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1. FESTIVALS: Vijaya Dashmi which falls on Aashwin Shukla 10, Oct 9 this year, signifies victory of good over evil. It is on this day Ram vanquished Ravan and Arjun picked up his weapons hidden on the Shami tree for a battle with Duryodhan in order to retrieve Virat Raja's cows from him. There is also a story of Kautsa, for whose sake Raghu Raja challenges Kuber - the treasurer of the devas. On this day, Kuber sprinkled gold coins on the Shami tree which Raghu offered to Kautsa. Thus, people perform puja of Shami tree on this day as its leaves are symbol of gold. The day is also celebrated with ' *Shastra Poojan* ' when People perform puja to weapons, tools and instruments and vehicles. They also perform ' *Sharda puja* ' - of books. It is customary to embark on all types of new ventures on this day, without the need to consider the auspicious time in the 'panchaang.' - *muhurta*. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh started on this day in 1925 at Nagpur and as such is one of the important among six utsavs.

2. ON TEACHER'S DAY, MODI HOLDS CLASS: Ek swarnim sankalp 5.5-crore gujaratio ne agad vadhar che (One golden resolve can lead 5.5 crore Gujaratis to progress) — thus echoed the voice of Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the Town Hall at Gandhinagar on September 5.

The occasion was Teacher's Day. The state government had organised the Vidyarthi Sankalp Abhiyaan along with the presentation of the Best Teacher Awards where around 1.5 crore students including 2.43 lakh from the tribal-dominated Valsad district took a vow of 'Swarnim Gujarat'. The function was shown live to people across the state through a videoconference.

The students had an interactive session with Modi where he gave candid answers to their questions on education, examination fear and school infrastructure. One student even asked Modi how he had studied during his student days.

With the literacy rate rising in Gujarat, Modi has a vision to further improve the education system. He also urged people to educate their daughters.

Modi said that the state government is ready to provide all technical support to its students so that they have an edge over others. He also said that colleges should concentrate on the development of language skills. Although English is essential, a child learns best if the medium of instruction is his mother tongue, said Modi.

3. GANESH IDOL IN MUMBAI INSURED FOR RS 26.5 MN: For the first time in its 75-year history, Mumbai's popular Ganesh idol known as Lalbaugcha Raja and its massive marquee have been insured for a whopping Rs 26.5 million.

Ganesh idols are worshiped for 10 days and on the 11th day, the statues are taken through the streets in processions accompanied with dancing, singing and fanfare to be immersed in sea, symbolising a ritual see-off of the god.

4. NEW SHAKHA STARTED: A new Shakha of HSS was started on 7 September in University of Southern California(USC), Los Angeles. Total Sankhya was 9 on the first day which included 5 Swayamsevaks and 4 Sevikas. Shakha started with warm up, surya namaskar, Yogasan and Pranayam, parichay, games discussion on how to contact other students on campus for Shakha. Shakha was concluded with Sangh Prarthana.

5. KOSI HAVOC IN BIHAR: On the East of Kosi Embankment are situated the districts of Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Supaul, Saharsa and Madhepura and on the West of embankment are the districts Madhubani, Darbhanga and Samastipur. KUSAHA is the name of the place where the embankment broke, on the 18th of August 2008, causing this catastrophe, leaving behind an unforgettable tale for the survivors of the floods. Organizations like Sewa International, Sewa Bharati, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and other like minded organizations are working together, and serving under the banner of "BARH RAHAT SAHAYTA SAMITI" with its centre at Saharsa and "BARH PEERIT SAHAYTA SAMITI" with its headquarters at Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Samiti has a very strong force, of over 3500 dedicated volunteers involved, working round the

clock rescuing, distributing relief materials, providing food and essential health care etc. It has volunteers from local region who are well aware of the topography and hence reaching far flung areas to locate the needy people, waiting to be evacuated to safer locations, in the first place and provide them with the needed help which other agencies involved aren't able to effectively do, as they are unaware of the terrain.

