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Diplomatic Immunities - Indo-Canadian Issue (Part – 2)

By Dr Santhosh Mathew

The Author is Associate Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University, India.

Upon arriving in host nations, diplomats formally present their letter of authority and assume responsibilities under the auspices of the guest countries' leadership. The designations of first secretary, second secretary, third secretary, consul general, consul, and attaché are bestowed upon individuals appointed by their respective countries to provide vital support. While embassies typically find their home solely in capital cities, consulates are strategically positioned in major commercial and trade hubs. Foreign countries often establish consulates in various Indian cities, exemplified by consulates in Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata, to facilitate diverse diplomatic endeavours. The appointment of attachés and other officials is a prerogative held by their home countries, reinforcing their roles as representatives abroad.

Diplomatic officials, under the umbrella of diplomatic security, commence their duties with host country approval. Additional personnel from the host nation may also assist diplomats, temporarily or permanently. The host country is responsible for vetting these individuals' qualifications and backgrounds, typically through its police department. Local appointees lack diplomatic privileges and may face legal consequences for criminal activities. The 1961 Vienna International Summit brought about key diplomatic rights and immunities, laid out in the 29th amendment to the Convention on Diplomatic Relations. This amendment grants diplomats and their offices complete tax exemption in host countries, encompassing customs, professional, road, and property taxes. Furthermore, diplomats and their families enjoy an INR 20 lakh import allowance for goods, as outlined in the Central Ministry of External Affairs' 4th protocol handbook. Crucially, under the Vienna Convention, diplomats remain immune from criminal or civil prosecution unless their home country revokes their diplomatic security. Recent cases highlight the limits of this immunity, as diplomats involved in crimes were repatriated without facing legal consequences. Countries have distinct policies to protect diplomats, slightly varying between diplomatic and consular staff. Diplomatic staff enjoy broader immunity, extending to all crimes, while consular staff are shielded solely for crimes during official duties. The host country has the discretion to decide on security coverage. Recent incidents, such as the alleged involvement of UAE Consul General Jamal Hussain Al Sabi and Attaché Rashid Khamis Al Ashmia in a gold smuggling case, raise questions about the scope of diplomatic security. While their roles may be evident, diplomatic immunity shields them from penalties or interrogations. The request is straightforward: conclude the investigation, provide necessary documents, and subject them to legal scrutiny in accordance with host country laws, given their current presence in their home nation.

In the realm of diplomatic security, any perceived threat to a diplomat under cover warrants prompt notification to the Protocol Department of the External Affairs Ministry. Notably, both the Chinese Embassy and the Pakistan High Commission, operating under diplomatic security cover,

receive enhanced protection due to potential threats. Indian offices in these nations similarly benefit from security arrangements tailored to the host country's circumstances.

While the Delhi Police provide security for embassies in Chanakyapuri when threats arise, safeguarding security within the office premises remains the responsibility of the host country. For instance, American military forces are entrusted with ensuring the safety of U.S. Embassy officials. Meanwhile, Indian diplomatic personnel have enjoyed security coverage in Canada for years due to threats from Khalistan separatists. Diplomatic tensions often make headlines, as was the case when the U.S. called for the closure of China's consulate in Houston in June 2020. This marked the onset of a diplomatic skirmish between the two nations, with the U.S. citing violations of the Vienna Convention as the reason for closure. The consulate was ordered to cease all activities within 72 hours, a move justified by then-President Trump as a means to protect American intellectual property and individual privacy. This unexpected U.S. action further strained already fragile relations, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and controversies surrounding Hong Kong. China maintains five consulates in the U.S. in addition to its embassy in Washington, D.C., while the U.S. operates one embassy and five consulates in China, including one in Hong Kong. The diplomatic engagement between the two nations dates back to 1979, when China opened its first consulate in Houston. The U.S. accused China of intellectual property theft related to COVID vaccine development, a claim vehemently denied by the Chinese Communist Party, which asserts its own research capabilities.

