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Special Supplement on

National Food Security Act' 2013

THE DISCUSSANT

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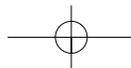
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The president of Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice (CRDJ) Sidharth Mishra on 17 September 2013 had the opportunity to address the officers and gentlemen cadets belonging to the 2nd and 3rd term at the Indian Military Academy.

To be received at the venerable Khetrupal auditorium and escorted to the stage was like a dream come true for Mr Mishra. Also seen in the picture are Commandant, IMA, Lt General Manvendra Singh, members of the faculty and gentlemen cadets.





Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh speaking at a national symposium on National Food Security Act' 2013 organised by Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice (CRDJ) in the national Capital on 30 July 2013. Also seen in the picture are CRDJ secretary Dr Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari and president Sidharth Mishra.

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PLEASURES OF READING AND WRITING

In these cantankerous times, when high-pitched and meaningless debate has engulfed public discourse, a narration on pleasures of reading and writing could come as balm to soothe ruffled feathers. After ages I had the opportunity to hear the legendary professor of Sociology Andre Beteille. He was delivering the National Book Trust foundation day lecture at the India International Centre (IIC).

Beteille, during the course of narration, in his own endearing style recalled the anecdotes of his long academic career including the horrors of learning that the library of Vishwa Bharati, the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore, had only the text books in its stacks. Then he went onto to recall how his professor - MN Srinivas, the man who gave the concept of Sanskritization, was a voracious letter writer and would even use the margins of the inland letter cards of India Post to express his ideas and thoughts.

In these times when the children are so occupied with Facebook and Twitter, I have long been contemplating how do get my two progenies hooked to reading and more importantly writing. After much persuasion my 12-year-old son finally agreed to write to us a letter from boarding school and we all waited with much expectation. The letter did arrive, written on a sheet torn from a notebook and divided into three irregular compartments -- one for me, one for mother and the third for the sister. We have replied to him in three different sheets and each sheet is fully utilized but still not the way MN Srinivas would have wanted to do it.

Last weekend, watching Ranveer-Sonakshi starrer *Lootera*, my daughter during the second half of the film told me that it has been inspired by O Henry's famous short-story Last Leaf . She left me happy and immediately after the movie, I wanted to check on her reading habits. "Dad, it was part of English text in class

The letters received from my father, typed on a Remington portable machine, gave me some of the best pleasures at reading and also writing. I am eagerly looking forward to the reaction of the 12-year-old on receiving a 'long letter' from us. Let me see whether he replies on three different sheets, or sticks to the old format of three-compartments in one sheet or altogether gives up the idea of letter writing.

VII,' said the class XI student matter-of-factly. I was at loss of not just words but also feeling on her revelation. While my thoughts about the girl reading classic literature had come crashing down, but I was happy that her school had taken care to 'teach' her some good stories.

During the lectures to media classes in past decade, I have always told the wannabe journalists that the best way to equip oneself for journalism was to read. In fact I once recall telling the students of the benefits of reading - it strengthens both knowledge and language. Some of them did take to the habit and have prospered. But then there are also journalists, who have prospered as book reviewers even without reading a single book.

Satisfaction to a true journalist can come only if on the basis of his knowledge and information he is able to better his compatriots. Let me narrate for you an incident which really made me proud of being even a pamphlet reader. The agitation by Gujjars in north India was in full swing. I was the lone sympathizer for them on the editorial board of my last newspaper - *The Pioneer*. In the course of news meeting one evening, a colleague sarcastically said, 'These illiterate louts ...'

I had interjected, 'Sir, given an opportunity, even this community can also give you the best of poets.' Everybody in the boardroom looked startled as another colleague said, 'Now you are taking your sympathy for the community a bit too far.' Confident from my readings, I said, 'I am sure about what I am stating. One of the best post-Independence poets was from this community.' Another colleague intervened, 'Come on give it up.' Not to be cowed down, I went on, 'His name was Sahir Ludhianvi.'

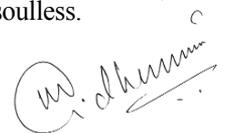
The boardroom fell silent, the editor intervened, 'I think the discussion is moving towards inanity, lets finalise the page 1 stories.'

Next morning the *Hindustan Times* had an article on the agitation by a reputed historian. It carried a mention of the community of Muslim Gujjars living in the vicinity of Ludhiana. I sent a text message to the editor to have a look at the article. He replied that he had already read it.

In the evening news meeting that day, the editor said there was truth in what I had narrated and asked me from where did I dig the information out? I went onto narrate the acquisition of precious knowledge with some flourish. 'Sometime around the turn of the century there was a huge Gujjar Panchayat on the Yamuna banks, where Akshardham temple stands today. Among the literature distributed to those attending and covering the Panchayat was a pamphlet on Gujjar Vidwan (men of letters). It had made a mention about Sahir Ludhianvi,' I said as everybody else heard in rapt attention.

In my boarding school, it was compulsory to write and deposit a letter every Sunday. Some of us even pasted an empty inland letter card and neatly wrote the address on top to befuddle the head boy, who at times checked the letters against an electric bulb to find out if it was empty inside. However, these letters, which I wrote and the ones I received from my mother and father, typed on a Remington portable machine which my father had inherited from his father, gave me some of the best pleasures at reading and also writing.

I am eagerly looking forward to the reaction of the 12-year-old on receiving a 'long letter' from us. Let me see whether he replies on three different sheets, or sticks to the old format of three-compartments in one sheet or altogether gives up the idea of letter writing. He has the much faster and crisper means of communication available to him. It's another matter that such communications on most occasions are soulless.



Sidharth Mishra

27 Oct 2013

secretary's desk

The intervening quarter between the last and present editions of *The Discussant* has been academically very fruitful for the Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice (CRDJ). During this period we intervened very effectively on the issue of Food Security Act. As is the aim of CRDJ, we make every effort to initiate discussion in the academic circles and amidst intelligentsia to come forth with their views on important matters of public policy.

Towards this end we organized a very successful symposium on Food Security Act' 2013 in New Delhi at the India International Centre on 30 July 2013. Dr Raman Singh, Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh, whose government is credited with the enactment of Food Security Act even before the Centre took initiative in the matter, was the keynote speaker on the occasion. Professor MP Singh, former head of Political Science department of Delhi University among others delivered valuable notes.

The most outstanding talk came from Shri Vikas Sheel, Secretary, Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Chhattisgarh. The other eminent speakers on the occasion were Dr Himanshu Roy from Nehru Memorial Centre and Dr Sangeet Ragi from Delhi University. The gathering was perked by enthusiastic participation of the teachers, researchers and students from Delhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawahrlal Nehru University.

In all around 300 delegates participated in the symposium. The important papers presented at the symposium are being published in this issue of *The Discussant*.

It also gives me immense pleasure to share with you the information that our Centre's president Sh Sidharth Mishra was invited by the prestigious Indian Military Academy in Dehradun to address the trainee officers and members of the faculty, which includes officers of the Indian Army on Media-Military Symbiosis. It was a very successful lecture. The presentation made by Mr Mishra is available on our website (www.crdj.in) and being published in this issue.

With this edition we have completed one year under successful supervision of the Registrar of Newspapers of India (RNI) and also ISSN. We shall keep our commitment of providing space to quality research rising above ideological biases.

27 Oct 2013

Dr Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari

NATIONALIST DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

LALIT KUMAR*

ABSTRACT: This paper seeks to understand the aporia of nationalism in India through a text like Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* and counter the negative connotations attached to it in recent years by looking at the presence of multiple nationalisms in India in place of a grand nationalism. What really concerns me is: can this globally constituted discourse on nationalism help us address the post-colonial situation in India? My paper proposes to understand the complex notion of nation and its changing significations over a period of time. To address this question at length first I intend to analyse the postcolonial critique of nation by drawing its genealogy and then locate this critique in the context of Kashmir by juxtaposing the sub-nationalism of Kashmir against the grand nationalism of India. In doing so I would take into account the postcolonial critique of nation by Homi K. Bhabha and Partha Chatterjee and employ their critique to understand the aporia of Kashmir.

KEYWORDS: Nationalism, Kashmir, Colonialism,

Is it relevant to talk about nation and nationalism after the first decade of the twenty first century, when for many the moment of decolonization seems to be a matter of past? Can it help us understand the contemporary politics in a better way? It is such a topic which has already been defined, redefined, constructed and deconstructed time and again. Then, why nationalism again? Though in a world dominated by globalization, mass communication, and multinational capitalism the idea of nation and nationalism might appear anachronistic to some, yet I argue that the discourse of nationalism can still be as productive as it was seen at the time of its origin. Citing its importance in contemporary times the noted political theorist Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments* puts forward the viewpoint of state leaders and political analysts of the west. For these state heads and

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political analysts after the collapse of Soviet Socialism, the resurgence of nationalism in various parts of the world posed real threat to world peace. What they mean presumably is that people fighting for freedom in Kashmir, Palestine and some other parts of the world (these little nationalisms instead of the grand nationalism of the larger and more powerful nation state) are potential threat to world peace. Their line of argument is not of utmost importance to me in talking about the violent or non-violent nature of these nationalisms but to make a beginning regarding nationalism taking a centre stage again. This way of looking at nationalism is pessimistic, as if nationalism were a notorious phenomenon, especially when compared to the fact that a couple of decades ago the discourse related to nation and nationalism was seen in positive light in India and the other Asian and African countries.

This paper makes an attempt to understand the aporia of nationalism through a text like Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* and counter the negative connotations attached to it in recent years by arguing that now instead of a grand nationalism we have multi nationalisms. What really concerns me is: can this globally constituted discourse on nationalism help us address the post-colonial situation in India? My paper proposes to understand the complex notion of nation and its changing significations over a period of time. To address this question at length first I propose to analyse the postcolonial critique of nation by drawing its genealogy and then locate this critique in the context of Kashmir by juxtaposing the sub-nationalism of Kashmir against the grand nationalism of India. In doing so I would take into account the postcolonial critique of nation by Homi K. Bhabha and Partha Chatterjee and employ their critique to understand the aporia of Kashmir. A good starting point to do so would be to critically examine Partha Chatterjee's critique of Benedict Anderson's notion of nation as "imagined community" and his retheorization of nationalism in his much celebrated book *The Nation and Its Fragments*.

It is needless to mention that according to most of the historians and political thinkers the discourse of nationalism in the Asian and African nations was derived from Europe. And, the West's dislike for the current violent nature of multiple nationalisms comes from its uncritical employment by the Third World. It appears as if the West were saying that since we are the originators of this idea the rest should employ it with caution otherwise it may pose threat to world peace (a point underlined by Chatterjee in the opening section of his book *The Nation and Its Fragments*.) The accusation echoes the same age old binary between the west and the rest in the sense that the latter is still ill equipped to handle a western concept in a violent free manner. Chatterjee's critique of Anderson is important to counter such accusation, as he rejects the tendency of the nationalist historians to read nationalism as only a derivative discourse from Europe and as a political movement beginning with the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885. The critique of nation and nationalism on the grounds that they are the products of western colonial discourse raises some fundamental questions. Are the colonial and anticolonial nationalisms the same thing? To what extent the latter differ from the former? Like modernity does the former operate with the problematic colonial assumption about the need to modernise the so called backward communities.

Anderson defined nationalism as an "imagined political community" which was not the product of given sociological condition but was brought into concrete shape through "print capitalism"(Chatterjee 4). He further argued that Western Europe, America, and Russia provided the "modular forms" for the subsequent nationalisms, from which the nationalists in Asia and Africa chose what suited their needs. Though Chatterjee acknowledges the originality and subtlety involved in Anderson's argument, he objects to Anderson's basic claim by arguing that if nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose

an imagined community, which has already been imagined by the West, then what is left for these countries to imagine. If we follow Anderson's strand of thought, it gives the impression that our imagination will remain forever colonized. But the strength of Anderson's argument comes from the fact that many occupants of colonial land did not possess the sense of "a deep horizontal comradeship" prior to the advent of the European powers. Nationalism was defined in opposition to and after the advent of colonial forces. This is not to deny the fact that although the myth of the nation played a major part in uniting people in opposition to colonialism, it did so by ignoring the racial, religious, cultural and gender differences. Under such circumstances the production of a homogenized community became both nationalism's strength and its ultimate weakness. I will elaborate this point further while looking at Kashmir dispute with the help of Bhabha's formulations of "pedagogic" and "performative", which denotes the ambivalence lying at the heart of nationalist discourse. But at present the way I look at this transition is that if Anderson argued that the members of that community share a "deep horizontal comradeship", that bond must be based on some symbols which will differ from nation to nation. For example, if in England cliff or heath gave the sense of belonging to its inhabitants; in India some religion or ritual could have had the same effects. Chatterjee's critique of Anderson therefore on the ground that the latter's theoretical framework gives the impression that our imagination was also colonized does not appear valid to me because there can be different ways of imagining and identifying with symbols and rituals, which will address the specificities of the local context.

However, what is significant in this critique is that anticolonial nationalism did not operate on a single line. The validity of Chatterjee's objection to Anderson's argument stems from the fact that the former instead of homogenizing nationalism on a single line, argues that anticolonial nationalism maintains its own sovereignty within colonial society by dividing its world into two spheres: the material and the spiritual. The material or the domain of the outside, on the one hand, is related to economy, science, technology and other fields where the superiority of the West has been accepted by the East, on the other hand, the spiritual is concerned with the domain of culture or language, art and literature. This distinction reminds one of the old Marxist distinctions between base and superstructure. Most of the historians tend to keep the history of nationalism limited to the domain of the material or political movements and that gives one only one side of the picture as the cultural domain where the distinctiveness of the anticolonial resistance is most visible remains untouched. The anticolonial nationalism maintains the sovereignty of the domain of the spiritual and resists any intervention on the part of the colonial power. It does not mean, however, that it never makes an attempt to modify or refashion its cultural practices but that modern culture would remain non-western. To illustrate his point he gives the example of family and the treatment of women in the family. The Europeans invariably argued that the traditions and rituals followed by the Indians were barbaric, especially in their treatment of women. The nationalist movement focused on improving the condition of women by initiating a series of reforms against some of the practices of traditional order but it also maintained that the new woman in her combination of tradition and modernity would be different from the western woman. Unfortunately historians ignored this aspect of anti-colonial resistance which was entirely based on indigenous nationalism.

Thus we find that on the one hand domain of the spiritual celebrates its difference and distinct identity, and on the other, the sphere of material depends on the forms offered by the colonial state. Ironically, there was always an anxiety in the colonial state to preserve the difference between the ruler

and the ruled. In judiciary, in lawmaking, in bureaucracy and in administration, there was an emphasis to preserve the distinctiveness of the Europeans. Paradoxically it became a major project of nationalism, which had insisted on maintaining its cultural difference from Europe, to argue in favour of the removal of difference in the sphere of the material. So what Chatterjee was arguing basically was that nationalism was derived from the western thought but was transformed into new anti-colonial purposes and that backward nation could modernize itself while retaining its cultural identity. In the light of these pronouncements Chatterjee poses some important questions:

'If Indians had to be admitted into the judiciary, could they be allowed to try being Europeans? Was it right that Indians should enter the civil service by taking the same examinations as British graduates? If European newspapers in India were given the right of free speech, could the same apply to the native speakers? (Chatterjee 10)'

Of course these questions, which focus on removing the difference between the colonizer and the colonized, were raised in the domain of the material. I have been trying to summarize Chatterjee's arguments in order to make a better understanding of the Kashmiri movement by transposing his ideas in the context of Kashmir dispute. Now the question arises can we employ his two-tier model of the spiritual and the material here? Before I proceed further, I wish to make it clear that I am working with the assumption that the moment of decolonization of India was the moment of subjugation for **the majority of Muslim population of Kashmir** since **for them** the oppressed donned the role of the oppressor. Did **the Muslims of Kashmir**, in the field of "the spiritual" try to maintain their cultural difference from the rest of India on the one hand, and on the other, attempt to remove this difference in the domain of "the material" in achieving scientific, political and economic liberation? To illustrate my point in the first domain I will take the same example of the treatment of women in the family, the one used by Chatterjee. Some of the accusations that are often levelled against the **Muslim majority of Kashmir** are that they are anti-nationals, fanatics and terrorists or terrorist-sympathizers, showing preference for the backwardness of Pakistan instead of the modernity and liberalism of India. But the reality is that after coming in contact with various ethnicities, religions, urban cultures, film and media and the military their cultural and geographical landscape have undergone major changes. The heart of the matter is that they are participating in the production of a modern culture by rejecting the Saudi-style Islamic code but at the same time they do not want their **religious and** cultural identity, **which often overlap**, to be diluted by the intrusion of the external world in general and India in particular. And, the Article 370 of the Indian constitution that bars the Indian nationals except Kashmiris from buying immovable properties in Kashmir guarantees the preservation of their cultural distinctiveness. Basharat Peer captures these changes in his autobiographical memoir *The Curfewed Night*:

But there have been fringe efforts to impose a Saudi-style Islamic code in Kashmir, although they invariably fail. In the mostly agrarian society of Kashmir, men and women have worked together in fields and orchards, and though women would wear headscarves, the practice of the veil never really took off. It simply didn't work. Even in non-agricultural and urban settings, like schools, offices, colleges, and universities, only a small number of Kashmiri women chose to wear the veil. (Peer 186-7)

So on the one hand an emphasis was laid upon modernizing the culture by rejecting the puritanical Islamist groups, and on the other, when the government of India and state government of Jammu and Kashmir decided to transfer 99 acres of land to the Amarnath shrine board in the Kashmir valley, it was resisted vigorously by the people of the valley first on ecological grounds and later on religious and cultural grounds. The Indian government was accused of attempting to dilute the culture of the majority in Kashmir by various Kashmiri political parties and separatist leaders. In an interview mentioned in *The Times of India* on June 2008, entitled as "Amaranath Land Row Turns Ugly" National Conference Leader Omar Abdullah described these protests as "Kashmiri Nationalism" and added further that Kashmiri people are not against Amarnath Yatra. Thus there has always been an increasing anxiety in the **majority Muslims of Kashmir** to preserve their cultural identity, **which at times is confined to Islamic identity**, despite adopting some forms of modern culture. Though it is hard to define what constitutes that distinct Kashmiri cultural identity, the answer may vary from religion and language to ethnicity. **In order to understand the nature of this distinct cultural identity of Kashmir I have tried briefly to locate it in the historical context of post-independence India.**

The settlement of the issue of Kashmir, as Ramachandra Guha argues in his book *India After Gandhi* (2007), was a kind of major test for Indian secularism. The important question was: Could a Muslim majority state exist without friction in a "Hindu-dominated but ostensibly secular India"(Guha 24)? India's claim on the whole of Kashmir drew legitimacy on the fact that Maharaja Hari Singh signed a treaty acceding to India. But Sheikh Abdullah, who had showed secular sentiment, expressed his demand for freedom in a meeting with the American ambassador Loy Henderson held on September 1950 on account of its cultural distinctiveness. Abdullah told Henderson:

Kashmir people had language and cultural background of their own. The Hindus by custom and tradition are widely different from Hindus in India, and the background of Muslims quite different from Muslims in Pakistan. Fact was that population of Kashmir was homogeneous in spite of presence of Hindu minority **(cited in Guha, 245).**

Over the years this homogeneity claimed by Abdullah has eroded to such an extent that the demand made for the freedom of Kashmir draws merely on the Islamic identity of Kashmiris whereas other communities are excluded. To equate the dominant culture of Kashmir with an Islamic way of life will be a kind of negation of the eclectic tradition of Kashmir. The negation of this tradition, in fact, had started immediately after the independence at a time when Abdullah claimed to speak for the whole state of Jammu and Kashmir though he was being increasingly unpopular among the Hindus of Jammu, who wanted to merge with the Indian union. To protect the interest of the Hindus of Jammu Praja Parishad party was founded in 1949 by Prem Nath Dogra, who later on got enormous support from Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee. The dissent expressed by the party to safeguard the interests of Dogra masses of Jammu region was immediately rejected by Sheikh Abdullah(Guha 246). The question of how to integrate Muslim dominated Kashmir region with Hindu-dominated Jammu region culturally and politically by fulfilling the aspirations of both the communities became a challenge for the political class of India.