From 19th of August 2008 itself, the Samiti set up 7 Sewa Centres/Camps in seven most affected districts to provide immediate relief, food, shelter and treating sick people on arrival. The seven centres are as mentioned below: Raghopur; Vivah Bhawan, Shankar Chawk, Saharsa; Bihariganj, Madhepura : Sewa Bharati Office, Madhubani Chawk, Purnea; Sangh Karyalaya, Shiv Mandir Chawk, Katihar; Sangh Karyalaya, Nawgachhia and Shiv Mandir, Forbisganj, Araria

Though the people have started moving back to their homes due to receding flood waters, over 3000 people are still there in our relief camp operating from Zila School in Saharsa district of Bihar.

Distribution of relief materials is still being done from all 7 centres and 21 sub-centres and a regular community kitchen is in operation to provide them food and safe drinking water.

On 7th of September, Baba Ramdev, Acharya Balkrishan and R K Sinha visited our relief centre at Zila School, Saharsa, where he performed Bharat Mata puja. Speaking on the occasion, he praised the good work being done by Seva Bharati volunteers during this disaster, and went ahead saying that other organizations should also do similar things to serve the needy.

From the 5th of September, a new relief centre has been started at Kodyapatti in Triveniganj block of Saharsa, catering about 4000 people. This centre is 12 KM from the Triveniganj block headquarters and can only be reached by boats. Team of Doctors from Sewa Bharati, Gorakhpur has set up a medical camp to treat the flood victims in the village Kodyapatti.

6. SIX BHARATIYAS IN FORBES' YOUNG ASIAN RICH LIST: Six Bharatiyas, including Ranbaxy promoter family's Malvinder and Shivinder Singh, Suzlon's Girish Tanti and

Indiabulls' Sameer Gehlaut, have made it to a list of 15 youngest Asian billionaires, compiled by business magazine Forbes.

"The country's millionaires jumped 23% last year. The billionaire count soared to 53 from 36 the previous year," Forbes said, adding that Bharat has maintained its pace in the money race.

Other Bharatiyas on the list include real estate firm Oberoi Constructions' Vikas Oberoi and online gambling entity PartyGaming's founder Anurag Dikshit.

7. MY EXPERIENCE DURING MY LAST TRIP TO BHARAT: In my last trip to Bharat, I stayed in my village for 17 days which is my longest stay in my village after 1983. I wanted to Utilize this stay for some social service. Yoga and accupressure being my favourite topics, I mobilized my fellow villagers, explained them the benefits of these free medical treatment techniques. They were very interested to learn it. Invited them in the morning at 5:30am and had one and a half hour session for several days. It brought very exciting results. Over 50 of them, Men, women, young, adults and children are performing pranayam, yoga postures and accupressure every day. My sister had severe thyroid and low blood pressure problem. She was on medicine everyday. She stopped the medicine, the day she started the accupressure and pranayam. Now she is very happy to learn these. She feels more strength and no fainting any more. I had to see so many patients with different diseases like thyroid, stomach pain, liver problem, high sugar and others.

They all feel happy now. My mom, who is 75 years old, had chronic pain in her leg. She is practicing both pranayam and accupressure every day. She is very happy to get rid of her leg pain. Another problem I found was heavy smoking and tobacco use. I worked with 3 of them. I am happy to mention that 2 of them, both my elder cousins have stopped it for ever. They mentioned that they feel better doing pranayam, than smoking. I tried to take a few more initiative with other issues, but could succeed because of shortage of time.

Though I went to take care of the final rites of my father, I enjoyed doing these sewa works in my spare time. -- *Arun K Sharma, USA*

8. REVELATION ON SWISS BANK ACCOUNTS: Subject: Is Bharat a poor Country?

This is so shocking...wish black money deposits was an Olympics event...India would have won a gold medal hands down. The second best Russia has 4 times lesser deposit.

DISHONEST INDUSTRIALISTS, scandalous politicians and corrupt IAS, IRS, IPS officers have deposited in foreign banks in their illegal personal accounts a sum of about \$ 1500 billion, which have been misappropriated by them. This amount is about 13 times larger than the country's foreign debt. With this amount 45 crore poor people can get Rs 1, 00,000 each. This huge amount has been appropriated from the people of India by exploiting and betraying them.

Some 80,000 people travel to Switzerland every year, of which 25,000 travel very frequently.