The global diplomatic landscape was similarly roiled when Turkey contemplated expelling diplomats from ten countries. The discussion about diplomatic security cover gained prominence amidst this dispute. Ultimately, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rescinded the decision to expel these diplomats, prompted by their joint appeal for the release of Osman Kavala, a social activist imprisoned in Turkey. The potential expulsion of diplomats from NATO member countries, including the U.S., Germany, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden, threatened to worsen Turkey's relations with the alliance. Erdoğan had ordered their expulsion in response to their collective demand for Kavala's release, viewing it as a challenge to his authority. Kavala had been sentenced to imprisonment on charges related to his alleged involvement in funding nationwide protests in 2013 and his role in the failed coup attempt of 2016. The diplomats' united call for his release was seen as a potential public relations disaster for Erdoğan. It's worth noting that the European Court of Human Rights ordered Kavala's release in 2019, with the European Council also advocating for the implementation of this ruling.

On 21st September in Canada’s Winnipeg, another Khalistan supporter Sukhdool Singh aka Sukha Duneke was reported as murdered. Sukhdool Singh had evaded the Indian eyes of law and fled to Canada by forging documents to fly across the land in 2017. This incident cracks open a can of worms that will have people divided on opinion, starting with defining the term “terrorist” itself. A terrorist for one is easily a brave revolutionary leader for the other. What Canada needs is a strong stance in dealing with organisations and country-dwellers with terrorist character. The Five Eyes intelligence alliance, formed by Australia, the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada is a network of anglophone countries sharing intelligence, with the aim of resisting the Chinese flare in the Indo-Pacific region. All these countries share with Canada the harbouring of Sikh population and have seen outbursts such as this in their territories. What is happening in Canada, may very well be the UK or the UK tomorrow, unless a joint global approach is undertaken, under the framework of FVEY. Such a move can save the lives of innocents, position of the messengers and the sovereignty of the state.

In this intriguing scenario, the Indian and Indo-Canadian populace can be offered a sage piece of advice: "Opinion is not an iron rod," reminding us of the fluid nature of perspectives within the diplomatic sphere. It is often said that diplomats can fall prey to a peculiar ailment known as "Stockholm Syndrome," wherein they develop an abrupt affinity for the leaders of the host government.

This devotion can sometimes erode the trust of their own government. "A Guide for Diplomatic Training" by Sir Ernest Satow, the former British Ambassador to China, is often hailed as the diplomatic Bible. Remarkably, even today, this book, initially published in 1917, continues to hold relevance. Sir Henry Wotton, a British diplomat, once humorously remarked, "An ambassador is an innocent person who is sent to a foreign country to tell lies there for the sake of the home country." In a way, it encapsulates a facet of the diplomatic craft itself.

Mission Atmanirbhar Bharat's Contribution to Defense Preparedness (Part -1)

By Mr. Kashinath Deodhar

The author, Sr Scientist (Retd) as Group Director, ARDE, DRDO, Pune. He can be reached at kddeodhar@rediffmail.com

It has been 75 years since India's independence and now it is moving towards its centenary. This twenty-five-year period is called Amrit Kaal. In this period, India wants to become not only a superpower in the world but also a vishwaguru.

If India only becomes a superpower and is number one, then the next two to ten countries can be permanent opponents, but we have to increase our footprint and our strength and stature to such an extent that no one will even come close. As per our philosophy "Sarvesham Avirodhen" means India will have no opposition from anyone in the world, which means India will once again become the Vishwaguru.

Former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam used to say that our mere extremely good philosophy only is not enough, like the philosophy of the Bhagvadgeeta "Live and let live", no matter how good the philosophy is, no one will accept it, unless a strong society and a strong country stand behind that philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary to have a strong and powerful India. In order to build such a capable and strong India, it is imperative to strengthen the defense system of India. For that, it is very important to develop indigenous weapon technology. The Government of India established the Research and Development Department i.e. DRDO under the Ministry of Defence. DRDO has been functioning for more than six decades.

The decade after independence, the Defense system of the country was well understood. A decade was then spent studying British-era weapons that were in service. The third decade went into reverse engineering, making incremental improvements to existing weapons systems, and called incremental improvements. However, in the 1980s and 90s, large projects, initiatives and programs were undertaken to develop indigenous weapon systems. The work of developing own small arms, tanks, rocket systems, guns gained momentum.