As far as the domain of "the material" is considered, Kashmiris instead of preserving that cultural

distinctiveness emphasizes diluting the difference with the rest of India. *Curfewed Night* mentions two such instances. The first instance occurs when Basharat along with his grandfather starts his train journey for Delhi from Jammu and witnesses a different world, where norms were being set not by the soldiers but by the civilians. In the Shalimar express, two soldiers enter his compartment and request a civilian to make room for them, but the man remains unmoved and points at the floor of the dirty aisle saying firmly that they may sit there. When the train ticket examiner arrives the soldiers obey him obsequiously. This was a new realisation for Young Basharat who must be longing to get the similar treatment by the soldiers in his home state since his father despite being an officer in the Kashmir Administrative Service never enjoyed that freedom and privilege. He expresses his astonishment in this manner:

Grandfather and I looked at each other. Unlike people in Kashmir, our north Indian fellow passengers had no reason to be scared of the soldiers: they ordered them around and the soldiers obeyed. **(Basharat63)**

Indian nationalists, according to Partha Chatterjee stressed that colonial difference should be removed from the domain of the political and demanded that as citizens Indians should be given the same rights as was accorded to British citizens in England. Here Basharat's desire to get the similar treatment from the soldiers echoes that nationalist sentiment. But this desire to include oneself through selective inclusion leads to an aporia from where there is no way to move ahead. It can become really difficult to draw a boundary between cultural self definition and political determination.

Another question that Chatterjee raises in the colonial context is related to the suppression of or the complicity of the mainstream media with the government. If the Indian mainstream media raises the news of suppression of people in the north India quite assiduously what prevents it from doing the same when it comes to Kashmir. The mainstream media suppresses the news items when the Kashmiri militants who die fighting the Indian troops are treated like heroes by the local people and some of them achieve the status of mythic figures. In Peer's book, the writer attends such a funeral procession of a Hizbul Mujahideen commander called Arif Khan. The place is conspicuous by the presence of thousands of Kashmiris and the absence of the media personnel. An old man takes the author to be a media person and shouts at him:

Where are the TV wallah? Go back and tell them what happened here! Tell them this is what they should show live. **(Peer 223)**

Chatterjee's argument made me ask a question in the light of these statements that what happens when nationalist discourse travels from one place to another and is appropriated by the colonized for the anticolonial purpose, especially when the colonized becomes the colonizer? Can the newly turned colonizer do away with the colonial attitude and respect the dissenting voices also as a form of mini nationalism. Therefore I intend to argue that instead of having a pessimistic attitude to nationalism, we can analyse it in two ways. First, instead of a grand nationalism we have multiple semi nationalisms. And second, instead of viewing nationalism as repressive in nature, one can perceive it as a discourse which will inevitably travel from one place to another and will be appropriated by different people in

different ways. From the viewpoint of the political analysts of the west the resurgence of various nationalisms might pose threat to world peace but in the case of Kashmiris dissenters, it is the discourse of nationalism that allows them to give an expression to their voice. This discourse therefore would not have negative connotations for them. The only difference is that there could be different ways of imagining that political community. It could be through a shared history, a common language, ritual, religion, some symbols or the performance of some action which would not be necessarily positive. A grand nationalism depends on such commonness in the process of creating community out of difference and transforming many into one.

In so doing, Bhabha argues in his book *The Location of Culture* that nationalist discourse deals with two contradictory modes of representation: the pedagogic and the performative. Nationalism, on the one hand is a pedagogic discourse in the sense that it claims a fixed origin for the nation and asserts a sense of a continuous history which links the nation's people in the present to previous generation of national subjects. It is pedagogical because it warrants legitimacy and primacy of the nation as the central political and social unit which collects the population into people. The people are the object of pedagogical discourse; they are also the body which nationalism constructs and upon which it acts. It gives the impression of the steady, linear movement of time from past to present to future.

Nationalist discourses are simultaneously performative. The term, according to Bhabha, refers to the ways in which nationalist icons, popular signs and symbols must be continuously rehearsed by the people in order to maintain the sense of "deep horizontal comradeship." He writes:

The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. **(Bhabha 145)**

As a consequence of this double narrative movement the nation is split by what Bhabha terms the "conceptual ambivalence." The nation is always sandwiched between two incompatible opposites: the nation as a fixed category and the nation as something which is devoid of fixed origins and is repetitive and performative. What concerns me is that the bond that is shared by the imagined community can be a type of performative action, which can be not only a way of buttressing the commonness but also a way of challenging and subverting through the expression of dissent. It might appear to be an intriguing claim to make but in 2010 stone-pelting in Kashmir emerged as such a performative action which became a popular way of challenging the Indian government and the paramilitary forces. Sanjay Kak has recorded this in *Until my Freedom Has Come* that how images of nine or ten years old boys and the photographs of middle aged and middle class women as stone-pelting protesters became common in the 2010 summer of massive protests.

Surprisingly stone-pelting became that performative and subversive act for the Kashmiris which they continued performing like a ritual partly to challenge their colonizers and partly to create a bond amongst them.

Though there can never be one common, coherent narrative through which nation and nationalist discourse can be theorized, there has always been a claim made that one should avoid the tendency to define nationalism in opposition to imperialism. One of the crises that the notion of nationalism has been facing is that how to define it in relation to imperialism. The argument that I have tried to

develop through the example of Kashmir is that still today in this age, nationalism is not an obsolete discourse; it can be appropriated and recast as a means not to suppress the voice of those who are on the margins but to give an expression to their voice. There are many like Kashmiris, who are dissatisfied with the grand nation of which they are part of and they require the discourse of nationalism to have a voice of dissent. But the question that remains unanswered is: will this little nationalism of Kashmir be able to sort out internal differences and address the problems of the Hindu minorities of the Jammu region before it claims freedom? The aporia of grand nationalism or mini-nationalism stems from the question how to conceive the notion of nation without suppressing the voice of dissent of the minorities. If religion becomes the basis for imagining community for the nation how to address the plight of those who dissent, and are unwilling to be a part of nation? How to retain unity despite respecting the diversity?

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NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: READING PATRICK MACGILL'S CHILDREN OF THE DEAD END (1914)

GAUTAM CHOUBEY*

In the case of working class literature, the close identification between the speaking subject and its narrative produces a dialectical relationship between consciousness and memory. Determined by years of exploitation, under various routes of production, working class writings exhibit the unfolding of a different kind of consciousness. According to John Fordham, the working class literature responds to a lived experience that bourgeois fiction can only observe. Looking beyond the horizon of bourgeois, governmental and academic discourses, working class fiction attempts a rather unpolished portrayal of the felt experience of industrialisation. Commenting on the reification of workers in capitalist economy, Marx argued that the industrial culture imposes a double alienation on individuals. They are not only alienated from each other, but also from the product of the labour. A reified consciousness, according to George Lukacs, perceives and discloses the true nature of a society that commodifies individuals and imposes principles of rational mechanisation on every aspect of human life.

“Navy Poet” Patrick MacGill’s *Children of the Dead End* (1914) combines class and diasporic consciousness to observe the changing nature of labour both from within and beyond the labouring class. Written from the consciousness of an Irish immigrant, the text is one of irresolution. Without any hint of optimism that characterises the realist fictions of British working class writers such as Lawrence and Dickens, the Irish labourer in Scotland does not affirm any tendency towards stability. In this paper, I propose to undertake a close reading of this semi-autobiographical account to explore the narrative and rhetorical strategy involved in the working class literature.

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(I)

Historian Gareth Steadman Jones identifies three faces of anxiety among Victorian propertied classes regarding the comportment of the working class. The first phase coincides with an unprecedented and unforeseen state of affairs that arose out of rapid industrialisation during 1840s. Although the Chartist Movement, which is widely recognised to have germinated out of the First Reform Bill of 1832, was considered too radical and dangerous, this phase saw the emergence of Christian Socialism. Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), subtitled *The Two Nations* and works of Thomas Carlyle (*Past and Present*, 1843) attempted to resolve the "condition-of-England-question" at a time when the rich and the poor narrated two entirely different stories of English Industrial Revolution. Researched in Manchester, Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of Working Class in England* (1845) acknowledges Carlyle's study and anticipates Elizabeth Gaskell's exploration of the conflict between the workers and the factory owners in *Mary Barton* (1848). However, it is worth observing that issues like Irish immigration and the deteriorating condition of the artisan class were soon forgotten in the euphoria over new industrial expansion. London, in spite of all the disparity that it perpetrates, becomes a destination with a promise. Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849-50) London holds out faith and optimism as the hero could eventually achieve success¹.

During the subsequent two phases, the anxiety was less intense. Thanks to the extensive documentation of the working class, both by novelists like Dickens and social commentators like Henry Mayhew, the working class ceased to be an enigma. The sudden demand of literary as well as documentary accounts of working class during the latter half of the nineteenth century, according to E.P Thompson, reflects a bourgeois desire to understand the working class culture, hitherto limited to government discourses and newspaper reports. Steadman adds that Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor* (1851) introduced an anthropological distinction between the "wandering tribes" and the "settled tribes" that accounted for the cultural distinction between the working class and the bourgeois. Although this line of analysis had no takers, it heralded an important sociological trend of acknowledging a working class way of life with its attendant idiosyncrasies.

Patrick MacGill's *Children of the Dead End* (1914) unfolds primarily as a diary that records ordinary events in the life of an Irish boy as he grows up working as a labourer in Ireland and Scotland. However, what it uniquely does is that it traces, to borrow the title of E.P.Thompson's seminal study of working population, "the making of the English working class". Afflicted by the merciless repression of the United Irishmen's rebellion in 1798, the socio-economic consequences of the Act of Union with England (1800), the potato blight and the mass eviction of peasant freeholders after 1832 forced a mass exodus among the Irish population who migrated to London and other European industrial centres. MacGill's protagonist, Dermod Flynn, provides a vital link between the declining feudal structure on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an emerging industrial culture with its attendant features such as loss of community, love, home and often, desire.

The first chapter of the novel is significantly titled "*A Night in My Father's House*". The narrator seeks to recollect a way of life that is lost to years of labour away from home. However, there is an overbearing sense of contingency in the description of the time Dermod spent as a child in Glenmornan. The narration begins in a "night in the dead of winter" as the "blue flames" of the hearth warn of an impending storm. "My father's house", as opposed to a possible "my home", is a place

that Dermot must leave to work in England or Scotland. During the great era of industrial expansion and migrant labour, the family suffered more than any other social unit. Wilting under an almost cyclic failure of potato crops, demonic landlord under an exorbitant land settlement and his nexus with the priest, Dermot's family would rather pay the land rent and the priest's tax than spend the money to save its youngest member's life. Even the grief at the death of a child could not displace prudent considerations for future sustenance. "It will take a lot of money to bury the poor boy", the father glumly observes, adding further that "It costs a good penny to rear one, but it's a bad job when one is taken away". Dermot describes a conservative catholic community where the poverty, starvation and death go hand in hand with rigid adherence to customs, beliefs and rituals.

In several of these working class narratives what is of primary importance is a sense of embeddedness in place and community and values of co-existence that sustain people through hardships. In Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913)², the occasion of William's death brings the neighbourhood together. In *Children of the Dead end*, Dermot describes family as a source of oppression. "I never for a moment thought of keeping my wages for myself. Such a wild idea never entered my head. I was born and bred merely to support my parents, and great care has been taken to drive this point into my mind from infancy." (MacGill, 48) Young Dermot questions his own upbringing that fosters another form of tyranny. The text strongly suggests that liberation doesn't merely imply end of class oppression. Its benefits must be extended to the individual within the community.

Here, the novel comes closer to Lawrence's psychological realism. The protagonist of Aron's Rod is a loner who feels alienated from both his family and the members of his collier's union. We wonder the extent to which the working class experience can translate itself into a modernist quest for issues such as fractured subjectivity, individuality and the position of individual as both an outsider and an insider to his community. Although Dermot is always a Glenmoran man and his companion Moleskin plays the role of an absent father, a worker in the industrial culture is always a loner. At the same time, the overwhelming sense of betrayal at the hand of his own family is depicted as a structure of feeling which characterises all Irish boys prematurely forced into labour. Dermot's trajectory is an Irish tale in which the individual crisis is measured against the collective suffering.

The passage from childhood to an early maturity to a pre-mature disappearance of youthful romanticism is paralleled by the gradual despondency and the dreariness that settles on the narrative voice. In the early parts of the text, the narrative pattern becomes routine as the young Dermot does little more than change location and master-from a nightmarish existence at Bennet's farm to the equally tedious life at Old Mary Sorley's house, to a "good time" at James MaCrossan's farm. These chapters reveal the rhetorical strategy of the narrator who frequently uses irony to capture the plight of the working class characters. Described with the vividness of a young, these episodes focus more on the people and places rather than the nature of work Dermot is subjected to. Dermot elaborately describes the customs, dresses and the manner of people living on these farms. His ever haunting sense of smallness during his stay in the farm does not deter him from reading *History of the Heavens* and anticipating a future happiness. However, his enthusiasm fails to conceal the irony which underlines his existence. It is the mechanical work routine, which Dermot seems to have naturalised, that allows him the leisure to dream. The narrator tells us, "Dreams like these made up a great part of my life in those days. Sometimes I would find myself with a job

finished, failing to remember how it was completed.” Similarly, the story of Sandy MacDonald evokes tragic irony. Emaciated under years of labour, Sandy longs to die in his county. However, the night before planned excursion, he dies clinching the money that his poor mates have collected for his travel.

Patrick’s narrative is more of amused account of the working class anguish where development, social or subjective, has a neatly identifiable origin. Working class mistrust of the aristocracy, church and the bourgeoisie, as the narrator endeavours to show, is not just a class antagonism rooted in material inequality. The opposition is a product of years of oppression and experience of living in sub-human condition. Dermot confesses that “the covert sneers, the insulting jibes, the kicks and the curse were good, because they moulded my character in the way that is best”. The present hatred and the anger, “firmly engrained in my heart even to this day”, is a product of historical suffering that has spilled well into the present. The period between 1815 and 1832 saw several popular agitations against particular abuses-income tax, tithes, the Corn Laws, sinecures, etc. However, as Craig Calhoun suggests, these insurrections were often read as urban movements which brought together the professional men, industrial labour as well as small time manufacturers. However, working class life writings and semi-autobiographical narratives, like *Children of the Dead End*, postulate that both the rural unskilled labour and the industrial worker share a common origin. The narrative of reminiscence suggest that the source of anguish among the working masses is not necessarily the fear of anonymity that polite discourses impose on them, but a prolonged history of exploitation.

In several of the working class writings, there is a dialectical interplay of permanence and change. The narrative does not restrict itself to the internal relationship of worker to his community but also incorporates the communal/individual contact with the world outside the community. Although such moments are limited in the novel, the lived experience is described not by means of static categories of social relation. Often there is a strong impulse to break the restrictive bonds of customs and community. Although steeped in Glenmornan conservatism, he acknowledges the magnanimity of Gourack Ellen, a fallen woman. His lifelong feeling of tenderness for Norah Jones never diminishes.

(II)

The “nether world” of the working class, as projected in the polite discourses of the bourgeoisie, was impermeable to civilization. However, the ethnic ensemble out of which the working classes emerged was thoroughly conservative with strict morality. For Charles Booth, the working class wasn’t simply without morality or culture but possessed a strict culture of its own whose rules did not coincide with the bourgeois morality. In the text, MacGill gives an account of a “fistic culture” that ruled the working class slums. Following a code of honour, the drunken brawls would be resolved through duels in “the ring”. However, once the fight gets over, the antagonists would accept the outcome and move on. Similarly, the narrator’s account of the practice of stealing, which was common among the mates in Kinlochleven, reduces it to a game. Moreover, it is described as a necessary vice which ensures that things only exchange hands as they are passed on to someone “who may be needed it more than did.”

Although their presence was increasingly registered, the term “working class” could gather only negative cultural connotation- uncivilised, irreligious, intemperance, improvidence, etc. Despite of

their geographical presence³, the working class, as a cultural ensemble, remained hidden from the polite voices and was thought to be the breeding ground for crime, sedition and prostitution. Mass unemployment, epidemics, Irish immigration, labour unrest abroad and the doubt over political allegiance of the working class created an atmosphere that led to an upsurge of charitable and evangelical missions, like Dr Barnardo's school for the juveniles, which sought to civilize the toiling masses. Legislative reforms to create physical and institutional space for the working class, which Foucault describes as the paraphernalia of bio-politics, were drawn with an added emphasis on tempering the rowdiness of the masses through a new moral code for life and work. The parliamentary reformers propelled little by the distressing living conditions of the working class but more out of a desire to prevent anarchy. The evangelical missions of private philanthropists were carried with an intention to prevent the working class from running amuck the property of the riches. The bourgeois reformist zealots sought to diffuse the revolutionary potential of the masses⁴.