Black money in Swiss banks -- Swiss Banking Association report, 2006 details bank deposits in the territory of Switzerland by nationals of following countries:

Top five

India---- \$1,456 billion

Russia ---\$ 470 billion

UK -----\$390 billion

Ukraine - \$100 billion

China -----\$ 96 billion

Now do the maths - India with \$1456 billion or \$1.4 trillion has more money in Swiss banks than rest of the world combined. Public loot since 1947. Can we bring back our money? It is one of the biggest loots witnessed by humankind -- the loot of the Aam Aadmi (common person) since 1947, by his brethren occupying public office. It has been orchestrated by politicians, bureaucrats and some businesspersons.

What is to be noted here is that most of the wealth of Indians parked in these tax havens is illegitimate money acquired through corrupt means. Naturally, the secrecy associated with the bank accounts in such places is central to the issue, not their low tax rates as the term 'tax havens' suggests. Remember Bofors? India could not trace the ultimate beneficiary of those transactions because of the secrecy associated with these bank accounts.

9. NEW JERSEY COURT DISMISSES SONIA DEFAMATION SUIT: A New Jersey

court last week tossed out one of the two defamation lawsuits filed by the Indian National Overseas Congress (INOC) seeking \$100 million in damages from individuals and non-profits for allegedly defaming Congress party president Sonia Gandhi. The court said the INOC does not have the right to seek damages. A decision on the other identical lawsuit filed by the INOC – but in a New York court and against different individuals – is pending.

The defendants hailed Judge Patricia DelBuono Cleary of New Jersey's Monmouth County Superior Court's dismissal of the much-publicized lawsuit as a measure of the fairness of the American judicial system. Satyanarayana Dosapati, a defendant along with Naresh Sharma, Sunanda Thali, the Mahatma Gandhi Center and Hindu Temple and others, said that he believed the ruling by the New Jersey court would positively impact the case in New York, because the charges are similar.

10. BHARAT WILL AVOID 5MN TONNES OF CO2 BY 2012: Through carbon trading

projects under the Clean Development Mechanism, more than 5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide will be avoided by 2012 - cutting back 10% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions every year.

The government has cleared more than 1,000 projects for carbon trading, the highest in the world, followed by China, attracting investments worth Rs 119,662 crore in these green ventures. The Clean Development Mechanism is a market driven device under the UN Framework on Climate Change that allows industries in developing countries to get funds to make their plants and production facilities a bit greener.

Under the convention, rich countries are expected to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by a fixed percentage by 2012. But realizing that transition would be costlier in developed countries, the treaty allows rich countries to instead fund green transitions in developing countries and claim credit of the reduced emissions against their targets.

11. 51% OF BUSINESSES OWNED BY SC/ST/OBCS:

Over half of all business establishments in the country — 51% to be precise — are today owned by the socially disadvantaged sections, mostly OBCs, with a slim contribution coming from SCs and STs. A closer look at the data shows that the majority of businesses owned by OBCs/SCs/STs are establishments without any hired workers — that is, these are pa-and-ma ops, run by members of the household. They are possibly efforts at self-employment.

The data shows that while people from these sections owned 45% of business establishments at the time of the last Economic Census in 1998, their share has registered a 6 percentage point increase since then. OBCs account for the largest chunk of this growth.

12. HSS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA KARYAKARTHA VARG:

The HSS Southern California Vibhag hosted a two-day karyakartha varg on August 30th and 31st in San Diego, California. 42 participants from various age groups and backgrounds from as far as 150 miles came driving to meet in a community center. The varg geet was “dhyeya marg par chale veer to”, which inspired all to march forward in the mission for Hindu Unity and the spread of Sanatana Dharma. A two hour Shakha was held on both the days, with emphasis on training in conducting Shakhas; sharing of experiences; a variety of rough games, including tank, tug of war, curuchela; volley ball; Mahakhel; Samarop Bauddhik were main attraction of the varg.