All our three-armed forces i.e., Army, Navy and Air Force are working to maintain the security, integrity and sovereignty of the country. Together with them, DRDO developed science and their own indigenous technology to create various weapons and weapon systems. Under the guidance of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai and with the support of Dr. Homi Bhabha, India has successfully developed the Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3) in space in ISRO, with the support of Dr. Satish Dhawan, under the leadership of Dr. Kalam and successfully tested it. By using such a Rocket, a bomb can be carried instead of a satellite, and it can become a missile after being fitted with a guidance and control system. On the suggestion of senior scientists Dr. Raja Ramanna and Dr. MGK Menon, the “Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP)” was taken up in DRDO. Of course, its leadership was given to Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

Under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program, work began at DRDO under the leadership of Dr. Kalam with the aim of simultaneously developing five world-class missiles, and in just five to ten years, its first prototypes were successfully tested. That is why Dr. Kalam is known as the Missile Man of India rather than the President.

The first missile entered service was named Prithvi. It developed the Surface-to-Surface Missile (SSM) which can be launched from the ground and has a range of 100 kilometers above the ground with accurate targeting and total destruction, destruction, and distraction.

Second missile entered into service named Aakash. It is a surface to air (SAM) class missile capable of engaging ground-to-air enemy targets such as fighter jets, helicopters or low-altitude enemy missiles in mid-air. Initially, the effective range of Akash was 24 to 30 km.

The third missile, Trishul, is a missile of the same SAM class and has a range of only six to nine kilometers. But it is called QRSAM as it has a very quick response and can accurately penetrate the enemy target in just six seconds from detection to hit.

The fourth missile developed under the IGMDP program is the Nag, which can accurately penetrate and destroy any generation of modern tanks of the enemy at a distance of four to eight kilometers. So, Nag is an anti-tank missile.

The heaviest missile is Agni. It is the fifth missile in this series developed as a surface to surface (SSM) missile. It has been successful by keeping its first range of 1000 kilometers. A 1000 kg conventional or nuclear bomb can be fired at enemy targets. And the enemy target can be blindsided. Agni missile is the jewel in the crown of Bharat Mata.

Under the leadership of Dr. Kalam, DRDO developed all the above five world-class missiles within just ten years and successfully test-fired all of them. All the five missiles became successful and when success came in sight, Dr. Kalam appealed to all the scientists to suggest beautiful names for all the five missiles, matching with our culture and soil. The only instruction given by Dr. Kalam is that the moment the name of that missile is uttered, the people of the world should know that it is Indian by the name itself. As soon as you utter the name of the missile, the world will know that it is India’s, and we will not need to tell the world that it is ours. This shows Dr. Kalam's patriotism, devotion to culture and studies. He was proud of Indian culture that's why he gave names matching with Indian culture.

When we developed the technology of Nag missile, America did not have this technology, so they demanded it, ready to pay any price. But at present it is in the development stage, after a while when its design is stable, we will give it to you. This shows Dr Kalam’s incredible intelligence.

The Akash missile is so effective that both the Air Force and the Army of the Indian armed forces have given a task order of Rs.23 thousand crores for its production. We accomplished that and developed a security shield that protects the entire country from airstrikes. Since then, we have laid a strong foundation of indigenous missile technology by successfully developing all the five world class missiles, keeping in mind that at least the defense sector should be self-reliant, we have laid emphasis on developing indigenous technology in various ways.

By the time Indian indigenous missiles were being developed for the first time, even the armed forces were not sure that we could build indigenous missiles. But as these missiles started being successfully tested, the demands of the armed forces also started increasing. Along with the technical things like range, accuracy, penetration capability of missiles, it should have minimum weight, long range, occupy less space, ease and ease of handling, and also should be less expensive. And while dealing with this, we need these missiles to be safe and reliable when fired at the target in the enemy's area. By fulfilling all these demands from time to time, Prithvi-1, Prithvi-2, Prithvi-3, Sagarika, Prahar, Shaurya, Pralay, various types of advanced technology missiles are currently in the service of the Indian Armed Forces. It was accepted at all levels.

All the missiles designed by Dr. Kalam have now been retired and new variants have entered service. Akash missiles are also in service as Akash Prime (Akash-P), Akash New Generation (Akash-NG). In place of Trishul, QRSAM, i.e., QRSAM (Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile) along with SRSAM, MRSAM, LRSAM series which have short, medium or long and fast reaction from its distance are in service and according to the requirement accuracy and cost-effective solution comes out of it.

Now as India has the capability to develop all types of modern and sophisticated missiles, the development of new missiles is going on. An air-to-air missile named Astra has been developed by developing indigenous technology and after its successful trials, it has been inducted into service. The missile can effectively target the next fighter jet by firing it from its own planes while chasing enemy fighter jets. Its Beyond Visual Range weapon has been included in the arsenal of the Navy and Air Force.