Children of the Dead End blatantly and vociferously dismisses the hollow claims of the bourgeois reformist missions. "I detest missions", proclaims the narrator, "a missionary canvasses the working masses for their souls as a town councillor canvasses them for their votes". Church is denounced as the "betrayal of the people" for it only "soothes those who are robbed and never condemns the robber". Moreover, it is important to note that the reformist zeal appears as an offshoot of the industrial culture. Unlike the earlier railwaymen and his mates in Kinlochleven, the railway unit in the industrial town of Glasgow is described as "ignorant and spineless". The new Ganger is a hypocrite who beats up his wife and at the same time, participates in the religious Railways Mission.

His impertinent description of "the apprentice who dressed better than his Divine Master" is coupled with the complaint that "no other minion of law ever came near the place". The tone suggests a general distrust for the evangelical mission of the "stray clergyman". At the same time, the text also records social myopia towards the less privileged.

(III)

According to E.P Thompson, far from being an undesirable excess of the industrial culture, the Irish labourers represented a necessary labour supplement unreformed by industrial work discipline. "The heavy manual occupations at the base of industrial society", writes Thompson, "required a spendthrift expense of sheer physical energy-an alternation of intensive labour and boisterous relaxation which belongs to pre-industrial labour rhythms and for which the English artisan or weaver was unsuited both by reason of his weakened physique and his Puritan temperament." In a bid to escape starvation under sub-subsistence economy or semi-slavery on potato patches, they acquired a reputation in the industrial centres of performing extraordinary feats of human labour. MacGill's narrative not only illustrates the physical hazards of stretching the human capacity to work, but also the long term socio-psychic consequences of prolonged labour.

While even the bonded labour on Irish potato farms had a human face in the figure of benevolent James MaCrossan, the first image of industrial culture is tainted by a tragic death and a rush to land into the "Dead Man's Shoes". The horrific sight of a body that had been "cut it two" and the image of severed hands lying on slag is a sharp contrast to Dermot's previous encounter with the dead who slept quietly as if in an eternal repose. However, later Dermot would get used to the

precariousness of life in the working class and this “virgin horror” of death would die away. Death, accidental or due to emaciation, became a way of life. The sight of a dead co-worker will perturb them, but soon they will recover and there would be a scramble for the dead man’s belongings.

The text is replete with graphic details of gruesome deaths and mutilated bodies. “Seldom may a man have chance to look on hands like those of my mates. Fingers were missing from many, scraggy scars seaming across the wrist or the palm of others told of accidents which had taken place on many precarious shifts.” Described as “wounded animals” and “scarecrows of the civilization”, these wasted bodies had little to look ahead to in their lives. The dispassionate narration of the several stories of suffering, woven in the text, suggest the commonality of death. The story of Sandy McDonalds is particularly telling. Until struck by illness, he was a sturdy man who could pull through ten hour work shifts at a sugar factory. In a desperate attempt to survive, he dragged his body against the disease and pawned everything he had until he could stretch it no further. After the death of his wife due to starvation, he is robbed of every support system and left with his decaying body as his only asset.

The text shows how years of struggle not only kill their dreams of a better future, but also robs the working class of any social affiliation outside their makeshift slums. These veterans of labour had no place to. Often they died at the place of work. Without an address, they couldn’t even receive letters from their family. The whole experience turns them inert to sentiments of joy and grief. “Nothing to me was pleasurable, nothing made me sad”. Even their sexual desire gets dissipated. “The sexual instinct was almost dead in them. Women were merely dreams of long ago.” When Dermot accidentally meets Norah Jones on the streets of Glasgow, the girl who had been his poetic ideal, he finds her sublimity reduced to prostitution.

(IV)

The initial sign of anger, which is imbued with any degree of logistical understanding of his predicament, appears in a chapter titled “Books”. Reading Carlyle’s *Sartur Resartus*, Marx’s *Das Capital* and Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*, Dermot felt like the monster of Frankenstein who rues his working class origin. Suffering, he adds, “starts at any age and its only permanent remedy is death.” Aware of his commodification, Dermot observes that he is “not a human being” but “a ware purchased in the market place...only an article of exchange.” His reified conditioned is further reinforced as he finds employment as a navvy. He feels riveted to “the great industrial machine” and that he was “a mere spoke in the car of progress”. In the chapter titled “*I Write for the Newspaper*”, the consciousness of an unjust socio-economic order becomes poignant. “Where we were working, a new town would spring up someday; it was already springing up”, muses Dermot, “and then, if one of us walked there,” a man with no fixed address,” he would be taken up and tried as loiterer and vagrant.”(MacGill, 227) On the one hand, reading books and the occasion to write for a newspaper makes his assessment of the working class struggle more profound; on the other hand, he writes without any purpose with the sole intention of getting solace from the exercise of writing. Dermot confesses that the act of writing is his way of getting to a world beyond the pits, fights and Moleskin. Caught in a double bind over his love for the community and his desire to live life on his own terms, the privilege of getting published in the newspaper induces a feeling of betrayal as if he was “committing some sin” against his people.

The question of fidelity to reality and the idea of a navy writing for navvies are some of the important questions that the constantly grapples with. The text not only disrupts reader's expectations of a bildungsroman, but even the autobiographical form is rendered tentative by the dialectical relationship between two parallel formations: that of the worker and that of the writer. Moreover, as the narrative voice grows in conviction, we wonder whether it is the consciousness of the narrator recollecting events from the past or whether it is the consciousness of the voice experiencing the world as it unfolds. Can the author be a vanguard for his community?

Unlike Aron's Rod, where Lawrence anticipates the birth of a superhuman to lead the working class masses, the vision for a future utopia is never spelled out in MacGill's text. The questions of literary sincerity and authority appear more prominently in the chapter "*Unskilled Labour of Another Kind*". Working as a journalist for a British newspaper, he realises that journalism has "oscillating principle." Dawn is managed by an American who hates trade unions while most of its journalists are socialists. Dermod ensures that his reports are based on firsthand experience, just as the text of *Children of the Dead End* is. Yet he adds a "spicy bit of socialism" to it.

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1. The euphoria over industrial revolution wasn't meant to last for long. Dickens' next project, *Bleak House* (1852-53) reveals a negative feeling. In the opening chapter of the novel, the city of London that had given hope to *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Paul Dombey* and *David Copperfield* appears shrouded in fog. This atmosphere of gloom gets intense with *Hard Times* (1854) and with the ironic re-examination of *David Copperfield's* autobiographical concerns in *Great Expectations* (1860).
2. By the time Lawrence wrote *Aron's Rod*, the community failed to be a support system. Published in 1922, the novel traces the collapse of trade unions and the idealism that sustains it. Aron Sisson, the secretary of the trade union is constantly reminded by his wife that "they want to get rid of you...a lot of ignorant colliers...Self, self, self-that's all it is with them- and ignorance."
3. E.P Thompson observes that very often the masters and the industrial labourers lived closer to the factory. In some cases, they even lived in the different sections of the same compound.
4. Several reformists, according to E.P Thompson, saw the insurrectionary phase of Luddism as abhorrent and futile. "It was not their intention to form a "working-class" radical movement", Thompson adds. Indeed, they thought it to be their duty to oppose-any attempt to excite the poor to invade the property of the rich.

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CAUSES FOR ACUTE POLARISATION: A STUDY OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH

MOHIT SHARMA*

The bitter friction between ruling Awami League and opposition parties - Jammata-e-Islami (JI) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) -- in Bangladesh, just a few months ahead of upcoming national elections may lead to yet another South Asian quagmire. Not only has territorial neighbours like India remained on alert, the international community too has been suggestive of resolving the problem amicably as soon as possible to thwart any egregious situation.

The trigger to the unabated political turmoil is the recent explicit rulings by International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a specially constituted body in 2010, to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during the War of Independence in 1971. Several JI leaders have been held responsible for 1971 war crimes which have led to polarization among supporters on ideological lines. The supporters of a multi-religious, secular establishment in Bangladesh are in favour of a government led by Sheikh Hasina. The conservatives wanting the rule of Islamic law, rallied by JI, have been challenging the government's actions at every step. Most recently, on 1 October, leader of BNP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was sentenced to death evoking bitter reactions from party supporters.

Sheikh Hasina government is accused of exploiting her power by championing the politics behind the ICT verdicts for electoral gains. Hasina, on the other hand, reiterates that it is the parliament where a debate should happen and not outside.

As the political game unfolds in Bangladesh, its stability hangs by a thread. The hopes of a free and fair elections are thinned with stakeholders showing no signs of homogeneity. This article would attempt to trace what led to such a situation and how international community, including India is wary of it.

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What transpired?

The ICT has handed down six judgements since January this year with the first one being against Abul Kalam Azad who was found guilty of crimes against humanity, genocide and rape and sentenced to death followed by Jamaat leader Abdul Qader Mollah who was sentenced to life in prison. Later, the vice-president of the religious party Delwar Hossain Sayedee was also convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death. On 15 July another top JI spiritual leader Ghulam Aza was sent to prison for 90 years for masterminding atrocities during the war. Recently Abdul Quader Molla, another JI leader, was convicted for committing mass murder during 1971 and was given the death penalty.

Resultantly, these convictions have witnessed face-off between the Jammatt supporters and the police. The police have even been accused of killing protesters by use of force.

BNP leader convicted too

BNP leader Khaleda Zia had criticized the government's actions when several JI leaders were convicted and had said that 'these rulings will always remain questionable.'

Now with one of her own party leader given death penalty for war crimes, it is to be seen how Bangladesh's main opposition party reacts. In all likelihood Khaleda Zia will take on the ruling party which will make matters worse for the stability of the country.

Earlier calling on the government and police not to use force against demonstrators, she had asked the courts to take into account the expectations of the public in deciding on their verdicts and sentences.

On 1 October BNP legislator Salauddin Quader Chowdhury was found guilty of torture, rape and genocide during the 1971 war. The 64-year-old Chowdhury was charged with killing some 200 civilians and collaborating with Pakistan's army to kill and torture unarmed people, as well as other crimes.

Sheikh Hasina's stand

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been maintaining that bringing perpetrators of war crimes to justice is for the betterment of the country and urged Khaleda Zia to join her in the cause.

She recently in a press conference urged Khaleda Zia to part with the war criminals and instead stand in favour of their trial.

'Please come (Khaleda Zia) to parliament and discuss issues. We've proved that free, fair and neutral elections are possible, and we want credible polls. Make it clear how you want the election to be held?' she said, adding that, 'If the opposition leader leaves her association with the war criminals and stands in favour of the trial, then there would be no crisis in the country.'

On upcoming elections she quipped, 'There has been a set of people who had always tried to create crisis so that their importance increases...if there's any abnormal situation then their importance gets enhanced. Reaffirming her commitment that the next general election would be held in a free, fair and neutral manner, a confident Hasina said, 'We would get seats the way people would cast their votes for us and I can guarantee that the next general election would be held in a free, fair and neutral manner.'

However, on the other hand, Sheikh Hasina is accused of initiating ICT trials to leverage political advantage ahead of the upcoming election. Many are arguing that had she really wanted to bring the perpetrators to justice what had she been doing till now. And now when she has done what is stopping

her from executing the ones who have been given death sentences. That Hasina is using these verdicts as a political propaganda can't be ruled out.

Hasina's take on this is that the matter is not up to her. 'Our judiciary is totally independent...the verdicts would be executed Inshallah. The law will take its own course and there's nothing to put pressure in this regard,' she had said. Certainly she is passing the buck despite the fact that she was the one who orchestrated the initiation of these trials.

Polarization due to ICT rulings

According to estimates, since January at least 100 people have died in violence that broke out after the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) convictions of Jammata-e-Islami leaders for war crimes.

Given Bangladesh's deeply polarised society and the passions associated with this case, analysts believe they're bracing for more violence in the near future. 'Jamaat is an important component in the opposition coalition, and the government reportedly tried to sway the party over to its side. After talks reportedly broke down, Bangladesh's high court ruled in August that Jamaat-e-Islami is registered illegally, effectively preventing the party from competing in the general election expected in January,' said Shahnawaz, a research scholar at Jamia Millia Islamiya writing his dissertation on Bangladesh. He added that this has led to immense polarisation in the society which may intensify as elections approach.

'There is polarisation between those who favour a nationalist, multicultural, multi religious identity for Bangladesh, and those who favour a more Islamic identity,' said David Lewis, an expert on South Asian affairs at the London School of Economics in an article in Duetsche Welle.

The International Crimes Tribunal, which has been criticised by human rights groups, is accused of operating against the rules set by international body United Nations. ICT was set up in 2010 by the current government to try those accused of collaborating in 1971 with Pakistan to stop Bangladesh, then known as East Pakistan, from gaining independence.

Moreover, the Islamic party recently received another blow when Dhaka's High Court ruled on 1 August in favor of a long-running petition which argued that the JI should never have been allowed to register as a political party. The petitioners had argued that JI's charter violated the country's secular constitution as it called for 'The rule of Allah' and discriminated against minorities and women. The JI reacted to this by appealing to the Supreme Court and calling for a 48-hour nationwide bandh.

Caretaker Government issue

Since 1996 elected governments in Bangladesh has been transferring power to an unelected non-partisan government to organize free and fair elections.

This system of a non-party caretaker government was constitutionally introduced through the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in February 1996 to press the demand of a non-party caretaker government to oversee political transition in the country. The Thirteenth Amendment gave power to an elected government to transfer power to an unelected non-party caretaker government to oversee a new parliamentary election on completion of its term. The system which lasted for nearly two decades has held four elections under it: in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008.

In June 2011, however, the ruling coalition led by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina amended the constitution declaring that in a democratic country "there is no space for any kind of unelected interim government."

The move triggered strong resistance from the opposition. Since July 2011 the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the country's largest opposition party led by Khaleda Zia has made the re-introduction of the CTG into the constitution their main demand, arguing that a national poll under a partisan body will not be "free and fair."

According to experts the issue has become the primary reason for the increasing volatility of politics and the impasse over the upcoming elections to be held before the end of January next year.

Ali Riaz, a South Asia expert at Woodrow Wilson Center was quoted in an article as saying, "I am afraid the elections might not be free and fair under a partisan government. There is a strong perception among citizens that it may adversely affect the outcome. Opinion-polls have shown that almost 80 percent of the population would like to see the election held under a caretaker government."

Indian apprehensions

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) officials has been maintaining that they are constantly monitoring the situation in Bangladesh and are in regular touch with their embassy in Dhaka. 'Stability in Bangladesh is imperative for the peace in the South Asian region and we are willing to extend all our support in ensuring that peaceful elections are undertaken in the country,' a senior MEA official said.

New Delhi has considerate relations with the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina government and is sceptical of emergence of Jammāt-e-Islami as the more powerful party in the country. 'Such parties may prove to be detrimental for the secular growth of Bangladesh which is imperative to manage the ethnic heterogeneity of the country,' the MEA official added.

India also fears any situation facsimile to Pakistan where the Islamic parties have been able to penetrate profoundly into the state's institutions. Islamisation of Pakistan's powerful military during General Zia-ul-Haq's martial law has been posing challenges to the country's democratic evolution till date. Certainly New Delhi dreads any such repetition in Bangladesh for stability of the region.

What India should do?

Ruling Awami League has faced humiliating defeat in July's mayoral elections in Bangladesh after losing all seats to BNP. It points to a possibility of Khalida's BNP in coalition with JI emerging victorious during the general elections. And if that becomes reality India will be affected badly.

Henrik Mairhack, director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's office in Dhaka recently said in an interview, 'The ruling party is becoming increasingly nervous ahead of general polls. It recently suffered heavy losses in mayoral elections in five large cities. Corruption scandals on a national scale contributed to the disappointing results at the polls. At the same time, a fundamental movement linked to private Koran schools has been increasingly successful in mobilizing voters to support opposition parties such as the JI and BNP by simply criticizing the government of being "anti-Islamic."

Presently, there is a notion that Indian government is pro-Hasina establishment which was reiterated by BNP leader Khaleda Zia cancelling her meeting with President Pranab Mukherjee during latter's visit to the neighbouring country in March 2013.

What India needs to accomplish is to maintain a tidy relation with not only the ruling government in Bangladesh but also main opposition party BNP. 'If at all Khaleda comes to power it will be adverse for India. India needs to, through diplomatic channels, pursue the developments minutely and not take

a stand completely opposite to anyone,' Shahnawaz said, adding that, 'According to reports, during recent India-Bangladesh summit none from Indian delegation was suggestive of calling on Khaleda Zia for an informal meeting.' Besides, there is a bigger risk to the Hindu minority in Bangladesh which enjoys support from Hasina's government. If Khaleda clinched the power the minority would become vulnerable.

New Delhi should also consider Jammata-e-Islami's already existing cordial relations with ideological factions in Pakistan. A BNP-JI coalition at center in Bangladesh could run amok against India. Moreover, Bangladesh's close association with Pakistan would beset India's strategic hold in the South Asian region. That all these factors should be kept in mind by Indian government is imperative.

International concerns

Bangladesh's surmounting political feud has caught the attention of international players such as the United Nations and the European Union too who have expressed that the country might descend into political instability. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon talked to Bangladeshi foreign minister Dipu Moni and stressed the 'critical importance' for the political leaders of the country to engage in constructive dialogue. Moon also phoned the opposition leader Khaleda Zia and talked for around half-an-hour. He conversed about current political situation and the next general elections.

As former US ambassador to Bangladesh William Milam told Duetsche Welle, 'Bangladeshi leaders seem to consider losing an election a near-death experience, impossible to tolerate. Winners always wreak vengeance on the losers. And it seems that the penalties for losing become more severe with each election cycle. This is not a fertile ground for substantive democracy to flourish,' adding that, 'The political imperative in Bangladesh to get elected, or re-elected, is just too fierce, and neither major party would be able to put the temptation to cheat behind it, even if it wanted to.'

Most analysts believe that if the situation in Bangladesh is not interfered with it could lead to more trouble. The threat of rise of Islamic terrorism in Bangladesh would linger if an immediate step to resolve the conflict is not taken. Before the swords are drawn and country's peace decimates, the analysts believe, that international community has a role to play in preventing any such situation.