13. LETTER TO EDITOR, THE PIONEER: Reference "A Dark Tunnel Ahead" - (06 Sep).

The usual chant of minority victimhood at the hands of the 'fascist Sangh Parivar' comes out loud and clear. But, how far is this true? Dr. (Father) Vincent Kundukulam of St Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Aluva, Kerala, undertook a doctoral research entitled: Le RSS Et L'Eglise En Inde (RSS and Church in Bharat), at the Sorbonne University, Paris, France, in 2003. To Fr. Kundukulam goes the credit for being the first Christian priest to do a doctoral thesis on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, that too in a foreign university. He is also the first clergyman to

author a book on the RSS titled RSS: Enthu? Engott? (What is RSS and Where is it headed for).

The findings of his research and successful defence of the thesis makes for ' very interesting reading '!! Far removed from the stereotype depiction of the RSS by our secularists! ! In his view, the RSS is a multi-faceted organisation which is political, cultural, religious and voluntary in nature and approach. At the same time, Fr. Kundukulam argues against branding the RSS ideology as fascism, Nazism, fundamentalism and communalism. He said the terms fascism, Nazism, and fundamentalism are much abused terms in Bharat. They have a distinct connotation in the European context that can hardly apply to the Bharatiya milieu. One admirable aspect of the RSS, Fr Kundukulam says, is its flexibility to move with the times and to adopt the best from other socio-cultural- religious movements. He admires the RSS for the dedication and discipline of its cadres, the simple life style of its pracharaks, the moral teaching it imparts to the younger generation in its daily sakhās, and the voluntary labour put in by its cadres at critical times such as natural calamities.

Similarly, the Justice Wadhwa Commission of Inquiry appointed to go into the Graham Satines murder, concluded on the basis of evidence presented: "There is no evidence to suggest that any of the persons involved in the crime was in fact a member of either the Bajrang Dal or the BJP or any organization ".

In this light, Father Dominic Emmanuel's Article, can therefore be construed as a case of ' Suppressio Veri, Suggestio Falsi '.
H. Balakrishnan, Chennai

14. SHRI VISHWA NIKETAN: Visitors:

Sh. Ramesh Mathur, Sh. Niyanta Deshpande - Japan, Sh. Dineshmani Dubey - Thailand, Sh. Jitesh Sehwani - USA. **Pravas:** Sh. Mohan Bhagwat, Sarakaryavaha RSS is on his last leg of the tour with book release functions on Sept 26 at New York and Sept 28 at London. Dr. Shankar Tatwawadi Samyojak - Vishwa Vibhag is in UK till Oct 9.

15. FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Regeneration is literally re-birth comes not by the intellect, not by the fullness of the purse, not by policy, not by change of machinery, but by the getting of a new

heart, by throwing away all that we were into the fire of sacrifice and being reborn in the Mother. Self-abandonment is the demand made upon us. She asks of us, "How many will live for me? How many will die for me?" and awaits our answer. -- *Sri Aurobindo, India's Rebirth.*

JAI SHREE RAM

UNIQUE SANGH EXPERIMENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

PRAMOD KUMAR

WITH 98 per cent rate of literacy, majority of the villagers speak Samskrit.

- * There are 53 kinds of small and cottage industries in the village of 450 families with a population of 2500.
- * Every inch of the agriculture land is irrigated.
- * Majority of the farmers have said firm no to the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and adopted organic farming.
- * No family uses wood for preparing food; almost every house has a bio-gas plant.
- * Awareness about protecting the environment is so wide-spread that every girl of the village ties *rakhi* to trees on Rakshabandhan day and resolves to protect them.
- * Every house has a *tulsi* plant and flower garden in the premises.
- * Every building has a sign of *Om/Swastik* and other ethical messages on the walls.
- * Every house has a toilet.
- * The village is free from theft, violence and all kinds of addictions including *paan, biri, cigarette, gutkha, liquor, etc.*
- * No dispute of the village is pending in any court or police station.
- * Every family has Sangh swayamsevaks.

Having gone through these highlights, you must be wondering whether it is a fairy tale. But don't be mistaken. It is absolute truth and the village is Mohad, where people are well aware of their duties and rights. This is manifest in the escalating literacy rate, consciousness about protecting the environment and all-pervasive religious atmosphere in the village. Mohad falls under Narsinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh. About 20 years ago this village was also like any

other village of the country. But now it has gone through a sea change. Credit to bring about this incredible change goes to Sangh swayamsevaks of this village.