By developing a very new indigenous technology, the missile called Rudram is mainly characterized by the accuracy of locating the base of the radar system and penetrating deep into the enemy's base to destroy or destroy the enemy's radar station.

By working together with Russia and establishing a company called 'BrahMos' Aerospace, the BrahMos missile, which travels at two to three times the speed of sound, has developed the world's fastest missile of the "cruise missile" class, which has been demanded by nearly twenty-five allied countries and is exportable.

India's indigenous submarine-launched missiles with short and long range are known as “K-series Missiles”. 'K' is Dr Kalam's initials and is named as a tribute to him. At Balasore, which has a missile launch center from "wheeler's island" named as Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Test Centre has also as legacy. All the missile technologies that are currently being researched in the world are being developed indigenously in India, like the “Hyper Sonic Missile”. Hyper means ultra-high which means a missile traveling at least five to six times the speed of sound. e.g., the speed of more than 2 km per second (2 km/s) is called hyper sonic, its technology is also being developed and like foreign missiles, preliminary tests have been successful and research work is progressing.

To be continued in next issue ….

India Needs to Go Nuclear

By Dr Anil Kakodkar

The writer, a nuclear scientist, was director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre

Emerging-economy countries, where one expects maximum net growth in energy consumption, should see rapid deployment of new nuclear-energy capacity to credibly address the climate-change challenge at the global level.

India’s economy is growing rapidly. It is expected to surpass Germany and Japan and move up from number five to number three position before the end of this decade. Economic growth triggers demand for energy. One would thus expect significant growth in our primary energy consumption which is already the third highest globally. Most of this is based on fossil energy.

Fossil fuel consumption is a major contributor to global warming, which has now become an existential crisis for humanity. Deep and immediate emission cuts, leading to net zero, have become unavoidable. There is now a global consensus to reach this goal before a 2045–2070-time frame. Transition to net zero involves massive transformation of energy systems, involving new technologies, restructuring of energy systems at supply-and-demand ends and large costs. For a large and developing country like India, the challenge of reaching net zero is much bigger.

Our developmental aspirations require a manifold increase in per-capita energy use even as we transition to net-zero GHG emission. Our inability to meet this dual challenge would mean either compromising on development or failing to realise the net-zero target timeframe or both.

We all aspire to reach a Human Development Index (HDI) comparable to advanced countries of the world. For this, as per prevailing correlations, we need a minimum of 2,400-kilogram oil equivalent (kgoe) energy consumption per capita per year. This threshold could improve to around 1,400 kgoe, as a result of expected improvements in energy use efficiency. Even after considering this, the total clean energy requirement to support a developed India would work out to around 25,000 — 30,000 TWhr/yr. This is more than four times our present energy consumption. While we are rightfully making rapid strides in deployment of renewable energy including hydro, would this alone enable us to become an advanced country? The answer is no.

Hypothetically, even if the entire barren uncultivable land in India is used up for setting up solar plants (which, clearly, is not possible), it would still fall way short of the target. The potential of wind energy is even smaller. The only way out then is a rapid scale-up of nuclear energy. For this, we need to shed the unfounded phobia around nuclear energy. Today, nuclear energy has emerged as one of the cleanest and safest of energies capable of effectively countering climate change. Since we pursue a closed nuclear fuel cycle, waste issue is also reduced to a negligible level. Based on a study done by Vivekananda International Foundation, with due analytical back-up from IIT-Bombay, it appears that nuclear energy would need to be scaled up to a couple of thousand GWe for an optimum solution to reach net-zero in a developed India. This is a major implementation challenge, and the country must brace up to meet it. Luckily, on the technology front, we are capable of self-reliance. What is missing is the determination and requisite policy/management framework. Without nuclear energy playing its due role, the country will not be able to reach the status of a developed nation. We need to be guided by our own sui generis strategy and not be driven by foreign vendors.

In this context, it would be worthwhile to pursue a six-pronged national strategy for a rapid scale up of nuclear energy.

Indigenous 700 MWe PHWR, the first unit of which is already in commercial operation, should be the prime workhorse for base load electrical capacity addition. Fifteen more such units are already under construction in fleet mode. One should take up many such fleets for implementation leveraging multiple PSUs in addition to NPCIL.