'If we look at the current situation in Bangladesh every election booth is guarded by a man each from Awami League and BNP. Any disruption would lead to violence making a free and fair election impossible,' Shahnawaz stated, adding that, 'It is necessary to get all stakeholders together and reach a consensus on issues of perpetual obscurity.'

Conclusion

The developments in Bangladesh have put the equilibrium of the South Asian region in quandary. Even as Awami League attempts to bring perpetrators of 1971 war crimes to justice through International Crime Tribunal they should also realise that it could lead to invigoration of unscrupulous elements. A collective resolution within the existing political set-up is what all parties should aim at, keeping aside their personal gains.

Polarisation along ideological lines is bad for any democracy and unfolding violent developments in Bangladesh could cause tremors which would be felt across borders.

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COMPOSITION OF DELHI LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY

SK SHARMA*

With the election for the constitution of the fifth Assembly of Delhi due in mid-December, a study of its composition so far is most timely. The author is credited with laying foundation for legislative business of the Delhi assembly functioning as its secretary during its state of infancy. He was specially commissioned by the Centre to carry out this study

Delhi Assembly, which came into existence in 1993 as a result of an amendment made in the Constitution of India, is now in the 20th year of its existence. Since its inception, four elections to the Assembly have been held viz. in 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008 and the fifth is due soon.

In the first Assembly elections, it was the BJP which came to power winning 49 seats in the 70 member House and Madan Lal Khurana became first the Chief Minister of Delhi. In the subsequent three elections, the Congress Party led by Sheila Dikshit emerged victorious winning 53, 47 and 43 seats respectively.

The fifth Assembly, the elections to which may be held in November, 2013, is necessarily to be constituted before 18 December 2013, and if not so done by that date, the present Assembly will automatically stand dissolved having completed 5 years of its existence.

Let us have a look at the kind of elected representatives, their age, educational qualifications, professional and socio-economic background, etc. who have, from time to time, represented the people of Delhi in the four Vidhan Sabhas.

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Education

To find out the educational level of the MLAs, two lists have been drawn-up. In the first list, names of those MLAs are placed whose educational background has been of minimum Graduation level. The second list has the names of those MLAs whose education has been of below graduation level viz. Intermediate, Higher Secondary, Primary etc. In the 70 member Assembly, the position that finally emerges is as follows:-

	No. of Graduates	Percentage of total members of the House
First Legislative Assembly (1993-98)	49	70%
Second Legislative Assembly (1998-2003)	46	65.71%
Third Legislative Assembly (2003-2008)	47	67.14%
Fourth Legislative Assembly (2008-2013)	47	67.14%

One thing is clearly discernible from the above Table. The educational level of MLAs is on the decline instead of going up. In the First Assembly, 70% of the Members were graduates, while in the subsequent three Assemblies; their percentage went down to 65% and 67%. Incidentally, more than 30% of MLAs have education below graduation level. This is notwithstanding the fact that Delhi is the capital city and its literacy rate is as high as 86.34%.

Average Age

The Constitution of India provides that any Indian citizen who has attained the age of 25 years is eligible to become a Member of Lok Sabha or a State Legislature, while the minimum age for becoming a member of Rajya Sabha is 30 years.

The Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 also lays down that a person has to be of a minimum of 25 years of age in order to be eligible to be a Member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

Age-wise, if the Members are divided into different age groups with a gap of 10 years in one group and the other, the following position that emerges is as follows:

First Legislative Assembly ▼

Age	No. of Members	Percentage
25 to 34 years	09	12.85%
35 to 44 years	19	27.14%
45 to 54 years	21	30%
55 to 64 years	16	22.85%
65 to 74 years	04	05.71%
75 to 84 years	01	01.42%

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Second Legislative Assembly ▼

Age	No. of Members	Percentage
25 to 34 years	04	5.71%
35 to 44 years	25	35.71%
45 to 54 years	26	37.14%
55 to 64 years	10	14.28%
65 to 75 years	05	07.14%

Third Legislative Assembly ▼

Age	No. of Members	Percentage
25 to 34 years	03	4.28%
35 to 44 years	13	18.57%
45 to 54 years	28	40%
55 to 64 years	17	10%
65 to 74 years	08	11.42%

Fourth Legislative Assembly ▼

Age	No. of Members	Percentage
25 to 37 years	06	8.57%
38 to 45 years	13	18.57%
46 to 55 years	32	45.71%
56 to 65 years	14	20%
66 to 80 years	04	5.71%

The Tables above show that the Legislative Assembly is ageing and the maximum number of Members are in the middle age group of 45 to 55 years. Nearly half of the MLAs of the present Assembly fall in this age group. Constitutionally speaking, 25 years is the minimum age for contesting elections. Hence, if members in the age group of 25 to 35 years are treated as young, their percentage has never gone beyond 13% and their number has never touched the double digit mark. This is despite the fact that more than 50% of Delhi's population is in the young age group of 15 to 40 years and all political parties make tall claims of focusing on youth power and seemingly vow to give more and more representation to youth in the Legislatures and various party forums.

**COMPOSITION OF DELHI LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:
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Eldest and the Youngest

81-year-old **V K Malhotra** is the eldest member of the present Assembly followed by **Choudhary Prem Singh** (80 years) and **Sheila Dikshit** and **O P Babbar** (both 75 years). **Bharat Singh** (36 years) is the youngest member of the Assembly.

Occupational background ▼

The Table below depicts the occupational background of MLAs, Assembly-wise:

Occupation	First Assembly	Second Assembly	Third Assembly	Fourth Assembly
Traders/Businessmen	26 (37.14%)	35 (50%)	34 (48.5%)	33 (47.14%)
Social & Political Workers	12 (17.14%)	13 (18.57%)	15 (21.42%)	14 (20%)
Teachers	10 (14.28%)	4 (5.71%)	5 (7.14%)	5 (7.14%)
Lawyers	04 (5.71%)	3 (4.28%)	01 (1.42%)	02 (2.85%)
Doctors	02 (12.85%)	05 (7.14%)	04 (5.71%)	04 (5.7%)

In terms of occupation, a large number of members belong to the category of traders and businessmen followed by those who call themselves as social and political workers. In the first Assembly (1993-98), the percentage of members engaged in trade, business or having some kind of means of income of their own was 37% and today their percentage has gone up to 50%. On the other hand, the number of professionally qualified members has gone down. For instance, the strength of teachers in the First Assembly was 10 (14.28%), which now stands reduced to half i.e. 5 (7.14%) in the present House. Likewise the strength of Lawyers and Advocates has also been reduced by 50%. On the whole, the professionally qualified MLAs have not so far been able to touch the double digit mark.

This shows that professionally qualified people are shying away from making politics as their career.

Women Members

The representation of women members in the House, Assembly-wise, has been as under:-

	No. of Women Members	Percentage
First Legislative Assembly	03	4.28%
Second Legislative Assembly	09	12.85%
Third Legislative Assembly	07	10%
Fourth Legislative Assembly	03	4.28%

There are two major parties in the Legislative Assembly viz. the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Both the parties talk about women empowerment. Both the parties are seemingly inclined towards giving more representation to women in Parliament and State Assemblies. On record, both the parties seem to be in support of the Women Reservation Bill, which is pending in Parliament, provides for reservation of 33% of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. However, the ground reality is totally different as is evident from the Table given above.

Issues in Media-Military Symbiosis

- Military and media are not mutually exclusive.
- A positive relationship can only help both.
- To recognise and respect each other, there is need for generating interaction.
- Military must take initiative to benefit from the media as a force multiplier.
- Natural tensions between the two will always exist.
- Realistic approach is to educate each side.

Media Management or Relations

- There is one thing for certain that media can never be ‘managed’ as ‘human qualities’ paramount. It’s a dynamic profession beyond the control of conventional management tools.
- Media should be understood, trusted, befriended and possibly co-opted. Hence the need to have the term Media Relations to define and explain military-media interaction.

Why Media Cannot be Managed

- Since we live in times where the possibility of total war is remote therefore is no direct threat to national survival. Thus obligation to support state for all its acts is absent.
- The scope for citizen to have opinion on an ongoing conflict has increased manifold. Public Opinion is important in the successful pursuance of limited conflicts. Media helps create OPINION.

Media's Position Of Primacy

- Free of obligation to support state.
- The speed and the global reach of media.
- Capacity for independent reporting has increased with increased independence in communications.
- Technology has helped bring conflicts into the living room thus the scope of public scrutiny has got very big.
- British TV icon Nik Gowing described the situation as 'the tyranny of real time news.'

Challenge to Co-Opt Media

- Media's ability to influence public policy should not be over-estimated.
- Media has the ability to highlight a situation but it seldom provides solutions. It's not media's job to provide solution. This limits media's influence beyond a point.
- Kargil conflict presents a classic case where the media excelled in playing both the supportive and the adversarial roles.

Objectivity of Newspersons

- Though media persons claim to be objective, they are not so in absolute terms.
- They are objective, to use legalese, to the best of their knowledge and belief.
- Thus error in reporting introduced is by personal, social and institutional subjectivity.
- Need for military to follow proactive media policy to counter 'mistaken' and/or 'mischievous' reports.

Opening Up

- Late General BC Joshi initiated the policy of opening up military to media and use the latter as force multiplier.
- The policy was concretised in the later years by his successor Gen Shankar Roy Chowdhury, who made the innovation of setting up Army Liaison Cell in 1996.
- Gen VP Malik affirmed the role of the media as a force multiplier in all situational conflicts.

Gandhi Using Media As Force Multiplier

- "I had heard a good deal about *The Pioneer* published from Allahabad, and I had understood it to be an opponent of Indian aspirations. Mr Chesney Jr was the editor at that time. I wanted to secure the help of every party, so I wrote a note to Mr Chesney, telling him how I had missed the train and asking for an appointment so as to enable me to leave the next day. He immediately gave me one, at which I was very happy especially when I found that he gave me a patient hearing. He promised to notice in his paper anything that I might write but added that he could not promise to endorse all the Indian demands, inasmuch as he was bound to understand and give due weight to the viewpoint of the Colonials as well."
"It is enough", I said, "that you should study the question and discuss it in your paper. I ask and desire nothing but the barest justice that is due to us."
-- *My Experiment With Truth*

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Keynote Speaker

Dr Raman Singh

Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Chhattisgarh

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CONSTITUTIONAL DEFICIT IN PROVIDING FOOD SECURITY

MAHENDRA PRASAD SINGH*

I am very grateful to Centre for Reforms, Development and Justice that it invited me in this important seminar and allowed me to express my thoughts here. This issue is very relevant and there is also a great deal of debate going on this in the country. Even in today's technical session that preceded the present panel many people including an IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh government in charge of food security Act of the state and two experts from Delhi University talked about at length on this issue. The Indian National Congress had promised the enactment of a 'National Food Security Act' during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and the President of India had also mentioned about it in her first address to the joint session of the Parliament then elected. In December 2011 a bill for this purpose was introduced in the Lok Sabha which was subsequently referred to a parliamentary standing committee. While this bill was still going through the process in the Parliament, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government with indecent hurry advised the President of India to make it a law by an ordinance. This led to a great controversy, and we have had a glimpse of it in the morning session of this seminar today.

Although I was told by the organizers to introduce this ordinance to the audience, I am leaving out its provisions in my observations as these have already been discussed in the morning session which was supposed to follow this inaugural session which had to be shifted to the afternoon due to the delayed arrival of the Chief Minister here. But I would definitely like to attract your attention to some of the important concerns arising out of the issue under discussion. One important criticism in this context has been about democratic deficit in this episode. By democratic deficit I mean that on

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important issue like this there should have been debate in parliament before enacting it. By enacting this through the ordinance route that debate has been obstructed, and the haste in which it has been implemented is in my view shows a disrespect for the Parliament and a contempt of the public opinion and democratic processes and procedures in this country. And concerns about this not only came from almost all the opposition parties but we also heard some concerns from some members of the Congress and the coalition partners of the UPA government. I want to suggest that there are concerns not only about procedures but also on some substantive points in the Ordinance.

There is another concern that the national nutritional norms suggested by the honorable Supreme Court of India and Indian Medical Research Council have not been incorporated in this ordinance. There is another concern that the conceptualization of the grievance redressal mechanism in this ordinance is also not very strong. And, moreover, there is no system of overseeing the implementation of the food security ordinance by the civil society or community by participation or social audit in the text of his ordinance. Another anxiety that stares this ordinance is the impending fiscal disaster that is being overlooked by the government in its unseemly populist 'vote bank' politics. On this issue there has been a great deal of discordance among the economists that I am not able to fully comprehend not being an economist.

The discipline of economics is considered as a positive science in the social science fraternity. Normally in comparison to natural science people do not consider social science as science, but in the field of social science economics largely has the status of a positive science. Competing perspectives on this issue have been put forward by these economists, that are confusing, to say the least. Marxist intellectuals say that the issue of fiscal disaster should not be a matter of anxiety in this context. The Indian state will not spend more than 2% of GDP on this account. And this is not an astronomical figure, so we are exaggerating the issue of fiscal disaster. Communist parties are only concerned on the procedural front, not at all about the fiscal disaster that worries parties from other ideological persuasions.

At the same time there are liberals like Amartya Sen who are supporters of this ordinance. They say that why is there no criticism when the middle and affluent classes are being doled out subsidies on multiple counts? Why is there so much hullabaloo when the subsidy is given to poor and resourceless people?

We saw maximal criticism on the issue of fiscal disaster from a Professor of economics at Columbia University, New York, Arvind Panagaria. His concern is that if we continue with a fiscal profligacy like this, we will go back to the great Indian fiscal crisis of 1991. According to the economists of his ilk point to the state of the economy of the summer and monsoon of 1991 when due to a severe balance of payment crisis the P. V. Narsimha Rao-led Congress minority government had to hasten the process of economic liberalization/privatization/globalization (LPG), conforming to the global neoliberal ideological hegemony of the Washington Consensus following the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Professor Panagaria has not aired his concerns specifically in the context of this policy but in the context of the general situation about all the subsidies given either to the middle or poor classes by the government of India and the state governments.

There is another concern about colossal waste at a very huge scale. In the morning session of this seminar Dr. Sangit Ragi mentioned about this issue. But after the narrative of good governance in the context of the implementation of the pioneering food security Act of the Bharatiya Janata Party

government of Chhattisgarh by the officer-in-charge of the programme there, Mr Vikas Sheel, we should not be worried about it too much. The anxiety of waste should lessen after seeing the presentation by Mr. Sheel and listening to the experiences of Chhattisgarh government in this area. Chhattisgarh is the first state where such a law has been enacted and implemented in the country. And this Act is much more ambitious in its coverage and nutritional component than the proposed central Act. The Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh deserves to be congratulated to his efforts in this concern. A participant had called this presentation by Mr. Sheel an eye-opener. Mr. Sheel's speech was indeed been an eye-opener. And this assures us it does not matter how much tough implementing a law is, if there is a political and administrative will and it is implemented with honesty, then it can prove to be a great success. That is why we need not get defeatist about an idea, cynical about any project, in the first instance.

I also want to talk about a constitutional deficit in this context. By constitutional deficit, I mean that there has been some contempt for institutions of parliament in the process of bringing about this ordinance. The concept of federalism, which is a very important concept in the Constitution of India, has also been denigrated in this process. The introduction of such an ordinance days before the Monsoon Session of the Parliament was scheduled to start betrays a contempt of the Parliament and parliamentary processes in the country. In the Indian constitution the power to make a law by an ordinance has been given to the President and the Governors only when the legislative branch of the government is not in session and there is an urgency to fill a legal vacuum. The mechanism of ordinance is not there in any other Commonwealth parliamentary federal system. Canada and Australia are also federations like India but there are no such powers given to Governor- General or Governors to make laws by ordinances. In India this mechanism was borrowed from the Government of India Act, 1935, which was a colonial constitution. I knew about the situation in Canada. I had to check with a Professor of Law in Melbourne University, Prof. Cheryl Saunders what the state of affairs in Australia was. She wrote to me: 'We don't have it, and we don't want it!' The parliamentary and federal concepts are basic features of our Constitution. And presence of this power of the executive as well as the way this ordinance has been brought about are derogatory to these basic features of our Constitution. This power is also violative of the constitutional principle of separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Keeping in mind the constraints of the time limitation, I would stop here. Thank you!

FOOD SECURITY ORDINANCE, 2013: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

SANGIT KUMAR RAGI*

Despite being one of the fastest growing economies of the world today and having a huge surplus of food grains production, India has failed to ensure two meals a day to all its population even till now, least to talk of nutritional food to everyone. As per an estimate, over 5003 children die every day due to lack of food. According to Global Survey Report 42% children are underweight. This figure is alarming as it is higher than the figure of even Sub-Saharan countries where average figure comes to 28%. Seventy percent of the population suffers from anemia and 80 percent of them do not get vitamin contents. The statistics in case of tribal and remote hills areas are even worse as. 75.5% of the total population of the country suffers from malnourishment and hunger. No wonder on the Global Hunger Index, India is placed on 66th position out of 119 countries.

This goes to show that the state has failed to fulfill its basic duty of providing food to its citizens which is a basic human right, closely linked to the right to life. A year ago the question raised a storm in the political circles, in media and in academic discourses when the matter of providing food free of cost reached the highest court of the country. The petitioned was filed on the ground that lakhs of tonnes of good grains are rotting in the open godowns of the government and the government is not forthcoming to distribute the surplus to save the life of thousands of the poorest of the poor people. To a great dismay, the agriculture minister of the union cabinet openly came out in public to condemn the very idea of free distribution of the food grains. The Supreme Court intervened and questioned the intent of the government. It warned that the policies are giving birth to two India; one of elite and the other of the poor. It also questioned the percentage of the BPL category as filed by the states. The court

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observed that all the states have stated in their affidavit with the court that even on the parameters set by the Planning commission the number of people below poverty line are much higher than the statistics of 36%¹. The court forced the government to file the reply accordingly and made Planning Commission a party in the issue.

The intervention of the Supreme Court accelerated the debate on the food security for the people. This woke up the Congress government at the Centre which was sitting over its own promises of providing food to the people on subsidised rates. It is interesting to note that though the Congress Party promised to provide the right to food to all even in its election manifesto of 2004 Lok Sabha Elections but it did not work on it during the UPA I regime, despite the fact that the communists which were the part of the regime were the great votaries of it. The issue again was made part of the party manifesto in the 2009. But the government did not bother to initiate the process.