The man behind this revolution is 75-year-old Shri Surendra Singh Chauhan, who, however, does not claim the credit personally and transfers it to his fellow villagers. "I am just a catalyst; the entire development work has been done by our villagers," said Shri Chauhan who is affectionately called Bhaiyaji. He made it clear that he does not wish to make the village a town. "The village will remain a village but the technology available in towns will be brought to the village also," he added.

Mohad is about 100 km from Jabalpur and falls under Kareli *tehsil*. It is just 5 km from Kareli town. After reaching the village border, one can realise the uniqueness of the village. As one enters the village, a Hanuman temple is standing tall to bless everyone. When I entered the village in the morning of September 1, the thing that impressed me the most was greetings of *Jai Shri Ram* and *Namo Namah* even by the kids of three-four years to me, who did not know me at all. On every step the village and the villagers inspire the outsiders. Their every activity carries a message.

Gaon ki pratibha gaon mein, gaon ka paisa gaon mein and *gaon ka paani gaon mein* (talent, water and money of the village should remain in the village) is the formula on which the village has been developed by swayamsevaks. The village has highly qualified people including Ph.Ds, LL.Bs, engineers, etc. Shri Bhaiyaji is himself MA in English literature. His son Shri Sangram Singh is MA Economics and the second son Shri Vikram Singh is BA LL.B. And all are doing farming in the village. The village has two Ph.Ds, dozens of post-graduates, over 20 graduates, 30 teachers, two journalists, four engineers, three doctors, one Superintendent of Police, two retired and three serving army officers.

Shri Beni Prasad is MA LL.B and is doing farming. He has done a wonderful work in organic farming. He stopped using chemical fertilizers and pesticides and turned most of his farming to organic. There are 38 tractors in the village and at least two farming symposia are held every year in

which agriculture scientists are invited to guide the farmers. The government officers of different departments are called in the village to discuss the problems of farmers on regular basis.

Besides other animals the village has over 3000 cows and 154 bio-gas plants. The pressure of bio-gas is more than the LPG. It is also less sensitive than the LPG. "Bio-gas plant has changed our life beyond our imagination. Now there is no tension of purchasing LPG cylinder or cutting the woods from the forests. It is also very cheap. It solved all our energy and power problems," said seventh pass Smt. Pratibha Chauhan in Samskrit. She pointed out that the cow dung produces more bio-gas than any other animals' dung in the plant. The villagers have adopted Deenbandhu model of bio-gas plant, which requires less space and less cost. All plants are built underground and the space over them is used mostly for animals. According to Shri Bhaiyaji one plant of 2, 3, 4 and 6 cubic metres costs around Rs 10,000, 12,000, 14,000 and Rs 16,000 respectively. This model has proved very successful. That is why following requests from other villages the artisans of this village go to different states to build similar plants. Now the work is on in the village over the experiments of running diesel engines with bio-gas and storing it in cylinders too. Bio-gas plants have proved to be a milestone in protecting the environment and forests. Tying *rakhi* on trees by girls has also been taken up as a step to protect them.

Till 15 years back, the people from dalit communities and Vanvasis were not allowed to have even drinking water from the public handpumps and wells. But now the picture has changed. All people belonging to any community can have water from any handpump or well freely. The village Panchayat has ensured at least one handpump at every 100-meter distance. The social harmony has improved to the extent that all villagers jointly perform *bhajan-keertan* in temples and have meals together. Those people who were earlier deprived of performing *aarti* during the Durga Pooja and Ganesh festivals now happily do it along with other villagers. *Kanyapujan* is also held in the village to bridge the gap between the upper and lower classes during Navratras.

Adarsh Hindu Ghar competition is held in the village every year. A few years back, this award was won by a Jatav family of Shri Devkaran Jatav. RSS Sarsanghachalak Shri K.S. Sudarshan and the late BJP leader Saheb Singh Verma jointly visited the village to present the award to this family on 11-4-2000. Writing *Om* or the sign of *Swastik* outside every house and having a *tulsi* plant in the premises is part of the 21-point programme under this competition, which is followed by all.