Secondly, build indigenous SMRs at a large number of sites that would be vacated by retiring coal plants in the coming decades. As the experience with large PWRs has shown, importing these units would make electricity production unaffordable. NTPC, being the owner of the largest number of coal plants in the country, is a natural partner in this process. More industrial partners could be involved.

Thirdly, well-proven 220 MWe PHWR units can be offered as partially owned captive units for electricity and hydrogen for energy-intensive industries such as metals, chemicals, and fertilisers. AHWR300-LEU developed by BARC can also be offered for this role after demonstrating a prototype.

Fourthly, develop a high temperature reactor for direct hydrogen production without resorting to electrolysis. This would enable cheaper green hydrogen production and reduce pressure on excessive electrification of the energy system in the country, which otherwise appears inevitable. Bhabha Atomic Research Centre has the requisite capability. Speed up second and third stage nuclear-power programme development to unleash thorium energy potential in accordance with the pre-existing plans for long-term sustainable energy supply.

Read complete article on website Indianexpress.com

Telltale Tel-Aviv

By Vappala Balachandran

The writer is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat. His latest book Intelligence Over Centuries examines the history and workings of the systems in countries like India, Israel and America.

How does terrorism originate? For the last 15 years or so, I have been giving lectures on terrorism to students of journalism at a reputed training institute in Mumbai. The most difficult part of the subject is to explain the paradoxes in its history, which often defy logic. For example, President Ronald Reagan told Americans in a radio address in May 1986 that effective anti-terrorist action was "thwarted by the claim that -- as the quip goes –- 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'.'' He added that freedom fighters did not need to terrorise a population into submission. What he said was true of India which won freedom under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership without violence.

If Reagan was correct, why did the United States consider Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as an acceptable and strategic partner despite an American Library of Congress paper recording that during the pre-independence days, Begin was responsible for several terrorist attacks: on two British police stations; the blowing up of the British military headquarters in King David Hotel; the execution of two British sergeants to retaliate for the hanging of three Jewish resistance fighters, and the massacre in the Arab village of Deir Yassir that left more than 250 civilians dead?

And yet, a year before Reagan's address, New York Times columnist William Safire had criticised the Reagan administration in October 1985 for not standing by Israel, a US ally, when the latter attacked a Palestine Liberation Organisation boat within the territorial waters of Cyprus on intelligence that it was meant for terrorist activities against Israel. Safire had criticised Reagan for "allowing" the UN Security Council "to condemn its ally and call for reparations".

In February 2001, UPI correspondent Richard Sale, quoting "several current and former US intelligence officials" claimed that Tel Aviv "gave direct and indirect financial aid to Hamas over a period of years" beginning in the late 1970s. He quoted Anthony Cordesman, Middle East analyst for the Centre for Strategic & International Studies, that Israel "aided Hamas directly -- the Israelis wanted to use it as a counterbalance to the PLO".

This was confirmed in January 2009 by Daniel Barenboim, the famous Israeli pianist and conductor, who wrote an article 'The Illusion of Victory' in The Guardian: "We must not forget that before Hamas was elected by the Palestinians, it was encouraged by Israel, as a tactic to weaken Yasser Arafat. Israel's recent history leads me to believe that if Hamas is bombed out of existence, another group will most certainly take its place that would be more radical, more violent, and more full of hatred towards Israel".

This Monday, The Times of Israel reported that "Hamas conducted a years-long campaign to fool Israel into thinking the group did not desire armed conflict and could be placated with economic incentives to maintain relative calm".

However, this did not start recently. I had written in 2009, quoting the late Ami Isseroff, known as the "Socialist Zionist", that successive Israeli governments had promoted these fundamentalists, who later became 'Hamas'. There was evidence that the Menachem Begin government had approved Sheik Ahmad Yasin's application in 1973 to recognise his organisation 'al-Mujama', even when it was known that it was an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Yasin was heading its Gaza chapter.

In fact, Begin and his successor Yitzhak Shamir created "village leagues" who were thought to be helpful to check the secular and leftist PLO of Yasser Arafat. They allowed Yasin to publish a newspaper, collect funds not only from Israelis but also from orthodox Islamic regimes, and helped convert the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) into their base. The IUG flourished as the only higher education facility on the Gaza strip — with official Israeli help, and due to Anwar Sadat's ban on Palestinian students seeking admission in Egyptian colleges.