In April 2011 the Rajasthan Branch of the PUCL filed a petition in the Supreme Court in which it argued that the Union of India is denying the right to life to millions of people who are not able to purchase food grains and thereby leaving them to succumbing to malnutrition and starvation death. It pleaded that it was violation of the right to life provided to all under Article 21 of the Constitution. The petitioner prayed to issue mandamus or any appropriate Writ directing the government to enforce famine code and release the surplus food grains lying in their stocks for the drought-affected areas. The Supreme Court admitted the petition on 16th April and it passed the order on 13th May 2011 in which it ordered the Government to release 5 million tonnes of food grains². The court held that the government of India must provide adequate food grains for the poorest 150 districts across the country. It also ordered that the food allocation should be based on annual assessment by the planning Commission. The apex Court observed that 55,000 tonnes of food grains had been reported to have got rotten in Punjab and Haryana alone. It was better to distribute them to needy than to destroy them in the open field.

The government acted swiftly and it introduced a Bill in the Parliament which was referred to the Standing Committee which deliberated upon and opined for its consideration by the Parliament. The Parliament, however, could not initiate discussions because the entire Opposition in the last session of the Parliament disrupted its proceedings demanding for resignation of the Prime Minister in wake of scams which roped in the neck of the Prime Minister even. The Budget Session of the Parliament witnessed the worst in terms of transaction of the business. Realising the fact that the government image touched the bottom low in wake of several corruption cases which led to rolling down of heads of three high profile ministers such as Railway Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal, Law Minister Ashwini Kumar and Subodhkant Sahay and ruckus on the property of Robert Vadera which dented the image of the Congress President too, the government thought to change the national discourse. And there could be no better subject than the introduction of the National Food Security Bill. It did not wait for the session of the Parliament which was close to begin its session.

The government resorted to the ordinance route on the pretext that the Opposition did not allow the Parliament to function in which the Bill was listed for discussion. And given the obstructionist attitude of the Opposition, it was most likely to meet the same fate in impending sessions too. And therefore, ordinance was essential as it marked the seriousness and commitment of the government on the issue. However, this argument had a very few takers only. There have been several such important issues and subjects of legislation, including the Women Reservation Bill which could not be implemented through

the ordinance despite support from a large section of members of civil society and political parties except the few regional parties like JD(U), SP, and BSP. So was the case with Lokpal Bill which agitated and continues to agitate the minds of millions in this country till date.

The allegation that the government was in hurry and did not want to share the credibility for the Bill to even its own allies is not without reason. Many of them were not taken into confidence. As a result, the day the ordinance was rolled out some of the allies publicly criticised the Congress Party for not consulting them before the ordinance. Similarly, the parties like BSP and SP which have been extending support to the government from outside without being part of the government also reacted sharply against the ordinance, though BSP finally came on the board and it is expected that SP will also sooner or later join the chorus.

It needs to be mentioned here that the ordinance is provisioned in the Constitution which is to be issued in case the parliament is not in the session and the matter requires urgent and immediate attention in the sense that if the matter is not attended that may cause a big loss to the country. Certainly, the whole idea is to avoid delays that may be caused due to lengthy parliamentary procedures involved in legislation. By no yardsticks the issue required urgent attention. Secondly, bypassing of the Parliament did not send a good message at all. It simply strengthened the allegations of the Opposition that the Congress Party, tainted by scams and corruption, just wanted to divert the attention of the people on the one hand and wanted to reach out to the people keeping in mind the general election scheduled to be held in 2014. This also shows the desperation of the Congress Party in backdrops of the unfolding events in recent months. All the Opposition parties charged the government for indulging in cheap politics on such a serious issue. The President of the Bharatiya Janata Party Rajnath Singh and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj both attributed the ordinance to politics and concerned for votes rather than genuine urge for arresting malnutrition and hunger. Multiple meetings of the Congress President with the Chief Ministers of states where it rules and the state party heads where it sits in opposition, and declaration of 20th August, the birth anniversary of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, to start the programme giving credence to the opposition charges.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Congress Party has tried to harvest electoral benefits through the ordinance the policy is aimed to ensure feeding 70 percent of the rural population and 50 percent of the urban population through distribution of 5kg food grains per persons per month on subsidized rates not exceeding Rs. 3, Rs.2 and Re.1 for rice, wheat and coarse grains respectively for coming three years from the date of implementation of the programme. In a way, this is a bold initiative but has raised several questions ranging from subsidy burdens to availability of sufficient food grains for procurement, storage, transportation, and distribution mechanism besides the issue of ambiguity on scores of issues which require a definite and clear answer for successful accomplishment of the task.

Availability of food grains and their supply

The first question is do we have enough food grains to distribute to such a huge population covering nearly 800 million people in total. The statistics are not very discouraging. Today India has emerged as the largest exporter of rice in the world. In 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, it exported 23.7 lakh tonnes, 32.12 lakh tonnes and 35.32 lakh tonnes respectively. If one looks at the 50 years data on rice production it is clear that it is on the rise but in the last one decade, the graph been zigzag-showing

both upsurge and decline. For example, rice production reached its pick in 2008-09 when the country produced 99.18 lakh tonnes. But then it got reduced to 89.13 tonnes and 80.41 tonnes in 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively³. India is second largest producer of wheat, next after China and much ahead of the USA⁴. In 1947-48, the wheat production in the country was just 5.6 metric tonnes (MT). Now it has reached to over 92 thousand MT. Of the total food grains produced wheat thus constitutes of nearly 35 %. But interestingly, the buffer stock of the wheat which was at its maximum limit in 2002 witnessed a continuous decline since then till 2007. It has again been on the rise since 2008 but the buffer stock has not reached the level of 2002. It is far behind that. One argument is that India's per capita wheat consumption is higher (73 kg) than the per capita wheat production i.e. 67kg.

The whole argument behind bringing this statistics is to drive the point that there is a sufficient food grains of which production is on the rise. But at the same time, given the higher rate of consumption and dependency of the production on Monsoon, pose a serious issue of uncertainty. Thus, today the buffer stock may be fine but there is no guarantee that it will remain the same tomorrow or after four years from now. Experts however, suggest that there is enough food grains in the coffer of the state that they need to be given to the needy at subsidised price. There is another argument which also links the issue of storage and distribution. It is estimated that 24 percent of the total food grains produced either get rotten or destroyed. The FCI godowns are not sufficient in number and capacities to keep the food grains safe. As per an estimate, nearly 24 % of the total wheat production goes rotten. This is equal to entire food grains production in Australia where the percentage of wastage is just 0.75%. Currently, the number of FCI godowns, both hired and owned including covered and plinth godowns fail to store 37.37 million tonnes, as per the data in public space on 1st April 2013⁵. Two years back, the Headlines Today's camera recorded the overflowing of food grains in a FCI godown complex in Phulwari Sharif in Patna. The stocks were placed in open, facing the monsoon showers. The Food and Civil Supplies Minister Shyam Rajak noted that the state needs the warehousing facilities to store 12 lakh metric tonnes of grains but they have the capacity to store just half of that. The state has been writing to the Minister for Food and Public Distribution at Centre but except for the lip services nothing has been done on ground⁶. Almost same was the complain of the Madhya Pradesh Government. The Government purchased the wheat from the farmers on minimum support price and wanted the centre to take it and store it, but the latter refused to do so causing a lot of storage problem for the state. This is not the tale of one or two states but the similar stories come from other states too. This is directly linked to decentralised management of the FCI godowns which have badly failed to meet the expectation so far.

It would be pertinent to note that to provide subsidised food to 67 % of the total population the country would need nearly 63 million tonnes food grains annually. Their storage becomes an important component towards the success of the programme. Currently the PDS system cater to just 44.5 percent of the population. It is clear that the FCI does not have godowns to manage the food grains. The other go-downs such as Central Ware Housing and the storage centres of Railways are also used for the purpose. But the point is that such godowns shall be needed to be operational at village and block level. The Government ordinance does not assure that homework on all these aspects has been done. That means it does not say about how much food grains will be needed, how much storage has to be created and so on.

Debates on subsidy

Critics of the Bill argue that the Bill is going to be fatal for the national economic health. The food subsidy which is currently 72,000 crore approximately in 2011-12 will go up to an extent of 3,14,000 crores annually. Surjeet Bhalla, a noted economist wrote a piece in the Indian Express in which he quoted the above figure after calculating the total operational cost of the programme. This amount, he held, will be 3 percent of the total GDP of the country. The Finance Minister P Chidambaram, however, does not agree and he said in a talk with the reporters some time back that the implementation of the ordinance will need just additional amount of Rs.10,000 crore annually which is a very small amount in light of the size of the budget. Even a conservative assessment, however, notes that the Bill is going to cost not less than 1,24,724 crore annually. The current food subsidy for 44.5 % of the population comes to 72,823 crore as mentioned earlier in 2011-12⁷. This must have gone up several thousand crore given the inflation of the prices of food commodities in the last few years. And this is when only 2.1 kg food grains were distributed per individual per month as per the National Sample Data available. If we calculate the devaluation of rupees and inflation of prices of food grains which are always on spiral rise and 5kg food grains per person along with the increased human and material sources, transportation and storage costs the additional subsidy no way would be what the government is proclaiming.

It needs to be mentioned that the inflation in general and food articles in particular has seen a phenomenal rise in the last one decade. Even the members of the National Advisory Council of which the Congress President is the Chairman also do not subscribe to mathematics of P Chidambaram. Their estimate is that it is minimum going to be no less than Rs. 37,000 crore additional food subsidy burden which is not a big amount. The whole argument of this school is to suggest that the subsidy burden is going to cripple the country's economy for many years to come⁸. Professor Panigariya did not subscribe to subsidised food programme of Chhattisgarh as well though he appreciated the governance on food management in the state. Panigari also advocated of rolling back the PDS which is marred with leakages and loss of food grains, corruption and bureaucratic apathy and suggested to replace it by cash transfer to the poor⁹.

There are economists and commentators who do not subscribe to the arguments of subsidy burden to criticise the food security provisions. They allege that this argument comes from the upper class elites who are silent on huge subsidies running into lakhs of crores to the corporates but such hue and cry occurs when the subsidy is granted to the poor people. After all, industry and the trading communities also get the subsidy from the government. Harsh Mander, one of the core team members of the National Advisory Council (NAC) held that it will be good to talk of eliminating the subsidies which the government dole out to the corporates. He held that in the budget Rs. 5 lakh crore tax holidays was offered to the corporates¹⁰. Similarly another commentator held that nearly Rs. 37,000 crore were given out to the gold traders. The argument is that 230 million go to bed without meal. Instead of talking on reduction of the subsidy on their meal it should be talked about to reduce the subsidy which is spent on the rich and middle class. There are thousands of crores of subsidy which are spent every year on petroleum products which benefit primarily the rich and middle class people. Why not these products are de-subsidised in order to save money? The subsidy amount saved from the spending on the rich should be spent on providing peoples' basic rights which include their right to food, clean water, sanitation, health care and education¹¹.

Mander argues that no system is perfect and no one can claim that the system introduced does not require further improvement in functioning to deliver better results. But it is always better to start than not to start. There is merit in this argument. A further logic is extended against the food subsidy is that it is meant for consumption and therefore cannot be compared with the subsidies given to the industrial sector which is given to enhance the productive capacity of the economic and to enable it to compete with the global players. After all it is not the industry alone which benefits from it. But farm sector also gets huge subsidy. This is not a powerful logic both from economic and humanitarian perspectives. After all these are the people who succumb to different diseases and problems due to malnourishment and starvation and the government spends thousands of crores of money on these people on their health care. The economic cost of the malnourishment needs a comprehensive assessment and quantitative valuation which alone can provide a comparative insight into profit and loss from the programme.

And more important, even the free market societies too give subsidised food to their needy people; their methods and mechanism may be different to apply and optimise them. Take for example; Australia subsidizes the transport cost to make available eggs, meat, protein dietary items to citizens in the remote areas. It subsidizes the food grains to them and provides unemployment allowance to its citizens so that they could meet their basic needs. The only thing that needs to be taken care of is to see that subsidised economy does not kill the productive capacity of the farmers.

There has been apprehension that the subsidised food grains distribution at such a large scale would lead to drastic cut on the profit of the farmers. No wonder some of the leaders which include even some ministers of the Union cabinet such as Sharad Pawar and Ajit Singh are apprehensive of the Food Security Bill on this count. The food producing strong farmer lobby thinks that the Bill is going to cut into their profits. It is not now a hidden fact that Sharad Pawar and his ministry are not happy with the Bill though they could not oppose it given the popular sentiments behind the ordinance. Similarly, Ajit Singh who draws his strength from the farmers in the western Uttar Pradesh where green revolution took place in the 60s, also is not very forthcoming on the Bill. So is the case with the Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab who publicly held that this Bill is against the interest of the farmers. The concern is that if 67 percent of the population is provided with the subsidised food this will discourage the farmers to produce the crops like wheat and rice and they would go for other commercial crops as has started in western Uttar Pradesh where farmers have started using the land for growing trees, woods of which are used for manufacturing ply boards. These were fertile sugarcane belts. (It is yet to be seen how these leaders react to the Bill when it comes for discussion in the Parliament.)

Implementation of the Bill

The food security ordinance is to be implemented through the existing PDS system. Now, this PDS system has already been a major point of criticism for its malfunctioning, corruption and leakages of food grains, failure to reach the real beneficiary and on several other counts. Estimates are that '45-50 % of what goes through the PDS does not reach the intended beneficiaries'¹². Reports keep on coming in media which showing that PDS system is really in bad shape in the country. It is further far worse in the remote rural and tribal areas. The fair price shops in these areas are several kms away from the residential hamlets causing a lot of discomfort to the people who are living in interior areas. It is difficult for the women and children to reach out to these fair price shops in time as they are 6-7 km away and the means of transportation are not very good. When they do not reach the shops the food

grains are sent to the market through the agents and the same food grains are sold on higher prices in the market¹³. There are occasions when the tribals do not have money with them to pay. That also encourages the owner of the fair price shop to sale the grains in the open market. It has also come to notice that the shop owners take the benefit of illiteracy of the people; keep their ration cards with them and when they do not turn up for the grains on the decided date, the food grains are sold out in the market¹⁴.

It is worth to note that the system of PDS was applied to all before 1993. Every one, rich or poor, was part of the beneficiary group. However, the fiscal crisis of 1993 made the government to start targeted PDS under which the people below poverty line alone could be beneficiary of the subsidised food distribution by the government. Except in few states where technology has been put in place to monitor activities from procurement to transportation to distribution, the system is not very assuring. Two of the major states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh still follow the old system of PDS whereas states like Madhya Pradesh has digitalised the whole system making it less vulnerable to loss, black-marketing and corruption.

Ambiguity and state's apprehensions

There are several provisions in the ordinance which need further clarification and hope when the Parliament meets to discuss the ordinance those ambiguity will be addressed. Section 8 of the ordinance states that the states will be paying food security allowance in case they fail to provide food grains to the citizens for the month or months in which that happens. This does not clarify who is going to bear the burden-state or Centre. In case the centre does not allocate and release the food grains in time, will the state have to bear the burden? Further, the ordinance talks of discontinuity of such subsidised distribution in case of emergency. This is not very convincing as the people would need it more in case of draught, famine etc.

There are also apprehensions of those states which have been distributing and covering larger population under the PDS system as of now. For example, Odisha Government displayed its unhappiness over making the ceiling of 70 and 50 percent of the rural and urban areas. The Chief Minister held that Odisha will be at loss in the sense that if this criterion is applied it will be getting quantity of food grains released from Centre lesser than what it gets now. Similarly, the Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu J Jayalalita wrote a letter to the Prime Minister in which she held that the monthly "allocation of food grains for the state declined by 1,00,000 tonnes"¹⁵. Currently the state gets 2,96,000 tonnes monthly from the centre. She on this ground has decided to oppose the Bill if it is tabled in the Parliament for discussion and voting. Harsh Mander, however, says that state governments are not restrained to cover larger percentage of population in their states but then they will have to use their own resources for the same in case they want to include more than 70 percent and 50 percent of their rural and urban population in the list of beneficiary.

Further, the Bill seeks to work on the promise that in all the states the food pattern is by and large the same. This is not the reality. The Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh held that every state has different pattern of consumption of food grains. For example, in Chhattisgarh, people use rice three times in a day; breakfast, lunch and dinner. The allocation of food grains therefore should be in accordance with the need of the state and their consumption pattern. The centralised policy making which also decides the operational natty gritty is not good for the policy implementation.

Conclusion

There are several grey areas and elements of ambiguity in the provisions of the ordinance. The first and foremost is the identification of the beneficiary of this programme itself. As per the ordinance, beneficiaries and the priority household are to be identified in time to come. The government is banking on the Socio-Economic Caste Census which started in 2011, but it is yet to be completed in many states. In such situations, skeptics question the homework and preparation of the government. They allege that the centre is yet to share the census data and thereafter the process of identification of beneficiaries will start. More importantly, who are going to be the beneficiaries, what will be the criterion for identifying them is not laid out in specific terms in the Bill and this has been left with other scores of issues to be decided in future. For example, how the government is going to tackle the issue of food grains in case of crisis which emerges from factors which are beyond the control of the state such as natural calamities, famine, floods etc. In such situations, in case the food grains are not produced enough to ensure availability of the same to the people, will government import the same and make it available? Or will it suspend the right to food grains itself. Hope, when the bill comes to the Parliament for discussion many of the existing questions that baffle the common man today will be addressed and a good legislation like this, does not matter whether it is politically motivated or not, will be able to be on more assuring ground.

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LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

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Hunger has always been a threat to states in history. And it has led to protests and revolutions in every age of structurally divisive society across the civilisations. The French Revolution of 1789 is one such example in modern history. Food security, therefore, haunts the governments particularly in the developing economy which has a large percentage of population on the margin, that too in the crisis situation of capitalism. Moreover, one of the agenda of the revolutionaries for social mobilisation has been the demand for food security for the masses. Subsequently, food security emerged as the essential demand of the Left under capitalism and as a right of citizens in 'Bolshevik societies'. Later on, it became a part of development agenda of liberal democracy in the post- Second World War Europe and of the World Bank and the United Nations since 1970s for global food security.

