These also play a pivotal role in national integration by way of communication amongst the various religions and shades. According to the ministry of surface transport and highways, we are having a long stretch of around 4.50 million kms of road length. And the overall benefits accruing therefrom ripple out vast, varied ramifications for the progress and prosperity of the country as a whole.

Now, with the ever-exploding population which all know has crossed 1.25 billion next to China and the trafficways have correspondingly increased manifold face to face with urbanisation and industrialisation. And these in togetherness are Tanta mounting to ever-escalating pollution, temperature, dust and a combination of noxious gases namely carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO2), Methane (CH4), Nitrous Oxide (N2O) and emission of chloro-fluoro-carbons (CFC'S) apart from the most hazardous halocarbons. These halocarbons originate from refrigeration and other cooling compound pollutants and are long persisting over hundreds and thousands of years when once released into the atmosphere. The expansion of roads width on either side of highways has ruthlessly massacred over lack of erstwhile plantations which have diminished the pristine well-established glory and grandeur of the highways which now are devoid of lush green vibrant tree cover across the country. Now, while travelling on these highways, we often feel as if something of our very vitality is missing, so much so that no shade of insight where once a while we can aspire to have a short stop over. Doesn't it jitter when we are on a travel-spree with family or friends?

It is, therefore, most pertinent to realise the changed scenario over a couple of years. And this is evidently very well before our eyes. And imagine the scenario elsewhere away from our sight, the overall forest cover (green gold) which is frizzling by the turn of the day. This is fundamentally tanta mounting to environmental degradation resultantly giving birth to multi-hued off shoots of problem of problems. Under this pernicious scenario, our highways demand top most attention for rejuvenation so that these become lively for beautification and glorification. It is as such becomes our moral and bounden duty to carry out mass campaigns for gigantic plantation operations alongside highways so as to restore back erstwhile lost glory and beauty. In forestry parlance, such plantations alongside highways are nomenclaturised as arboriculture or avenue plantation and the people so participating or engaged are called arboriculturist. These plantations are also carried out alongside railway tracks, canals apart from urban metropolises where this has an independent department. The predominant objective being to cloth such areas with green cover ensuring greenery, beautification and slowing down the temperature and averting pollution in its manifestation. The concept of such plantations is not new as over the years the earlier rulers were very much enthusiastic and compassionate with this concept of plantations when we unfold the history.

During Ashoka's regime, this concept was very much in vogue, as he carried out extensive/intensive afforestation alongside all avenue, other denuded areas. Similarly, Sher Shah Suri in the 16th century carried out an abundant plantation of ornamental, horticultural and shade bearing trees inter-mixed with flowering climbers, creepers and shrubs right from Mureshidabad (the then Bengal) to Peshawar via Delhi and Lahore. Similarly, the Mughals were very much enthusiastic and compassionate about the construction of new roads and supplementing these by carrying out plantation. Shahjahan brought Chinara from Iran and introduced in Kashmir and its vicinity. They carried forward this campaign on all available barren areas, preferably, the roadsides and other road-linkages.

When we achieved independence, the spirit and sanctity of tree culture, plantation, promotion and propagation was still more invigorated. Our late Prime Ministers J L Nehru, L B Shastri apart from other prominent leaders, naturalist, environmentalists namely GB Pant, Dr Rajender Prasad, K M Munshi a large scale planting campaign. It was too recently on the first day of July this year, when Nitin Gadkari, the union Minister for transport and highways convened a two-day meeting at Visakhapatnam and consequently, a mega mission for greening highways was promulgated and this mission was nomenclaturised as 'National Green highways Mission (NGHM). Under the mission the Minister Kick started the first ever massive National highways plantation campaign with a targeted budget of 300 crores to cover around 1,500 kms of the first leg of 1,00,000 kms of highways.

Nitin Gadkari further emphasised that the Ministry of Road and highways (MORTH), government of India endeavour the need and importance of developing green corridors along National highways, promulgating massive plantation, transportation, their progressive promotion and maintenance all through for the glorification- cum-beautification of highways apart from generating jobs and employment on larger scale. According to Raghav Chandra, Chairman NHAI, the government contemplates earmarking an estimated amount around 5,000 crores which works out around 1 per cent of roads construction amounting to 5 trillion ending year 2019 of this mission. This is synonymous with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in boosting rural economy. The funds as such are earmarked to provide promotion and impulsively targeted greening highways mission, apart from opening up job-cum-employment avenues for around a million youth in a broader spectrum.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K).