The village has four schools including one Saraswati Shishu Mandir. Every child of the village goes to school and those who are below three years of age go to *balwadis*. All the schools begin with *Saraswati Vandana* and *Vande Mataram*. Interesting part of it is that even the Muslim students sing *Saraswati Vandana* and *Vande Mataram* without hesitation. They also sing Samskrit *shlokas* along with other students. Every house has the Ramayana and the Gita and the family members read them regularly. But the family members of one Jumman reads the Quran.

Special attention is paid to improve handwriting of the students. Apart from personal efforts on the part of Shri Bhaiyaji who still writes very beautifully, Shri Nana Labhe, a handwriting expert, is invited from Nagpur to teach the techniques of improving handwriting. So far, he has visited the village nine times since 1996.

Mohad has set a noteworthy example on Samskrit propagation. The first Samskrit Sambhashan Varga was held on January 15, 1996 and so far six such Vargas have been organised by the Samskrit Bharati. More than 800 persons including children have learnt Samskrit in these Vargas. There are more than 100 minor children, who can introduce themselves fully in Samskrit. A woman, Smt. Pramila Devi, even topped the All India Kovid Exam of Samskrit, conducted by Samskrit Bharati in 2004, with 84 per cent marks.

Under *Udyan Utsava* school children are taken to village nursery twice a year and are taught about grafting. According to Shri Bhagvendra Patel, suprintendent of the nursery, the nursery has more than two lakh saplings of rare species. Special experiments of grafting are undertaken here. It has a variety of mango trees, which

produces four kinds of mangos—*dashahari*, *chausa*, *langada* and *Amrapali* at a time.

A few years back the village had six patients of leprosy and 13 of infectious diseases. But now all have been fully cured. The initiative was taken by the swayamsevaks. Though, there is no health centre in the village, there are two *arogya rakshaks* who cater to the primary health needs. Two camps of Patanjali Yoga training have also been organised in the village to teach proper yoga techniques.

The Sangh work in the village began in 1947 and was on even during the Emergency. Today, every house of the village has at least one swayamsevak. Three swayamsevaks are third year trained and seven have done first year OTC and over 20 have done Prathamik Varga. Today, there is one evening *shakha*, which has over 30 swayamsevaks including four Muslim swayamsevaks—Habib Khan, Rashid Khan, Jumman and Rais Khan. “Basically the *shakha* develops the genuine workers who are required for such development. The qualities and facilities that we wish to have for our own family should be available to all villagers, and this is our basic thinking,” added Shri Bhaiyaji.

Before leaving the village on September 2, Bhaiyaji introduced me to Major (retd.) Prabhat Singh Chauhan who has settled in the village after taking VRS. He did wonderful work on vermiculture. “Vermi is basically *bhoomiputra* and is the best friend of farmers. It is called intestine of the soil. But the chemical fertilizers and pesticides have killed it. It could become a major profession in the villages if taken up properly and seriously,” he said. He has promoted the use of rainwater in batteries instead of distilled water in the village. “This is the benefit of bringing the talent back to the village,” Shri Bhaiyaji explained.

Every person of the village appears energetic and enthusiastic. Nobody throws garbage in streets and every family cleanses the street outside their houses. Bhaiyaji is highly regarded in the village and he visits all the houses and is treated as if he is part of them. The swayamsevaks of Mohad also inspired the people of Baghuwar, an adjoining village, which is also being developed on the lines of Mohad. It has also shown good results. Seeing

the inspiring and highly informative quotations on the walls of every house and building in the village the local Collector Shri Manish Singh had commented that the students preparing for UPSC exams must visit this village at least once. And after that two batches of such students have visited the village.

At the time when villagers are migrating to cities, Mohad sets an example as to how to develop villages and how the facilities available in urban areas can be made available in villages. -- *The Organiser* September 21, 2008

NEEDED: VICHY DETERRENT

SWAPAN DASGUPTA

The conflict between national sovereignty and the 'international architecture' of modern existence has been the source of unending heartburn in the post-War world. Europe was the first to confront it during transition from the Common Market to the European Union. If Ireland's rejection of the Treaty of Lisbon in a referendum two months ago is any indication, the birth-pangs of a new European order have not ceased. The attempt to graft a European constitution on deep-rooted national cultures will continue to agitate the minds of those who still see themselves as Irish, English or Poles.

