



A thought for today

They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Preserve Privacy

Threats to privacy have snowballed in the digital era, SC must act

The creation of a nine-judge Supreme Court bench to decide whether right to privacy is a fundamental right focusses attention on an issue of critical importance in a digital era. The right to privacy is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution but Article 21 guaranteeing the protection of life and personal liberty does encompass various aspects of privacy.



These cases, however, sought curbs on policing powers and are not intrinsic to the privacy debate. The two petitions questioned search and seizure powers of police and surveillance on a suspected dacoit. No one is arguing for absolute privacy and no fundamental right is absolute in nature. For example, the powers of arrest are a legitimate exception to the right to personal liberty.

Long Live The Maharajah

Air India can survive disinvestment and emerge even stronger

Ashwani Lohani



Air India, the national carrier of India and one of the strongest global brands of the nation is regularly in the news and often for the wrong reasons. Almost everything happening in and with the national carrier emerges in the national and international domain with amazing alacrity.

The very fact that in the last 18 months, beginning December 2015, the airline has gone globetrotting should not be lost sight of. With new flights linking Delhi with San Francisco, Madrid, Vienna, Washington, Stockholm and Copenhagen and Ahmedabad, and London and Newark and many other connections in the offing, the airline has achieved in the international arena, what many other airlines could not.

On the domestic front too, the national carrier has been able to increase frequencies as well as put many new cities on the aviation map of the country, with its singular contribution being in the field of improving regional connectivity, some of that under the umbrella of "Udan", the landmark scheme of the government that is poised to change the way people travel within the nation.

And its efforts in stepping forward whenever the nation needed it have also earned widespread appreciation. With a very wide reach to every nook and corner of the country and also many parts of the globe, the airline often steps much beyond the routine call of duty.

At times of natural calamities, movement of forces, events like the Haj, elections and international evacuations, the role of the national



Shindeep Ahlawaty

carrier in organising rapid movement of men and material is indeed true national service that it performs quietly but with aplomb. Similarly women empowerment is another area in which Air India has done yeoman service by having a large number of women crew in its staff and often operating unique all women flights.

The recent incident of misbehaviour with its employee – in which the airline indeed displayed its spine and concern for the dignity of its workforce – is also perhaps a first that not many in the public or private sector have attempted in the past. The banning of air travel of the gentleman by Air India, that was quickly supported and followed by many other airlines, is a unique landmark in Indian aviation history.

The airline definitely has character but is unfortunately mired in the deeds of the past and therein lies its tragedy.

Despite shortcomings, the fact remains that the national carrier continues to proudly occupy an important place in the psyche of the nation

A few days back, the news of a painting missing from the art collection of Air India was widely carried by the media. What also needed to be brought out but somehow got missed is the monumental effort that is being put in by Air India in retracing, cataloguing, digitising, storing and displaying one of the rare collections of arts and crafts that the nation possesses. This effort that began in 2016 in right earnest could soon culminate in setting up an 'Air India Museum of Arts and Crafts' at Nariman Point, Mumbai, the erstwhile

headquarters of Air India, thereby displaying Air India's concern for the national heritage.

And the recent furore over the non-issue relating to meals served on domestic flights is beyond understanding. As a part of its drive towards reducing wastage and costs and in the process rationalising and improving catering services, a commercial decision was taken to serve only vegetarian meals in the economy section of all domestic flights. One wonders, how should it really matter to passengers travelling from one city to another on domestic flights if they are not served a non-vegetarian dish?

Yet the issue snowballed into a national debate, almost as fierce as the ones we witness on serious issues across the border. The only point that this coverage proved was that the airline is definitely newsworthy, if nothing else.

In recent times, news about disinvestment of Air India has been occupying major space in the national media. Notwithstanding improving performance of the airline, disinvestment is perhaps inevitable in view of the huge debt the airline is saddled with. The operating profit in 2015-16 is evidence of the fact that the airline is able to stand on its feet, albeit after discounting the extremely heavy debt servicing charges, debt that accumulated for a variety of reasons including the flawed decision of merger with Indian Airlines which also left many scars in its wake.

In any case Air India, still the largest airline of the country, shall hopefully remain Air India with all its inherent strengths even with a change in the shades of its ownership. With many constraints removed, perhaps the organisation would emerge stronger and realize the true potential of its men and machines.

Despite shortcomings, the fact remains that the national carrier continues to proudly occupy an important place in the psyche of the nation.

Long live the Maharajah.