In India, it began in the French colonial territory of Puducherry in 1922 with the mid-day meals for school students. K Kamraj of Congress, subsequently, extended the idea and its application to Tamil Nadu in 1965-66 which was further expanded to five states by 1995-96. In 2005, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) became operational providing indirectly, food security to the marginalised by the Act of Right to Employment. And in 2013, a separate food security law was enacted by the Parliament to ensure food for the poor.

Essentially, food security is an idea that ensures every family, who can't afford, three meals a day by the state. Its delivery mechanisms and forms vary in space and time. The idea is premised on the necessity to foster healthy work-force for business/industries which requires intense work from the labor in the competitive social milieu. However, its collateral benefits have also been the growth of individual freedom for labor, transcending the realm of hunger. A section of the political economist, on the other side of the

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ideological spectrum, look at it as part of long term social investment for expanded reproduction of capitalism. To them, a part of surplus value is invested in the human development for better labor reproduction. In India, 22% of its population is undernourished according to the Global Hunger Index and “33% of women in the age group of 15-49 have body mass index below normal” according to the National Family Health Survey 2005-06¹. The context, thus, necessitated the enactment of food security required for rapid development of capitalism under the aegis of globalisation.

Let’s now discuss The Food Security Act, 2013. The Act stipulates that “every person belonging to priority households, identified under sub section (1) of section 15, should be entitled to receive five kilograms of food grains per person per month at subsidised prices specified in Schedule 1 from the state government under the targeted public distribution system”². The food is to be made available at a price of Rs.3 per kg of rice, Rs.2 per kg of wheat and Rs.1 per kg of coarse grains (millets, etc.). Every pregnant women and lactating mother, however, is to be provided with free meal with specified nutritional standard. Similarly, the school students in the age groups of up to 14 years are entitled for it. The eligible household is to be identified by the states with the objectives to cover up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population. And the list of the identified eligible household is to be displayed in public domain. More, there is to be instituted a grievance redressal mechanism at different tiers with State Food Commission at the top. The Commission is “to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the act”³ through enquiring into its violations, through advising to the government, and through laying down the reports in the legislative Assembly through the government. The Commission is vested with the powers of a civil court. Thus, deterrent mechanism is to be instituted to check corruption, dysfunctionality in the delivery mechanism and to suggest measures to the government for its improvement. In case of “non - supply of the entitled quantities of food grains or meals to entitled persons...such persons shall be entitled to receive such food security allowance from the concerned state government to be paid to each person.”⁴

In practice, however, the law may turn out to be another source of malpractices for politico- business-administrative nexus- as other such laws have become in most parts of India with degrees of variations in their functioning depending on the everyday protest of the local residents. The interests of the Central government to enact this law before the parliamentary election of 2014 is obvious.

But notwithstanding the criticism, the idea of the food security for the citizens is an excellent idea which should have been applied much earlier, after Independence itself. The production of food grains, even then, was always more than the growth of population; and the percentage of malnourishment in the early decades was much higher than in the contemporary India. The social requirement of the application of this law, earlier, was much serious. For, the development of citizenship the food security is an essential premise. It’s a premise for the realm of freedom

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EXECUTING FOOD SECURITY: EXPERIENCES FROM GRASSROOTS

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First of all I would like to thank the CRDJ for inviting me and giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts on the topic of food security and what we are doing in Chhattisgarh in terms of implementation of the first law of its kind in the country i.e. Chhattisgarh Food and Nutrition Security Act. It is a privilege to be here in the company of such dignified speakers, thinkers and I am sure that whatever I share with you and the feedback that I get from the house will help us to argue better for food security. It will also help the Government of Chhattisgarh to improve whatever we are doing right now. I made a specific request to Dr. Sondhi to allow me to make my presentation immediately after the speech just delivered because to elaborate the functionalities of State Government in the backdrop of Chhattisgarh Food and Nutrition Security Act. I will discuss all kinds of concerns that are there in terms of how it is going to solve the problems and how we are trying to do it in Chhattisgarh. So, therefore, I am really thankful to the panel and the speakers, who were supposed to speak earlier, for allowing me to speak before them.

Generally the context of debate on food security, in my view, is more focused on what are the entitlements are going to be like and how the entitlements are going to be given. I personally believe that the National Food Security Ordinance (NFSO) as well as the Chhattisgarh Food Security Act are a reality now and the debates of whether to do it or not are over. That debate is no more there. It is going to be done in some form or the other. The debate is about the form and content of the legislation or the law. Now, we have to clearly understand that by merely making a law we cannot ensure food security. It will all boil down to how well it is implemented. I am pretty sure that everybody would agree that

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unless the law is implemented in letter and spirit it may not reach to the desired outcomes and the goals for which the law was made in the first place. Now, I would just briefly like to explain as to how we did it in Chhattisgarh and I will invite your suggestions in terms of as to how we can improve it any further. Now, in my view the prerequisite for the successful implementation of the law is a robust PDS. I am basically focusing attention on PDS because that is the topic of the debate as because of other entitlements such as MDM, supplementary nutrition, Anganwadi etc. are given, nobody is debating that, everybody is welcoming it. It is only in terms of PDS and its reliability and its credibility that people are questioning whether it is going to solve the problem or not. So I would just like to share with you what we did in Chhattisgarh to convert the PDS per say as it is perceived generally that it is a corrupt system, it is a system full of leakages and how we converted it into a robust, accountable and transparent kind of system. We can classify that we did a whole series of reform starting from 2004. So it is not as if there is a magic wand which can bring reforms overnight. It has taken at least 10 years now to come to state in which we are now today. Since 2004, we have taken various kinds of reforms which can be broadly classified in four categories: Legal Reforms, Structural Reforms, Financial Reforms and use of IT and Technology for making the system more accountable.

The first and the foremost and perhaps the most important of reforms that the government did in 2004 was to de-privatise. All private licensee shops were cancelled. In the state today none of the shops in PDS is owned by a private licensee either for food grain or for kerosene. All shops are run by either the women Self-help Groups (SHG) or the gram panchayats or the urban local bodies or the primary local agricultural societies. And this is still being contested in the various judicial forums; the matter is still pending in the Honourable Supreme Court where the private licensees have gone up to the Supreme Court against the orders of the Government of Chhattisgarh to be in this business. This was basically done to remove the private vested interests. PDS is a system which cannot let shops to run with profit motives. Everybody in the system would think that the commissions being paid by the Government on the sales of various commodities are so less and private vendors cannot run the shops without diverting it. And therefore we removed the private fellows. We said that since it cannot be run by virtue of a private profit motive so it has to be a social motive and therefore social institutions should only be allowed to run the shop. That is the argument the Government took. We have so far been able to defend it. There is no adverse ruling in any honourable courts in the country on this particular aspect. We improved that outreach, now there is a fair price shop in every panchayat in the rural areas and in the urban areas at every 1,000 ration cards. We have also become more reliant... We are also not dependent on FCI or any other sources for our inventories. We are the first decentralised procurement state in the country where we procure our own food grains, all commodities... the state procures from whatever means, through the market, through MSP operations, etc. But we do not buy our rations from FCI and therefore our logistics and our supply chains are in our hands and our inventory is our command. We are not dependent for our inventory on other agencies. There is doorstep delivery in the state. Every ration shop gets the supply of rations at the ration shops. No ration shop has to come to the godown to pick up the rations to check the diversion as its the transportation where maximum diversion takes place.

We took a few crucial steps in terms of financial reforms as unless the shop is financially viable even a social institution perhaps will not be able to run the shop. Nobody would put in money from his pocket to run a government shop. First step was to provide a startup capital to woman SGHs and PRIs. Because when they were given the first shops in 2004 they did not have the startup capital to buy the first stocks

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and hire a building, appoint a salesman etc. They would need some capital. So the government provided Rs 75,000 assistance as interest free loan to be returned in 20 years in equal installments. We also gave them one month's stock on credit. So that we can take the sales statement and time and maintain the discipline in terms of making sure that no consumer can be turned away. We also increased commissions on the food grains. Today the commissions are to the extent of Rs 45 per quintal. A shop meeting supply of 500 cards can earn the commission up to Rs 12,000 which is sufficient to finance the salary of a salesman, it is sufficient to pay the electricity bill, etc.

We used the technology for computerisation of PDS supply chain, which has been widely recognised. We have presented it in various forms so that the model of Chhattisgarh in terms of back hand computerisation of supply chain, right from procurement from the farmers to the supply to the shops, has been recommended for replication in other States by the honourable Supreme Court in the PUCL vs. Union of India case. And the whole end to end computerisation project, the phase one of it which talks about backend computerisation, is basically based on the Chhattisgarh model.

Today, our all ration cards are in printed form. And no hand filled ration cards are supposed to be legal in the State. All ration cards are printed from the ration card database. Because the ration card database is there, therefore everything, including allocations, is calculated more or less automatic. On the basis of sales statements provided by shops, we calculate as to how much should go to each shop and the movement of stocks starts from the 10th day of the previous month. This is to ensure that the government proclaims the guarantee that from 1st to the 7th day of the month if you go to the shop with the ration card and in case you don't get the stocks we will make sure that you get the stocks then and there. That is the kind of guarantee that we offer to the ration card holders.

Now this is what we did in the backend. Backend make sure that the diversions are down and the credibility if the ration shops and PDS gets restored. We have a very robust grievance redressal mechanism in place. Every ration shop has a Call Centre number displayed. We do receive complains even now that 'I am here at the ration shop with the card and I have not got the rations'. Immediately that message will go to the Food Inspector concerned and it is his responsibility to immediately go to the shop and get the delivery of ration done on the spot. If there is a genuine reason like the stocks are not available then tell the consumers to come two days later and get the delivery of ration done. Unless that kind of system is put in place even by declaring entitlements to the people will not get any entitlements. So that is the kind of work that has been done in Chhattisgarh. So we are very confident in terms of implementing Food Security Act because we have a robust PDS which we have developed through various kinds of reforms and this did not happen at once. At various points of time in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and the latest in terms of reforms where we are now revolutionising out front end i.e. the PDS shop.

Just try to understand this quote and you will understand what we are trying to do in the core PDS. Prof. Amartya Sen has opined that the person will always prefer choice. So if I have to buy soap, I will always like to have a choice of buying it from one of the 10 different shops rather than being attached to one particular shop regardless of the quality of the soap. And in PDS the current structure is precisely like that. Ration card is attached to a shop. Ration card does not have any choice but to go to that shop for his rations. In Core PDS what we are doing is we are removing that restriction. We are offering portability to ration card holders. So in the shops where Core PDS has been implemented which are around 300 odd shops as of now in the cities, ration card holder can go to the shop of his choice. Now that completely changes the dynamics in terms of relation between the shopkeeper and the consumer.

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I will explain what kinds of problems that is there at the shops even despite doing so much reform at the back hand. There are problems at front end which can only be solved through systematic interventions. Now these are the kind of problems prevailing at the shops. Whatever you do at the back end, howsoever you improve your logistics... Underpayment by the shopkeeper to the consumer is something you cannot check by computerisation of the PDS. This is a transaction taking place at the shop between a shopkeeper and consumer. Nobody can go and check every payment. And since there is a monopoly relationship the shopkeeper can always underpay and do it with a sense of propriety and say that if you wish to take it then take otherwise leave... Be happy in whatever you are getting! Overcharging is another thing which will be there in a monopoly situation. Multiple trips... Now the shopkeeper will say today I will sell only rice if you want salt you come tomorrow. Day after tomorrow I will give kerosene... and if the beneficiary is availing five different commodities from the same ration shop he will have to make perhaps four to five trips to ration shop to pick up the full quota of rations. In a monopoly situation it will always happen like this. Most of the times... The shops may not be regularly opening or the shop may not be opening at the time convenient to the beneficiary. It might be daily opening in the morning, but for the beneficiary it might be convenient if the shop opens daily in the evening because in the morning he goes for work or something like that. And behaviour of the fair price shop salesman... most of the shops is being run by men... the salesmen are men... Most of the times the woman of the house will go to pick up the ration and that behaviour aspect, whether that particular fellow is behaving properly with the women or not is something that can be addressed with any kind of technology. So we have given options to the beneficiary. You go and pick up the rations from whichever shop you like... Now, where is the beneficiary likely to go more? Where there is no underpayment, where there is no overcharging, where most things are available in one trip, where the behaviour is proper, where the shop is open at a convenient time. That is why we say that through Core PDS we are now revolutionising the front end of the PDS i.e. PHS Shop. And basically, virtually converting these shops into food ATMs... So you have a smart ration card and you can go any shop of your choice and convenience and pick up rations.

This is the basic model... I just like to attract your attention to one thing that there is a smart ration card that we provide, which is a plastic ration card. We have also been able to work out a convergence with Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) because that scheme already has a smart card for the BPL so the card beneficiary uses his RSBY smart card also to avail portability.

These are the results so far... 25 per cent of the ration card holders prefer other shops than their original shops. This basically means these 25 per cent ration card holders were getting exploited because they did not have that choice of going to some other shop. The number of trips that a beneficiary has to make to the ration shops to pick up a full monthly quota has come down from 2 to 1. We have this online data which we can analyse. It also incentivises the shopkeepers to perform better. The commission to the shop operator is also limited according to ration cards beneficiaries attached to it. If you have 600 cards you get X amount of commission but because of this if you can sell to 1800 consumers your commission becomes 3X. If you do not perform your shop may shut down because nobody will come to you. There are 18 such shops in the state which have been closed, because no body was coming to them. So this is something which incentivises good performance for the fair price shops, weeds out the bad performing fair price shops without suspending the shop as it entails a whole lot of political reactions such as that this is our man, please don't suspend him. Please give him one more chance... Those kinds of things! But I don't have to do that. Consumer will make sure that it happens.

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Now, in a nutshell, all this can happen if there is a very strong political will and a sustained effort at this. It will not happen with the magic wand. And unless this happens it is very difficult to implement the Food Security Act in a manner in which it should be. That is the point I would like to stress upon!

Now, I will briefly explain as to what are the provisions of Chhattisgarh Food Security Act and also compare the Food Security Act of Chhattisgarh and National Food Security Ordinance. And then I will give it a stop.

Basically all definitions in terms of inclusions in the Food Security Act of Chhattisgarh have been delinked with whether a person's name appears in the BPL list or not. There is general assumption that BPL surveys are not error-free. So if we have to prove Right to Food, we have to make sure that somebody who deserves this Right to Food does not get left out. That somebody will get left out if there is a survey error in the BPL survey. If there is a maximum cap imposed by the State as has been done in the NFSO, there is a maximum cap of coverage, so 67 per cent population will get covered and 33 per cent population will get excluded. Now, whatever you do 5 per cent of that 33 per cent will get into this 67 per cent and some 5 per cent who deserve to be there in this 67 per cent will automatically have to be in among the 33 per cent. So because of the ceiling there are bound to be exclusion and inclusion errors. So what in our act we are doing is that we are not putting any ceilings? No upper limits. At least we would not like to make exclusion errors, even at the cost of some inclusion errors. And the definitions are more on socio-economic indicators; all landless labourers, small and marginal farmers, all households registered as construction labourers are eligible as priority households. So the definitions in Chhattisgarh are already clear in the Act whereas in the NFSO as you were pointing out it is not clear as who is the beneficiary going to be.

We have also made a provision that the Government will from time to time identify particularly vulnerable social groups and these social groups will be entitled as Antyodaya families. And these basically include households of particularly vulnerable tribal groups, terminally ill persons, widows and single women, physically-challenged persons, destitute and old age pensioners who do not have any wards to look after them.

Exclusions... We basically exclude income tax payers, government servants of Class III and above, in rural areas all such households who have more than 4 hectares or 10 acres of land and in urban areas all such household who have pucca house of carpet area of more than 1,000 square feet. This is all provided in the act. It is not that there is discretion available that the Government will from time to time notify such criteria and as it may deem fit for exclusion. We purposefully put it in the Act so that it is not left to the discretion and can be generally played upon.

These are the entitlements we give. Our priority households include the Antyodaya households, 35 kg per month per ration card at Rupees 1 per kg for the general household which is equal to APL in the conventional sense. So all household which are not excluded and are not priority are general households. So they are also promised an entitlement of 15 kg but they get only food grains. We also provide pulses, chana and iodised salt. These are the entitlements other than PDS, mid-day meals, supplementary nutrition through Anganwadis etc.

Food grains for students residing in hostels. One time meal is already covered through MDM but the evening meal we are covering through food security and the specific provisions are being made to provide either cooked meals or rations to the students living in hostels and SC/ST and OBC hostels. Also there is a provision for community kitchens which we call 'Daal-Bhaat Centres' to provide meals free of charge to destitute and homeless. This is missing in the National Food Security Ordinance. And there is the special

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provision for the emergencies and disasters to provide in the rehabilitations and relief camps meals free of charge for three months for disaster affected persons for something like Kedarnath. So rather than trying to say that in a disaster zone not been able to provide food security, we commend that in case there is a disaster, the disaster-hit person will get something extra apart from what he gets from the ration card.

This is how we have been generally financing our food security over the years. We have just noticed that the last year 2012-13 is what we made our law and 2013-14 our financial outlay for implementation of the Act is around 1,800 crore from the State budget. It used to be Rs. 515 crore in 2007-08. So it does put a lot of financial burden on the State, but given that we are making a law to provide a legal right to it, which would be a meaningful legal right regardless of the cost. Once you are convinced that it has to be done then you have to do it and manage the cost and do it well. So that you ensure that the outcome is there.

On comparison between NFSO and CGFSA and then I stop. Legal status of NFSO is still an ad-hoc thing which has to be approved by the Parliament. Ours is a permanent right because it is already an Act. We are the first and only State so far to enact the law. Nature of the right in the NFSO is not food security, its food grain security as they are only providing rice, wheat and coarse grains. In our Act we are also providing nutrition security by providing pulses and iodised salt. There is further scope for extending and diversifying the food basket. In terms of coverage NFSO cover 67 per cent population of the country. Ours is nearly universal as we are providing 90 per cent coverage out of which 75 per cent is in the priority category and a few exclusions.