By the 1980s, the IUG had become the largest university in occupied territories, with 4,500 students. Isseroff had even said that Mujama cadres were allowed to keep their cache of weapons to intimidate secular students. The Telegraph (UK) said in March 2004 that deliberate Israeli neglect of Yasin's bold political activities "nurtured a movement that came to epitomise all that Israel meant by the word 'terrorism'".

In 1983, Yasin had formed two secret para-military units: One for the surveillance and punishment of drug dealers, prostitutes, and collaborators with Israel; and the other consisted of commando groups that carried out attacks on Israeli targets. This was revealed only after Yasin was killed by a direct Israeli strike in March 2004. After the recent hostilities started, the Israeli air force went to the other extreme by destroying the Ahmed Yasin Mosque in Gaza on Monday. Middle East Eye reported that at least 10 mosques were demolished in the recent bombing. This, in turn, is bound to inflame religious feelings all over.

Read complete article on website deccanherald.com

India's Age of Ambition

By Pratap Bhanu Mehta

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

The infrastructural nationalism that marks the transition to a new Parliament building is symbolic of our times. Perhaps, it can make room for a more representative parliamentarianism.

The transition to a new Parliament building is one more marker in India's new Age of Ambition. Amid all the immediate dangers our democracy faces, it is sometimes easy to miss that the dominant emotional register of our times is national ambition. Everything has to be imagined in terms of the "new", a break with a recent past whose greatest sin was its lack of ambition. Time has to be redefined, not in terms of a few years, but in terms of whole eons. This is the inauguration of Amrit Kaal. Scale has to be redefined. It is all too easy to dismiss the relentless public construction as authoritarian kitsch. But often, time consecrates aesthetics as much as taste. But this fascination with modernist infrastructure, too, is tapping into a revolt against a previous kind of mediocrity, the low ambition of India's Public Works Department. Our command over history is now stamped through a new infrastructural nationalism. The excessive use of Vishwaguru or the "Mother of Everything" may border on historical inanity. But its function is to keep the emotional furnace of national ambition burning.

It is important to register this dominant mood. It is a political reality that cannot be wished away. To be politically successful at this moment, to capture the imagination in democracy will require stoking this ambitious impulse. It will require painting a canvas of success, literally stamping it all around us. This is exactly the impulse that Prime Minister Modi is a master at tapping, that sense of elevation he constantly produces. It is true this sense of elevation is much like the effect of a conjurer's trick. But its ability to tap into a disposition for vicarious pride is unmatched.

This is where the Opposition struggles the most: Its inability to tap into a psychological register of ambition. It either has to tap into a sense of fear, something like the thought that democracy is in danger. This fear is analytically well founded. But it is a fear that wilts away in the face of ambition.

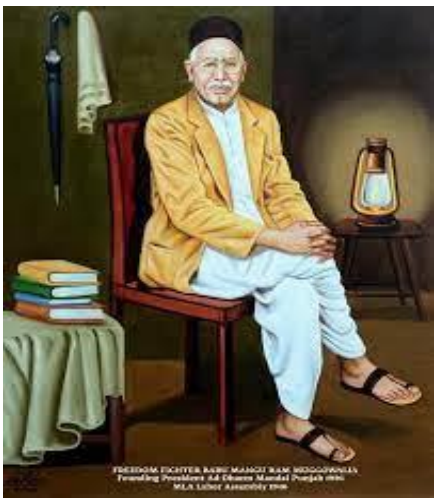
Or it has to tap into a narrative of failure over the last decade, which is hard to sell with a degree of vividness, especially when people see visible signs of expansion in state capacity. Or, it has to once again devolve into a politics of nostalgia and restoration of the status quo ante, an ancient regime trying to re-establish itself, long after the revolution has taken place. The framing of the move to a new parliament building as a new beginning, an acceleration of ambition is meant to register precisely this overcoming of a politics of fear, failure or nostalgia. The Age of Ambition has arrived. Any criticism of this age, that does not have a counter ambition painting vivid dreams, will be brushed aside as mere pedantry.