The writer is Chairman and Managing Director, Air India

After the attack on the Amarnath Yatra: Why Meghnad Desai is both right and wrong on Kashmir

Syed Ata Hasnain



Men of letters have outstanding world views, but sometimes their views on the situation in the Valley are coloured by lack of practical appreciation of the ground reality. This could certainly be said of Meghnad Desai, thinker and analyst of no mean proportion, who has argued in a newspaper column recently "Kashmir needs patience to get right. A harder military approach will be urged. That has been tried since 1989. Time has come to try something different".

He is entirely right in the broad concept he has outlined. No strategy can be static and no proxy conflict of this kind can ever be defeated by military means. I disagree, however, that India's approach to the proxy conflict has so far only been militaristic or through the security prism and not from the angle of winning the support of the people. A brief recap is appropriate.

1994 and 1996 were political high water marks with the Joint Resolution of Parliament and the first elections after 1989, respectively. 1997 was the humanitarian landmark with

the adoption of Operation Sadbhavana and the Supreme Court's issue of guidelines to the army on operations under AFSPA.

2002 saw the adoption of the healing touch policy of the late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in conjunction with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's philosophical and humanitarian approach. 26/11 saw the re-adoption of a hard line by Pakistan, leading to the paralysis in the streets till 2010. 2011-13 saw the conscious calibration of the balance of hard and soft power through the Hearts Doctrine

Success of soft power initiatives ultimately lies in the ability of the military to stave off the physical threats

which created hope and attempted restoration of dignity to the conflict stricken people, incidentally by the army itself; a situation not politically exploited.

There was nothing militaristic about 2014-16 either; it was a situation of political uncertainty. No doubt violence increased, but not so dangerously until July 8, 2016, when Burhan Wani was killed and the current



impasse came to be.

The recent attack on the Amarnath Yatra after 15 years of peace may actually prove to be another landmark in the history of J&K since 1989, demanding a pragmatic look at balance of hard and soft power. Some observations about the attack and its aftermath are pertinent. First, it could have been much worse, only providence saved the day although loss of even a single yatri to violence is unacceptable.

Second, the response within Kashmir and the rest of India seems different to what might have been expected. They must have been a major

disappointment for proxy war sponsors across the LoC, who wish to create mayhem within India's tenuous social fabric. The Valley did not witness any support from the people for th is heinous act despite the commonly professed notion of hatred towards Indians and other faiths.

Third, the aftermath was sensitively handled by chief minister Mehbooba Mufti with her timely visit to victims and the injured; her statements were soothing and appropriate. The PM also stepped in as also the home minister, but with nothing jingoistic. The political opposition made a conscious

effort at consensus, up to a point.

Lastly and most interestingly, growing impatience in the rest of India with the turbulent situation in the Valley and the broad tendency to be accusatory against a community did not translate into anything as negative as could have been.

Meghnad Desai is both right and wrong. While much more needs to be done to get the people back to the track of belief in themselves and India, the military's role cannot be diminished. Success of soft power initiatives ultimately lies in the ability of the military to stave off the physical threats. The last time India diluted military presence without overseeing genuine peace, that space was occupied by terror groups. We cannot afford it this time, after having learnt our lesson for the umpteenth time. That is the lesson from, for example, the Northern Ireland conflict. The Good Friday agreement could only be enabled in 1997 because the British army continued to hold the periphery even as economics, high quality governance and talking with the people began in earnest. That is ultimately what brought about a significant victory for the people and for the government.

The writer commanded the 15 Corps in Jammu & Kashmir

Shuffle The Cards

Modi must promote performers and induct fresh talent into the Cabinet

Venkaiah Naidu's resignation as minister after filing his nomination for the post of vice-president has set off speculation about an impending Cabinet reshuffle. Prime Minister Narendra Modi must use this opportunity to promote performers and induct fresh blood to deliver results quicker on the ground. This would not only bring in new talent but also relieve ministers saddled with multiple ministries.

Both finance and defence deserve full-time ministers. But both have fallen to Arun Jaitley after Manohar Parrikar moved to Goa as chief minister in March. Similarly the ministry of environment, forests and climate change has been functioning under science and technology minister, Harsh Vardhan, after the demise of Anil Dave in May. Some young BJP leaders have shown promise such as Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and former journalist and MP from Mysore Pratap Simha. They can be given a leg up and brought into the Union Cabinet.

The Centre had merged ministry of overseas Indian affairs with external affairs last year but a lot more can be done in terms of capturing synergies by ending needless bifurcations. For example, Piyush Goyal has been given independent charge of power, coal, mines, and new and renewable energy. This makes sense because an optimal energy policy requires coordination among these ministries, but the logical next step is to abolish the distinction between them and bring them under the same ministry. Similarly, skill development and human resource development can be merged. Such ministries as steel or information and broadcasting are of socialist era vintage and lack relevance in a post-reform environment; they can be scrapped altogether. With less than two years to go before the 2019 election Modi needs more talent in his council of ministers, focused on a smaller range of priority governance tasks rather than spread thin across the board.