Entitlement... the general impression is that it is 25-35 kg. But I must share with you that the census family size of 2011 is 4.5. Since the census family size is 4.5 then effectively it is not 25 but it is 22.5. Another things are which normally people do not take into account whether it is going to be adequate or not is that because the entitlement so far were on ration card basis, per ration card 35 kg, what the entitlements used to be. So there was a natural tendency in the larger families to split and make two ration cards. Supposing there are six members in the family they will go for two ration cards so they get 70 kg. And therefore in the ration card database the average family size is only 3.5. So when it is 3.5 the effective coverage under NFSO on such a ration card is only 17.5 kg against the existing supply of 35 kg. So that is how the Government of India is perhaps managing the subsidy. What they are doing is they are expanding the coverage to double, used to cover 33 per cent of the population, provide 35 kg, now they are providing 67 per cent population with only 17.5 kg per card effectively. So double the coverage, reduce the entitlements by half and your subsidy burden remains the same. Perhaps that seems the logic and that is where the confidence stems in terms of this will not be expanded to some astronomical figure. Anyways, we are of the opinion that as per the ICMR study, the family of 5 of 2 adults and 3 children should consume 54 kg food grain per month. That translates in to 11 kg per person per month. Even if it is 5, it is half of what it should be and it is actually being reduced from 7. So this is no food security... I mean this is not the way to provide the food security. We have always argued with the Government of India from the Government of Chhattisgarh that the entitlements should be at least 35 kg. Since the effective family size in the ration card is 3.5 that translates into 10 kg per person and that is actually adequate. You actually do not need to do anything more than that, by just providing the existing. Then you have to consider whether you want to expand the coverage on account of reduction in entitlement for the poor. So far 33 per cent of the poor were getting 35 kg, now 67 per cent will get it and this balance 34 per cent who are not so poor as compared to these 33 per cent who are actually getting 35 kg. So on account of giving entitlements to

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34 per cent not so poor you are basically reducing the entitlement to the 33 per cent poor. That's what basically happening. There is no hunger related death in the State in the last 6-7 years and we can claim this with pride. We are providing for the community kitchens as I said earlier. There is no provision as such in the NFSO.

We have not purposefully kept any provisions for benefits transfer in terms of cash transfers in the PDS. We are staunchly opposed to the idea. We have firm belief that subsidies should be given in kind rather than in cash. Consumer empowerment as I said portability we provided in our Act that we will over the period of time expand and provide this option to all the consumers in the State to pick up rations from any shop in the State of their choice or wherever they reside.

Thank you very much! And sorry if I have exceeded the time limit, this is the least I could do!

QUESTIONS SESSION

Participant: Heartiest congratulations to Mr. Sheel for an eye-opening presentation! Sir, my question to you is that how the State would break even the financial burden because of the magnificent PDS system that has been introduced in your State? Because of the efficient warehouses whereby there are no pilferages and of the trained manpower which you have quoted right now! And second question is will the unemployment increasing among the BPL because they are one of the beneficiaries? Thank you so much!

Vikas Sheel: As far as the first part is concerned, wherever we have used information technologies... I am assuming the question is regarding that, the use of information technology to manage the inventory, monitor the inventory better and thereby keep a close watch on movement of PDS commodities at various levels, at the time of procurement, in the godown, from the godown to the shop and then further distribution from shop to consumers. We firmly believe that any IT intervention is going to yield a lot of information and data. Unless the Government, the Government officials and employees at the field use the data to monitor it closely these things will never improve. So computerisation per say does not solve any problem. The culture in terms of monitoring the PDS in the State for the last 7-8 years have been that every week the Secretary (Food department), regardless of who he is, will have to find two hours to review shop wise availability of stocks because there is declared guarantee of the Government that from 1st to 7th if somebody goes to a ration shop with a ration card and he should get his rations preferably in one trip and if for some reasons the rations are not made available during that duration, latest by the 10th of the month all rations should be distributed. Now, this kind of guarantee cannot be fulfilled by just declaring the guarantee. By just making the law you cannot implement it. And you have to ultimately implement it. Similarly, what we try to do is, through the use of IT we now have information on the basis of which we can efficiently monitor and actually find out if supposing a Collector or a Tehsildar has in his roster twice a week to tour, he can effectively find out which are the two PDS shops where he needs to go. Those are kinds of reports that we take out from our portals and that is how we monitor. And that is how we are able to sustainably manage and maintain that kind of vigil. Secondly, honestly speaking, I am not a pundit... the relationship between the PDS and Food Security Act and the employment rate or the non-employment rate, but generally what I can say from experiences that a Food Security Act and ensuring the delivery would lead to healthy workforce and a healthier workforce should be able to work more. So that is what I can say. Personally, I think that it should help especially the members of the

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conventionally productive age group (18-45) to be able to work more and earn more. That might be an indirect correlation. I do not have the data to support this argument but this is what a general common sense kind of thing that I can say right now. Thanks!

Dr. Sunil Sondhi: Can we have the second question please!

Participant: I completely agree with Dr. Roy that food should not be denied to any human being. Denial of food or the insufficiency of it keeps them hungry and does not allow him to have the basic necessity of survival and this is not correct. My country has been retracting for the last 67 years and this is a great pain and this should be corrected immediately. Food Security Act, I have read through the Act this afternoon very carefully, it mentions about 100s of schemes and other Acts which are already in place and it seems to me just as new alcohol in an old bottle. So I have no reservation in saying that this Food Security Act is a total sham. Thank you gentlemen!

Dr. Sunil Sondhi: Any specific question?

Participant: Sir, I wanted to know that Chhattisgarh has a model law on food security; I just want to know whether any steps have been taken so that mid-day meal scheme becomes a model mid-day meal scheme? Especially in the context of recent mid-day meal tragedy in Bihar and other examples of how badly mid-day meal schemes are run...

Vikas Sheel: As far as the MDM is concerned our Act provides that every child of the age group from 6 to 14 years will have the right to mid-day meal in the primary and middle schools up to class 8th. In order to make sure that something which happened in Bihar or there are incidences being reported almost everyday, does not happen. The only way to make sure that community is involved in the implementation. And therefore in the State of Chhattisgarh the MDM is mostly run by the women Self-help Groups. These women's children are also studying in the schools. So the contention is that if the mothers themselves are preparing the food and are serving food the likelihood of any kind of mishap or accident or something of that sort, something of a nature which is very unfortunate, happening becomes that much less. And there is no substitute for stricter monitoring and surprise inspections and making sure that the quality remains good. And evolving a system of constant feedback; we are successful in PDS because we have a very robust system of feedback from the consumer. The consumer knows my Call Centre Number and he can call me anytime of the day about the problem. Perhaps we need to extend that kind of system to the children also, because they are the beneficiaries and they will tell us the exact picture. So something needs to be done on that count but as far as systemic interventions go in Chhattisgarh, the MDM is purely run by the women self-help groups and they prepare the food and serve the food. It is the women SHGs which picks up the food from the ration shop. If they deploy a cook they will give ration to the cook otherwise normally they cook themselves. The idea of giving responsibilities of MDM to women SHGs was that if there were 20 members in the SHG it will invariably be so that out of 20 children of 10 will be studying in the same school. So when they prepare the food or oversee the preparation of the food it is more likely that these kinds of accidents will come down because here the community is involved. And then there is no substitute to stricter and closer monitoring and putting a grievance redressal mechanism in place.

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Participant: Mr. Sheel, you said that you are opposed to the idea of Direct Cash Transfer. What is the rationale behind it?

Dr. Sunil Sondhi: I guess we will have to wrap it up here. It is time to break for tea and after that the new session has to start. So I request the audience to reserve their questions for the tea time. The panelists will be there and we can have a discussion there.

Vikas Sheel: I just want to answer this one because this is interesting. Initially if you remember the Government of India said 'Direct Cash Transfers'. Today they do not talk about 'Direct Cash Transfers' they talk about 'Direct Benefit Transfers' and generally they come around the idea that as of now it is not a good idea to substitute food with cash. For example if a family is getting 25 kg of subsidised rice and the value of subsidy in that subsidised rice is, let's say, Rs 500 every month. The idea in cash transfers is you give Rs 500 to the family and they should be able to buy 25 kg of rice from the market or at the PDS shop from the market rate. Our reservation is that these are targeted subsidies for a particular purpose. With cash transfers there is no guarantee that this money is going to be used to purchase rice only. Especially in poor families this money can be easily diverted to other emergent consumption expenditure such as expenditure on medicines which cannot be avoided. If somebody does not have any cash, it is more likely that he will use this cash for medicines. And to that extent he would not be able to afford the same quantities which he would have afforded at subsidised rates. And therefore in PDS, as far as food is concerned, we, Government of Chhattisgarh, are of firm opinion that it should be in kind at least for the foreseeable future. The other thing is, which is not in terms of principal but in terms of implementation problems, is that the density of banking network is very low in Chhattisgarh so of today 'Direct Cash Transfers' replace PDS... You see the general argument about the 'Direct Cash Transfers' and PDS is that the PDS is beyond redemptions, that is the basis. Because we cannot do anything about PDS let's do away with it. That is the whole argument about 'Direct Cash Transfers' and PDS. We are of the opinion that PDS redeemable if you put in the right systems and strategies in place you can reform PDS, and we have demonstrated it. And, I welcome you all, please come and take a look, just do not be satisfied by my claims. You are most welcome to come and visit Chhattisgarh and take a look. Go to the remotest part of the State and find out whether a poor fellow gets his ration from 1st to 10th of every month or not! Some things can be done in the manner it is supposed to have been done. Why dismantle the system and talk about cash subsidy. That is why we take a principled position that cash transfers are bad in food because they have been seen as alternative to reduce leakages.

VISION OF FOOD SECURITY: INVESTMENT AND POLITICAL RETURNS

RAMAN SINGH*

Nowadays, there is great deal of debate about the issue on which today we are discussing here. I want to thank the organisers of the seminar on ‘National Food Security Act 2013’ which is organised by ‘Centre for Reform, Development and Justice’ that you have invited me. I also welcome all the participants of the seminar especially Prof. M. P. Singh, Mr. Sidharth Mishra, Mr. Sanjiv Tiwari, Mr. Aman Singh, Mr. Vikas Sheel and all the specialists and experts in this field who are present here today! It’s always a pleasant experience for me when I am invited to participate and address a gathering where the issue of food security is discussed upon. Whenever I read about such deliberations and meetings on this issue in newspapers and at other places, I feel that people are talking about poor people. I feel that people are talking about those people who have contributed in the making of sky-touching buildings. They are the people who contribute through their labour in the greener fields; running factories, making of six-lane highways and these people have nothing with them except their hard work. And if the country is getting concerned about these people now, I will say it’s already very late.

Right from 1947 the promise of ‘Roti, Kapda aur Makan’ to the people of this country has always been in the slogans of all the political parties. But, it took us 67 years to make this promise a reality as we are making efforts for this in 2013. And that too is being attempted through the route of ordinance. This is not a small issue but a major one. This has the potential to bring changes in the country. So it should had been talked about, discussed and debated openly in the Parliament, not brought through any back door mechanism. You should talk and debate about it openly in the Parliament. You should not

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fear from the criticism. Those who fear from criticism cannot move a step further in life. Why do you fear? You are doing this for poor people, BPL families, labourers who do not have enough to buy even a two square meal for themselves. You are doing it for them then why do you fear? These are the people who make you MPs and MLAs. We get elected by their votes. We are wearing cloths made by their labour. Why do you fear from debate?

I want to give you an example in the context of this issue. The 1857 was a period in this country which witnessed a series of revolution against Britishers. We can trace the history of demand for food by the people in Chhattisgarh during this period. You all are aware that during the period of 1856-57 there was one of the biggest famines in Asia. If you ask the elders they will tell you stories about this famine. Even now when they see a lanky person they call him that he is from famine of 56' era. There were thousands of deaths during that period of famine in Chhattisgarh. At that time landlord of Sonakhan Vir Narayan Singh felt that when food godowns of British are full and thousands are dying in need of food and the businessmen are selling grains on higher prices he picked up the gun and started looting the British godowns and distributed the grains among poor and needy people. British government saw this as an attempt of challenge to the British sovereignty. And because of this revolt against the British government, Vir Narayan Singh was jailed in the Raipur Central Jail. But somehow he managed to escape from the jail. When he tried to regroup against the British he was caught again and was killed openly at Jaysthal Chowk in Raipur. Since 1857 that fight for rice and fight for hunger has always been there in the conscience of people of Chhattisgarh and India. When I joined politics, I felt that today we do not need to loot the food from the British like Vir Narayan Singh did. I do not need to loot any godown. What I need to do is to give this conscience a legal form so that millions of people suffering from hunger can be helped. So the inspiration to bring such legislation came from the martyrdom of Vir Narayan Singh. I had dedicated this legislation to the Martyr Vir Narayan Singh. Chhattisgarh government worked very hard in order to implement this law and I can say that we have been successful in this attempt.

I want to bring to your notice about the concerns expressed by Prof. M. P. Singh. There are concerns in the country that we will lose millions of rupees. I want to ask people how much they receive as petroleum subsidy. It comes around 1, 25,000 crore rupees. And this money is nothing compared to the GDP of our economy. We can wait for building bridges, schools and roads but not for giving people security of food. If there remains even a single malnourished child one generation will become defunct. If our food godowns are full and there are still hungry people in the country then how the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers of this country can sleep peacefully. This is what I believe in. When there are foods being rotten in these godowns why can't we give it to poor and hungry people? If we do not have sufficient storage capacity why can't we give it to people to consume on a subsidised rate? What we needed to do was to make a system and better the existing system. I would not like to go into the technical details as Mr. Vikas Sheel has already explained it to you. I do not even wish to deal with the technical details. When I was thinking about the project people used to scare me with technical details. I went through 2-3 surveys in the country about the PDS system and they mentioned that there is 40 per cent leakage in the system. There was a prevailing thought that if, in order to reform the system, you touch the PDS it will burn your hand. It is not wise to even think of reforming the PDS in this country. When I used to go into the villages to find about the existing PDS system I found many problems viz. ration shops do not open, shops do not have sufficient rations, shopkeepers do not come

to the shops, sometimes they open the shop once in a week, etc. Then, I thought why can't we turn around the whole system. After taking a trip to whole Chhattisgarh I understood that to reform the system there could be a financial mechanism. In year 2000 Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee introduced Antyodaya Anna Yojana for the poorest among the poor people in the BPL list but this scheme used to cover very limited area. Only 18 lakhs families of Chhattisgarh were part of that scheme. I felt that there are many families who are not part of the scheme. Many people are not attached with this scheme. Whole country and Parliament is still discussing and debating about the report submitted by Mr. Tendulkar Committee which talks about a deadline of income of 28 rupees in villages and 34 rupees in towns. I have read reports by six different experts e.g. Rangrajan Committee Report, Sengupta Committee Report, World Bank Report, Planning Commission etc. And we have spent years on coming to the conclusion about who exactly is a poor and who belongs to BPL, who should be given rations etc. I think it should be turned exactly opposite. There is a one line solution. Whom we want to keep away from PDS, whom we would not give any ration! You come out with a negative list. You cannot come to a conclusion if you are making a positive list. For example, we would not give rations to income tax payers, government employees, those who possess more than 10 acres of land etc. You fix around six such criteria and then you will be able to make a category of people who are the poorest. Whenever there is a debate about people in the BPL they brought an average of 67 per cent and this is a problematic. If we fix 67 per cent as national average then we have to give entitlements to 67 per cent people in Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh unanimously etc. and from where do we find the statistics about these people who belong to this category of 6 per cent? Every state has a different percentage of people who belong to poverty line.

Daily wage earning of Bastar and Sarguja's tribal is four times less than what people earn daily in Haryana. Every state has a different socio-economic problems and every state has different count of people who belong to BPL. That is why when the Central Government makes any scheme they fix a uniform criterion for the whole country and try to implement it accordingly. They do not understand that Jharkhand's situation is different from Chhattisgarh's situation. So all the expert's reports which I have read I think contribute to the debate of fixing a uniform criterion at all-India level. And that is why they kept on delaying it from 2009 till 2013. They have issued an ordinance for this project but how will they implement it in the next coming six years as they do not have any roadmap for that. Do they have any plan to make PDS system in our country transparent? How can the entitlements be reached to the last standing person via the existing PDS system, do they have any plan for this? Do we have proper storage system at States, Districts, Blocks and panchayats levels? If you have to supply rice for one year, do we have proper system in this country to implement it throughout the country?

It will take at least ten years to build this proper mechanism. It took me around eight years to make system correct right from building state warehousing corporation godowns to the PDS till the panchayat level. It requires efforts to correct systems from the state to the consumer level. This is a complete chain. Nothing happens by just passing a Bill in the Lok Sabha. Production, procurement and distribution which Mr Vikas Sheel must have told you about... This chain cannot be broken. There are many ways to enhance the production and I won't go into the details about that today. It is very unfortunate that we do not have a proper system of procurement in the country. There is no proper system of buying wheat, rice, maize, etc. in this country. Chhattisgarh government implemented this system of procurement. Today we procure 71 lakh MT paddy worth Rs 9,000 crore and we make 100

per cent payments through cheques. We don't make any cash transfers. We purchase almost whole grain with the help of 1,333 societies. We convert these 71 lakh MT paddies into rice within 100 days and then we give them to FCI godowns and then we bring them for distribution.

People say Dr. Raman Singh oppose cash transfers. I do not oppose cash transfers in any other sectors. I know what cash transfer is. Even if under PDS Rs 600 is given as cash transfer then how will the Finance Minister of this country will argue that Rs 600 is the solution of the problem. If we do this the whole distribution system will get destroyed. After four years what will be the value of Rs 600 given the increasing rate of inflation. Will you be able to attach it with the Inflation Index? There is no answer about it. After four years the purchasing power of Rs 600 will be half of what it is now. Even now in this market system what can you purchase in these 600 rupees? So there should be clear cut thinking about this cash transfer scheme. In this country only food security is not going to solve the problem. In a country where in most of the underdeveloped areas there is problem of malnutrition. IMR and MMR rates are very high. Providing either rice or wheat won't help much. When you are working with a big heart, thinking about taking such a big step, you have to know that providing tablets of folic acid and other medicines won't help much. People who are hungry they don't need medicine. These people need pulses, chana, iodised salt, oil etc. along with rice and wheat. This is the question of making of a generation. Making of flyovers, six-lane highways etc. can wait for another year or two. What is the average IMR and MMR in this country? We need to have a long term strategy to tackle all these problems one day. And unless you add nutrition factor in the food security provision this won't help much. This aspect about food security needs to be discussed in the Parliament. This food security should be provided to the people in a wholesome package. It should be acknowledged by the poor people that the government does not only bother about taking votes from them but also doing something better for them. When we have a debate on this in the Lok Sabha, we should think about dealing these loopholes in the proposed Bill.