Ambition can stir people to righteousness. In a way, the consecration of a new parliament building, with a milestone in the history of representation in India, the Women's Reservation Bill, is a legislatively clever way of signalling the government's success. How that might change Indian politics in the long run remains to be seen. The Bill is an act of inclusion. But it will exacerbate the tension between the core principle on which our Parliament was organised — territorial representation — and the outcomes we want — proportional representation. For instance, will it weaken the power of the individual legislator by subjecting constituencies to even more rotation in representation?

Read complete article on website indianexpress.com

India is Proud of:

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia
Social Reformer of Punjab (1886-1980)



Mango Ram (1886–1980), a revolutionary, social reformer, and political activist was born on January 14, 1886, in village Mugowal of Hoshiarpur district to Harnam Das and Atri. He was the founder of the Ad Dharam Movement in Punjab. Mangu Ram's mother died when he was only three years old. His father looked after him. Harnam Das, was a leather businessman, relatively a well-off person in the village.

Mango Ram, who was initially taught by a village sadhu, was admitted to a school when he was seven years old. He faced a lot of discrimination in school because he was from a lower caste. He dropped out of school in 1905 due to this humiliation and worked with his father. In 1909, like early emigrants from Punjab, he decided to move to the United States. He reached America by the end of 1909 and worked in lumber mills and agricultural farms.

In America, Sohan Singh Bhakna and other nationalists established the Ghadar Party, a revolutionary organisation, in 1913. Mangu Ram was quick to join it. The Ghadar Party plotted a pan-Indian revolt against the British. Five ghadarites were chosen as part of a plan to smuggle weapons into India. Mangu Ram, a member of this team, was given the alias 'Nizamuddin.' However, on its way to India, S.S. Mavrick, the ship was intercepted, and the plan went into disarray. He spent the next twelve years in the Philippines incognito. Mangu Ram learned in the Philippines that another person of his name had been executed by the British. For British authorities, he was dead now.

Mangu Ram finally decided to return to India in 1925. He arrived in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and travelled through many Indian hinterland cities to reach Punjab. Mangu Ram saw widespread discrimination against oppressed castes during his journey. This journey through India provided him with a better understanding of the scope of caste-based oppression. When he arrived in Punjab, he was fairly convinced that Indian society required immediate transformation. He was no longer alive in the eyes of the British government. This aided Mangu Ram in beginning his political activism. He wrote in his biography that the leaders of the Ghadar Party agreed with his proposition and designated him to officially work for the upliftment of oppressed caste groups.

Mangu Ram began teaching in his village's primary school in late 1925. From 1922 onwards, social reformers attempted to organise the oppressed castes in Jallandhar under the banner of Ad-Dharma. All of these reformers were previously members of the Arya Samaj, which had launched an anti-untouchability campaign within a Brahmanical framework. A delegation of such leaders met with Mangu Ram in 1926 and persuaded him to join the movement. The Ad-Dharm Mandal was founded in 1926, at the same school where Mangu Ram taught. He was elected as the organization's President.

The Ad-Dharm Mandal was infused with radical ghadarite spirit with the arrival of Mangu Ram, and the movement caused a storm in Punjab. The Ad-Dharm Mandal declared complete independence from Hinduism. The movement persuaded nearly 500,000 untouchables to register as Ad-Dharmis in the 1931 census. During the second Roundtable Conference, when Mahatma Gandhi opposed Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the representative of untouchables, Mangu Ram organised a mass campaign and sent telegrams to the conference, proclaiming Ambedkar as their representative.

Mangu Ram was elected to the Punjab assembly as a member of the Unionist Party in 1946 and again in 1972 from the Indian National Congress in the post-independence era. During both of his terms, Mangu Ram advocated for increased educational and employment opportunities for oppressed classes. In June 1928, Bhagat Singh published an article titled "The Problem of Untouchability" in the Kirti newspaper. In the article, Bhagat Singh praised the Mandal's attempt to organise the untouchables independently.

Mangu Ram died at the age of 94 on April 22, 1980. Throughout his dynamic political career of 65 years, he emerged as a beacon of light and hope for oppressed communities. Despite the fact that the Ad-Dharma movement had died out by the late 1930s and was later merged with the Ravidassias in the 1970s, Professor Raunki Ram argues that Mangu Ram's contribution was crucial in the formation of Dalit consciousness in Punjab.

Write to us at:
bulletin@finsindia.org

*OFFICE :**4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu Road, Dadar (East), MUMBAI – 400014***
Phone 022 24127274