India's experience with rule-based multilateralism has been dominated by the WTO, a body whose mention arouses virulent populist responses from earthy politicians. For two decades, India has had to face a nuclear debate and demands to join the non-proliferation regime. So far, India has resisted signing CTBT and NPT and chosen to plough a lonely furrow. The Indo-US nuclear deal tickled the national imagination because it indicated a desire by four Big Powers to redesign the 'international architecture' to accommodate India on generous terms.

The debate on how much national sovereignty to concede was bound to be stormy, more so because India's democratic culture is inherently robust. As the deliberations enter the final leg, it is worth taking a step back and examine what the nuclear debate reveals of India. By far the most important discovery is the growing evidence that the Indian establishment, defined loosely as official and non-official decision-makers and opinion-makers, has

changed dramatically in the past two decades. Whereas earlier, there was an irrational but unflinching faith in Fortress India, growing prosperity and global exposure has led to a significant erosion of the siege mentality (the ultra-nationalist section of NRIs may be an exception). However, far from generating a healthy cosmopolitanism there has been a temptation to swing to the other end of the spectrum.

The point can be best illustrated by an observation by Brian Sedgmore, a Left-wing British politician. Writing in 1977 on the tedious negotiations over Europe, he noted that "officials interpret being a good European as being synonymous with selling out British interests". He smelt a "Vichy mentality", the willingness to mask surrender in the cloak of nationalism, as Marshal Petain did after the fall of France to the Germans in 1940.

There is little evidence to indict Indian officialdom for displaying a capitulationist streak. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that Indian diplomats fought hard, negotiated well and upheld national interest during discussions on the N-deal. It is, for example, now becoming evident that the Indian negotiators were unaware of the contents of the 'secret' letter sent by the Bush Administration to Tom Lantos. Yet, the statement by the American Ambassador to India that the US had shared with the Indian Government the contents of the letter cannot be disregarded.

It prompts the conclusion that the Indian leadership knew more about the real thinking in the US Administration than it let on. In other words, there was a significant mismatch between how officials and the political leadership perceived national interest. The divergence is not difficult to fathom. Since liberalisation changed the face of the economy, India has seen the emergence of a class more at ease with global citizenship than Indian citizenship. The manifestation of this shift was evident in the defeatist impulses that greeted the azadi hysteria in the Kashmir Valley, the pusillanimity over terrorism and, earlier, in the pro-appeasement noises over Pakistan and China.

On the nuclear question this perspective was best expressed by Rajiv Desai, a publicist for the

Congress. Explaining NDA's defeat in 2004, he wrote: "When the Congress came to power three years ago, middle class hearts were gladdened. Having supported the Neanderthal Democratic Alliance led by BJP, many were dismayed by the 1998 N-tests, following which India became a pariah of the international community." Match this statement with those TV pundits who wonder why India is making a fetish of retaining the right to conduct N-tests -- "we don't need it, so why insist on it", they say -- and you can gleam the Vichy mentality in India.

There may be compelling arguments why science has made N-tests as irrelevant as indigo plantations. In that case, why wasn't the Government more forthright about it and willing to incorporate it in the 123 and NSG agreements? It would have made life easier at Vienna. If there is an abhorrence of N-arms in India, why didn't the Government repudiate Pokhran-II and undertake a rollback?

Are we to assume that the political leadership is afraid of public opinion favouring a strong India, values sovereignty and believes in nationalism? The nuclear debate has been marked by widespread intellectual dishonesty. The Government has fallen back on needless secrecy and practised covert diplomacy in an age of information overload. It refused to make public the IAEA draft on the ground that it could provoke "nuclear terrorism" only to see it floating on the Internet. Since 2004, the MEA has closed its doors to scrutiny and prefers dealing with what Arun Shourie calls a "managed media".

The daddy-knows-best syndrome, so prevalent in the pre-information age, has persisted in today's India, triggering a distorted debate and generating lively but needless conspiracy theories. So much so that in the past three years there was more information about the deal coming from American quarters than the Indian Government. This lack of transparency will ensure that the nuclear deal will remain at the heart of many future political storms. India's nuclear assets won't be compromised as long as there is institutionalised vigilance to deter the Vichy mentality. --

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