There are some issues specifically about Chhattisgarh when we worked towards strengthening the PDS system in the state like what challenges we faced and how we tackled them successfully. Although we brought this Bill in 2012 but for the last four years we have been consistently working towards strengthening the PDS system in the State. When we completely reworked the whole system we came up with the law. The law which the Central Government has proposed will take at least six years to work out properly. We first worked for six years in the field to reform the system then made it the part of the law. I will tell you the difference between Chhattisgarh's law and this one. Mr Vikas Sheel must have told you that in Chhattisgarh we removed the private sector shops in the PDS system. People say this is the era of privatisation and we completely went around and de-privatised the system. For this we had to fight in the court. We also came up with certain legal reforms. Ultimately every issue was resolved in the honourable High Court. Now in Chhattisgarh all the shops are being operated by either SHGs or Van Samitis. In this effort every section of the society including panchayats and women groups were also involved. We have put every data regarding this in the public domain. The names of the families availing the PDS entitlements are written on the walls of the Panchayat Bhavan. If the families whose names are written on the board do not get their rations on time they can complain to the District Collector and if the Collector does not act within a week then the Collector would also be punished. We made sure through the law that any one has to be accountable in case there is a problem. We also increased the number of shops to more than 10,500. After increasing the number of the shops

we fixed the accountability of the panchayats. We added panchayats and Gram Sabhas to the system. Now, the Gram Sabha decides who will be the beneficiary. Gram Sabha is the most important body. When Gram Sabha is organised in villages, residents of the villages assemble there and names of the beneficiaries are called out and by this way we eliminate the names of the bogus people from the system. Those who talk about 40 per cent leakage in the system do not care about the economic dimensions of it. How a shop will become financially viable, if a shopkeeper gets only Rs 8 as commission for selling 100 kg of grains? In this case he will not be able to operate a ration shop. We increased this commission rate from Rs 8 to Rs 45 per 100 kg. Now for the shopkeepers operating a PDS shop has become more financially viable. We are thinking about increasing this rate with the inflation rate. We do not bother about increasing financial burden on the State. We just make sure that the beneficiary receives their due entitlement. Earlier, it was not possible for the SHGs to procure rations on their own so we provided them with an interest free loan of Rs 75,000 for the startup. In our budget we kept Rs 40 crore aside only for this purpose. The third thing we did was that we provided them with one month's ration in advance free of cost.

All these helped us to create a better system. The profit of a shopkeeper which was around Rs 700 earlier now has increased to around Rs 7000-8000 per month. So now for a shopkeeper operating a PDS shop has become more viable. We also worked on operational transparency. The biggest leakages occur during transportation of ration from warehouses to the PDS shops. Earlier this transportation was done privately. We identified this problem and took over this transportation job. We introduced yellow vehicles in the whole State which takes care of transportation of rations from warehouses to PDS shops. Now, it is the responsibility of the Government to make sure that rations reaches to the PDS shops. We completely changed the transportation system. Now if a yellow vehicle carrying rations goes to private businessman's shop whole village gathers and start asking what a yellow vehicle is doing there.

Nowadays media is very active. We have provided numbers to the mediapersons and Panchayat's Sarpanchs and we inform them when a vehicle starts with ration from the warehouse, they take care of the vehicle whether it is arriving at a designated shop on a given time or not. These people act as watchdogs for the system. We have also provided the people with a toll-free number on which anyone can inform us if they find any discrepancy.

Many mediapersons ask me one question as what is the basic difference between the Act of Chhattisgarh and the one being brought by the Central Government. The biggest difference is that the coverage area that we identified and what Government of India did on the basis of different parameters. In Chhattisgarh we have added APL, BPL and Antyodaya together and we are covering almost 90 per cent area and Government of India's legislation seeks to cover only 67 per cent. The difference is that in Chhattisgarh we have tried to cover the larger areas. And along with food security we also ensure nutrition security too. In targeted places especially tribal dominated areas like Bastar and Sarguja, we provide them chana, pulses and iodised salt etc. along with normal entitlements of rice and wheat. When the market price of chana is Rs 45 per kg we provide them two kg chana at the rate of Rs 5 per kg per month. In Chhattisgarh there are around 42 lakh PDS consumers. You will be surprised to know that among 42 lakh customers we don't receive complaints from even 42 people. We have been visited by Chief Ministers of at least nine States who came to see how we turned around the system of public delivery. Honourable Supreme Court of India also praised this effort and directed other States to

implement a system like this in their States as well. Many intellectuals including Amartya Sen, who have visited Chhattisgarh and experienced the changed system, have praised our efforts. It feels good when such dignitaries praise your State and the system and prescribe that other States to emulate the Chhattisgarh model. I feel very happy when I visit the remotest corner of the State in the jungles and hear from them that the system is working well. During a visit, I met some elderly people and when I asked how this system is working they said good things about it. When asked who provides you all these they don't take names of the Government, the Chief Minister of the State or Raman Singh, they say 'Chawal Waale Baba' provides us this. I have been Cabinet Minister in Delhi for five years and Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh for the last ten years, but I never felt so satisfied in my life before hearing this. I was amazed if today anyone thinks with such emotions, it is amazing to know that a person living in the remotest part of the jungle thinks about your work in this way.

For how long do we have to wait to see this happening in the entire country? We have been waiting for this to happen since 1947. Sometimes I wonder whether the country is waiting for other Vir Narayan Singhs to take birth for their cause. When will such law take place in the country? Sometimes people allege that Dr. Raman Singh is wasting money in Chhattisgarh. But there is nothing like this. Chhattisgarh is a very small State. We know the fiscal situation of the State. When we implement programmes like this we have to think many times before taking any step and we do it carefully. For the first time in the country we did an experiment using PPP model and this has been a successful one. I say if there is a will to do, you can do anything.

For the last some years, I have been talking to many Railway Ministers about the situation of railways in Chhattisgarh. Since the last ten years not even single kilometre of railway line has been established in Chhattisgarh. All the time they say that they do not have money in the budget for this State. They do not have money for converting single line tracks into double lines or building a new railway station in Chhattisgarh either. Then, I also told them that do not give us any money and just support us policy wise. I had gone to meet the Railway Minister with a project of Rs 3,000- Rs 4,000 crore. The Railways Minister said that the budget has already been passed and he could not shell out any money. I told him that we do not need any monetary support from his side and asked him to read the proposal only. It was a very good proposal. The State was ready to give land for the purpose of construction and SCIL and CIL were ready to finance the project. We had made this proposal very carefully and after six months of preparation of the project the Chairman gave his approval in just 15-20 days. And now we have already started with the first stage of this railway corridor project in Chhattisgarh. Some 10-50 projects like this could be started in this country too. We do not have problem of money but of willpower. Big projects like this do not need the support of FDI. We have enough money in this country only. What we need to do is to take robust steps, swift decisions and firm implementation according to the rule. Unless you pump these infrastructural projects with full power it is not possible to create good roads and railway networks. Today China's GDP is double of our country's GDP and this has only become possible because of China's full throttle implementation of these infrastructural projects in the areas of roads and railways. Roads and railways are necessary components of development. During the tenure of Atal Bihari Vajpayee we started with a huge project of highway development in the country which was known as 'Golden Quadrilateral Project'. He also started the PMGSY with a budget of Rs 50,000 crore and through this every villages of this country could be connected with each other. He did not have money for it. At that time there was a debate that

making roads in the villages come under Centre subject not as the State subject. Atal Ji said that is not an issue. He said we will do it anyhow. And he put a cess on petroleum products and managed to collect Rs 50,000 crore and under this scheme 40,000 villages of the country got connected with each other.

If we have determination we can turn around any project in this country. And this is possible even now. Do not feel sad! Those who won't do it will have to leave. Now the youth of this country has awakened. It will not tolerate the situation our country is in now. Our economy is going down, industries have become sick, and inflation rate is on its peak. Today a common man gets scared if he has to go to the market. The prices of petrol and diesel are touching skies. This country has experienced really a very bad time in the last 7-8 years. This government has spent money on various projects but when it comes to implement a project like this it says it does not have money. It has spent Rs 80,000 crore during the Commonwealth Games and much of the money was spent unaccountably. Why there is always an excuse of money when it comes to project meant for 40-50 crore poor people of this country? The solutions of all the problems are here in the soil of this nation. For example, Chhattisgarh, which is almost 1, 36,000 square km in size, people chant slogans like 'Ameer Dharti ke Gareeb Log' about it. Why this phenomenon of 'rich land and poor people'? Since the last 60 years this State has been lagging behind in terms of developmental parameters. We had 45 per cent people in the BPL list. But now this state is one of the fastest growing State economies in the country. How this sudden change happened in last 8-10 years? The reason of underdevelopment of most of the States is policy paralysis. And in these 10 years in our State we have shown that with the willpower and vision to bring change we can overturn the existing affairs. We not only made the PDS system work in Chhattisgarh, we developed Raipur as new capital in Chhattisgarh. If there is willpower to do things, we can do anything. I can say that and have proved it as well. It is fact that in 21st century after Chandigarh we have been able to make Raipur as the second best capital city in the country. A new capital of Chhattisgarh which is of 8000 hectare in size is ready and functional. Six-lane roads, underground sewage system, underground electricity system, 30 acres of jungle safari, housing facilities based on sectors system etc. All these work have been going on parallel basis.

People say that Chhattisgarh is an underdeveloped State. I ask how much is the per capita power consumption in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and other developed States. Today in Chhattisgarh a normal person consumes double the power of what anyone consumes in Delhi. Today Chhattisgarh's per capita power consumption is 1,540 units and the national average is 660 units only. How are we underdeveloped then! Very soon we will be generating 30,000-40,000 MW of additional power in our State. We in Chhattisgarh alone produce one fourth of total production of steel, cement, aluminum, power in the country. Two per cent of population produce this much and at the end of 12th plan this will reach to 30 per cent of total production. This is what we call as inclusive growth. We do not concentrate on area but we take care of every aspect of development simultaneously.

I was telling you about how more villages joined our PDS system. People say that in our State coverage area is more. We have reduced the number of labourers who used to migrate outside the State. We added all those people of Chhattisgarh in the list of beneficiaries, who are destitute, differently-abled, widowed, bonded labourers, all those labourers who do not possess any land and landless farmers, students living in hostels, pregnant women, etc. And that is why number of beneficiaries in our State seems a bit inflated. We experienced the difference in the last four years. We keep talking about big things like MDGs and other targets as well and many intellectuals talk endlessly over these

issues. But we say that it is fruitless to only talk about it. Go to the roots of the problems and attack there to solve the issues. This country has become tired of these debates about targets and statistics. The job has to be done. Only talking about it won't solve anything.

I am telling you about the effects of jobs done in Chhattisgarh. I am giving you statistics from my State. For example, there has been tremendous change in the statistics of IMR in our State. It stood at 63 in 2006-07 and now it has come down to 48 and in coming five years it will be below 30. Our target is to achieve the rates of the best performing State in India. We are not sure when we would be able to achieve that targets but we have firm belief that one day we will definitely achieve it. There has been dramatic change in our MMR rates. It has fallen down from 279 to 260. From Chhattisgarh every year around 8-10 lakh people used to migrate out of the State in search for jobs and now this number has fallen down in thousands only.

In the area of malnutrition, we are performing better than earlier. These tremendous results in four-five areas show that PDS system is not all about two square meals a day but it is about freedom to live one's life in a better sense. Chhattisgarh is a very diverse State where around 32 per cent of the population is tribal, 45 per cent population belongs to SC/ST while 45 per cent of the population belongs to BPL; around 50 per cent of the State is covered with forest, etc. Bastar district of my State alone is bigger than whole State of Kerala in terms of area. There are certain good things about our State and some bad things as well. And when it comes to talking about Chhattisgarh the first question that many ask is about its Naxal problem. The area like Bastar, which is surrounded by six different States, has 40,000 square kilometres area comprising of very difficult geographical terrain. To find a single person called Verappan around 40,000 security personnel were used in his search operation in the jungles for around 8 years. But, in comparison to that the situation in Bastar is much more difficult. It is very easy to talk about problems of Bastar region sitting in a room in Delhi. But you have to go to the ground in order to see the real problems. It is not easy to do politics in Chhattisgarh. We do politics amidst landmines, AK 47s and RDXs. But when we have decided that we have to do right things for people then we have to leave all the fears behind. And in this conference on food security I assure you that very soon there will be peace and development in Chhattisgarh, especially in places like Sarguja and Bastar. If not today then tomorrow but it will definitely happen. And we along with people of Chhattisgarh will make this happen. We definitely face problems but we will soon overcome this. I was given only 30 minutes to speak and Prof. M. P. Singh was supposed to speak for 45 minutes but he finished his speech in 15 minutes only. I was asking Tiwari Ji about his experience of these 15 minutes. Prof. Singh is a very learned person and when a person like me speaks in front of him it seems like a college student is speaking in front of his teacher. I am neither an economist nor a specialist on Chhattisgarh. But luckily, I found a very good team which is implementing works in Chhattisgarh and we have only brought practical experiences here on this stage which we are sharing with you.

The next generation of PDS system, this is a transformed version of PDS which we have introduced in our state in the last one year, is known as Core-PDS. We have extended the normal PDS in cities like Raipur, Bhilai and Nagri in the form of Core-PDS. Now we have given choice to the consumers in the new PDS system. Like you use ATM for withdrawing the money, in the same way, we have 150 shops in Raipur and in this we provide the consumer freedom to choose and buy their rations from any of these 150 shops. We have been provided with a Smart Card to buy their ration from a shop of their choice. The name of the new PDS system is 'Meri Marzi'. In this system a consumers can not only buy

his rations from the shop of his choice but also have the freedom to choose the quantity of ration he/she wants to take along in one go and buy the rest some other time. With this Smart Card system shopkeepers cannot indulge in any kind of corruption because every transaction is recorded electronically. This can prove to be a model for PDS systems in every part of the country and with this leakages in the PDS system can be brought down from 40 per cent to 0.4 per cent. It is a very big experiment that we have launched in Chhattisgarh and it had been proved a successful one. Now we are working towards implementing this system of Core-PDS in every city of the Chhattisgarh. And about this one of the Central Ministers has also mentioned that it is a model system for the country. In Chhattisgarh we have brought an Act for the purpose of skill upgradation of youth of the State. And for this purpose in all the 27 districts of the State we have started establishing 'Livelihood Colleges' where any youth can come and join any of the certificate courses for the purpose of his skill upgradation. We have provided them choice of 150 different certification courses. The experiment of 'Livelihood College' has been started from Dantewada district. Our target is to train around 50 lakh youth from Chhattisgarh in the coming 20 years through different certification courses. The 3-month courses being offered by the State Government ranges from Motor Mechanic, Sewing Machine operation, Heavy Vehicle Operation, Computer Operation, etc. If there is a group of at least 50 young people ready to join a course it is mandatory for the Government to make necessary arrangements for them in 40 days of application. We have launched this programme on a bigger scale. We have started with a Skill Upgradation Centre in Dantewada which is established in a 40-acre campus. We have also established these centres in Sarguja, Bastar, etc. We call these institutes as colleges of unemployed. Our vision is that if a youth in Bastar with the help of training in these institutes becomes able to earn around Rs 500-Rs 600 per day then this youth would never pick up a gun to be part of Naxal movement. We have launched this programme on a big scale and we have also roped in PSUs, NGOs and local bodies with this programme. We have also added medical colleges, engineering colleges, poly-techniques and ITIs with this programme. We do not need much of infrastructure support for this. We select the candidates and then talk to a college that we have to train these youth for six months. There remain many seats vacant in many medical colleges, engineering colleges, poly-techniques and ITIs we can use these vacant seats for the purpose of giving short-term training to these youth. We can also select candidates in large numbers and divided them in different groups according to their choice of trade and then send them to different institutes for training. By taking these kinds of steps we can help youth of not only Chhattisgarh but also in other States to help them become part of the job market. We have started many such small programmes like this along with PDS system in Chhattisgarh which provides its people guarantee of food and employment, etc. I would like to stop here!

Sidharth Mishra: Dr. Raman Singh Ji, I would like to assure you that it does not matter how much a Professor speaks, but the way an eloquent leader puts forward his viewpoints a Professor can never do that. And your Secretary too expressed his views very well. But the way you took the issue between the common people is very unique. I have listened to many leaders in my 20 years career of journalism but today I found that one can talk like you only when he not only has a brilliant understanding of public policy but also insights of how a policy can be implemented. I am sure, today the audience present here must be feeling educated after listening to you. And you have assured us that you will come to us again and I assure you that we will definitely invite you again.

Now, I would like to have some questions from the audience and request Dr. Raman Singh Ji to respond to these in an open house session.

Participant: First of all I would like to apologise for being limited to English in my question. The Centre has not given much instruction in terms of distribution and I think Food Minister, K. V. Thomas, said that the implementation will be left to the States. So, perhaps I could ask, where Chhattisgarh has been successful in it, does it has any advice for other states where there are many challenges... like Bihar where there is a much bigger population which is far-flung population?

Dr. Raman Singh: A model like Chhattisgarh can easily be emulated and implemented in States like Bihar and Odisha. We have created a model for PDS system and it can be implemented anywhere in the country.

Sidharth Mishra: Now we have a very limited time left with us so I regret that we won't be able to take more than one or two questions.

Participant: As per my understanding the food security law in Chhattisgarh must have been made under the concurrent list of the Constitution of India. And it is written in the Constitution that if the Central Government makes any such law which already made by a State then in this case the law made by the Centre will supersede the States' law. So how do you think this situation of conflict can be resolved?

Dr. Raman Singh: We have kept a very clear cut provision that we will implement the law created by the Government of India and we will provide the beneficiaries all the entitlements which is mentioned in the law. And at the same time we will also cover the beneficiaries who are not covered by the law made by the Government of India from our own fund.

Participant: So you are not opposing the Act brought by the Government of India?

Dr. Raman Singh: Not at all! We will not oppose this move at all! Although we would demand that there should be debate on this issue in the Parliament. The PDS system and food security must be implemented in this country but if this is implemented by adding amendments suggested by us it would be beneficial for the country. We are not going to oppose this Bill at all.

Sidharth Mishra: I think we have run absolutely out of time. I must say it was a great day debating and deliberating on the issue of food security in India.

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