Storm in a P-cup

Is Parliament's 'monsoon preparedness' as leaky as that of municipalities?

Bachi Karkaria



Shri Meghnad Rainkar of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) was in full angry flood. "All the time media is berating us only for lack of monsoon preparedness, but why they are not asking same questions to Parliament. Means, MPs also are pouring public's paisa down the drain, no? Parliamentary sessions are not as choked with garbage or what? This monsoon session will be even more waterlogged thanks to opposition beating down on government with no let up, only hindrance." Miss Varsha, his PA, stood listening as impatiently as a Mumbai commuter during the usual monsoon-crippled services. But she knew that there was no stopping Sir in his tracks. The more he raged the more I realised that Shri Rainkar's gripe was justified. Why single out BMC for this season's mess when Parliament's 'stormy' monsoon session is as unlikely to sort out our woes?

Shri Rainkar could well have put himself in the soggy shoes of ruling party MPs. They too had to try to get things working when it was pouring catcalls and a dogged determination to stall proceedings like the flooded Central line. This municipal engineer was no stranger to the tyranny of the rain gods, so surely he could sympathise with the sarkar's difficulty in handling the reign of terror unleashed by anti-nationals as well as the new flood of aggressive 'nationals'?

Just like BMC in this monsoon season, BJP in the monsoon session would not be spared. Yes, ji, the opposition was going to rain on their parade and thunder on about terrorist strikes and lynchings.

But an unsympathetic Meghnad-bhai continued, "Why you all are lashing-splashing BMC only? So many areas i'm pointing out where the monsoon session's record is worse. See, our shoddy paver blocks may get washed away in the first downpour, but opposition MPs are never interested in any paving-shaving, they are blocking only. Low, lying areas are a problem across parties. BJP's most predictable Met department is 'Jab Modi Met Trump/ Xi/ Netanyahu...' And, tell me, will Congress ever tackle its Rahul-sized pothole?"

Alec Smart said: "No surprise in Lulu's railway hotel scam. He loves the gravy train."

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dilbert



Arjan Dev And The Guru Granth Sahib

Balbir Singh Bhasin

Guru Arjan Dev is the fifth in the line of Sikh masters, starting from Guru Nanak Dev. The construction of Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar, the compilation of the Adi Granth, the establishment and development of new townships, the extension and consolidation of the Sikh faith and sacrifice of his own life for a righteous cause are some of his exemplary achievements.

The Golden Temple at Amritsar is an immortal tribute to his superb genius. The Guru Granth Sahib, which has been accorded the unique honour of 'Guru' in Sikh circles, was compiled and edited by Guru Arjan Dev and it continues to command the reverence of generations of countless disciples everywhere. The scripture is an invaluable treasure of Indian spirituality, culture, literature and language.

The company that Arjan Dev enjoyed from his early days consisted, apart from near relatives, Bhai Guru Das, a nephew of Guru Amar Das. His unique personality was the result of his own genius which evolved and flowered in the suitable atmosphere around him. An in-depth study of spiritual and philosophical literature gave a fillip to his scholarly attitude.

Guru Arjan not only undertook to study spirituality, but he also examined and evaluated the message of spirituality. He led his life in the tradition of Nanak Bani and supported it with the strength of his genius. Its most outstanding example is the compilation of the Adi Granth.

The establishment of townships, construction of the Harmandir, pools, baolies and wells – all these projects

required a steady flow of money. In order to meet this requirement, another plan was mooted that proved highly successful. This was the custom of Daswandh – one-tenth contribution of one's income to such endeavours. This custom served to organise and unite the Sikh people.

Jahangir, who ascended the Mughal throne during the lifetime of Guru Arjan, in his 'Tuzaki-i-Jahangir' – in reference to the Goindval settlement of the Guru – makes a mention of the Guru in terms of "Pir" and "Sheikh" and presents him as leader of Hindus and Muslims. But Shaikh Ahmed Sridhndi calls the Guru a qafir of Goindval and expresses happiness at his martyrdom.

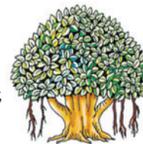
On the other hand, people in close contact with the Guru and his followers have expressed their highest regard and

Sacred space

Work Hard

How did things happen? Was it by accident? I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work.

Plato



the speaking tree