



DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE **SECURING THE IDEA OF INDIAN NATION**



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Quite elementally, the erosion of one facet of the trinity cannot leave the other two undamaged. In a perversion of this reality, denial has become the drift in contemporary Indian politics. Policy makers and its implementers fail to recognise that internal disturbances are not a unitary or even a phenomenon whose resolution is wholly a task of the military, but a compound of many elements ranging from politics to technology to administrative incompetence to human emotions.

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I **SOLOMON'S FIRST TEMPLE:** **THE LEGEND**

In the fourth year of his reign, King Solomon (970-931 BCE) found his rule unchallenged. His father King David (1006-970 BCE) had spent his rule in conquest and imperial expansion and made Jerusalem the capital of a united Israel and Judah. But, it was left to Solomon to give a basis for unity to his people. In this quest he gave stately solemnity to the institution of the 'Ark of the Covenant' and its contents, the Ten Commandments, the charter which endowed that realm with principles of conduct and the font of law. He did so by enshrining this instrument of collective security in what Biblical lore called "The First Temple of Solomon" and in doing so gave it sanctity in the minds of his citizenry. Solomon ushered a golden era and the Jewish people would revere the moral and legal foundations of society and the security that the Temple stood for. (The Bible Kings)

Wealth and opulence flourished for four hundred years but with time and immoderation a decadent effeteness set in.

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The veneration and inviolability of the Charter was replaced by disparagement and compromise. Despite warnings of the coming slide, pliability and conciliation remained the order. Retribution took the form of pillage by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian armies, leaving the city and the First Temple erased and the people condemned to slavery and desperate dispersion for the next two millennia. (Barton, n.d.)

This mythological narrative is not about Solomon's sagacity or his ability to discern motherhood through recognition of compassion; but more to bring home the lesson that integrity of a nation and effective governance are predicated on security and uncompromisingly espousing the foundational statutes of the realm, dodgy concessions made are always at the cost of security.

II THE PALPABLE ANALOGY

The Indian freedom movement, by means of noncooperation, civil disobedience, at times violence, and at others ahimsa, voyaged through a period of uniting élan, which created a momentum that carried them from challenge through response (Arnold, 1957) to the next challenge, and independence till the Indian Constitution was forged and brought into force on 26 January 1950. The Constitution struck a balance between the thrust towards modernity and the abject reality of poverty and the astounding diversity of its people; security of the State remained an overarching covenant.

In setting off on its venture of nation building

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India made an important assumption, that its people would be led by leaders of strong moral character with the spine to uphold the Constitution and the Institutions that it created. This belief was, however, stained by the very frailty of its guardians. The effect on the hapless citizenry is best summed in the words of the late Nani Palkivala, "The Indian people Who gave unto themselves the Constitution but not the ability to keep it, Who inherited a resplendent heritage but not the wisdom to cherish it, Who suffer and endure in patience without the perception of their potential." (Nani, 1999)

The singular art of leadership that the first generation netas preached and practised was soon lost in the venality, contempt of institutions and material hunger of their successors. The most persistent legacy of the day, as Palkivala once again pointed out, "is to have too much government but too little administration; too many laws and too little justice; too many public servants and too little public service; too many controls and too little welfare." And so the proverbial Temple began to parade cracks as public disorder, administrative incompetence and political malfeasance became the order of the day. The cracks widened when constitutional impropriety extended into areas of national security—as was so disastrously exposed in the 1962 war against China when policy, intrigues and preparedness failed the nation to espouse the Constitution in one of its primary promises "to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India." (Indian Const. art 19 (2))

III INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT

Fast forward to a statement made by the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee (and Chief Minister twice over) on 07 July 2013, attacking the chief opposition party in the wake of the recent serial blasts at the Mahabodhi temple in Bihar's Bodh Gaya, "The BJP and the Sangh want to communalise politics in India again. Therefore all non-BJP ruled states should be careful." (CNN-IBN, 2013) What was

insinuated was that the opposition party was responsible for this act of terror and that the episode must serve as a warning to States that were not governed by the BJP that such blasts may occur there too. The statement if true ought to have invited the full weight of the law on the responsible party; and if false the individual should have been held accountable for a testimony prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony. (IPC, sec.153A) Predictably, no action was taken. What was once again perniciously injured was the sense and credibility of State security.

Instances of compromising, undermining and politicising constitutional institutions are fast burgeoning, whether it was the alleged compromise of the Railway Minister Bansal in the nepotism case investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation; (Times Now, 2013) the disproportionate asset case against erstwhile Chief Minister Mulayam Yadav;(ibid.) the now infamous Bofors defrauding case; (Sardesai, 2012) the 'coal scam' involving the Law Minister Ashwani Kumar; (DNA, 2013) the sacking of the Naval Chief in December 1998 (Bhagwat, 2011); the recent 'tweet' by Shakeel Ahmed a General secretary of the Congress party attributing the origin and rise of the terror outfit 'Indian Mujahidin' to the chief opposition party and, in doing so, undermining the security forces as they confront terrorism; (Headlines Today, 2013) the cash-for-question Parliament sham (outlook, 2005) or even the politicised overtones of the appointment of the President (also the Supreme Commander of the military). While it is not the aim of this paper to develop on these instances, what is suggested is that the 'First Temple' is under a malevolent siege from within and that each case, with as much deliberation as donning a suicide vest, serves to prejudice the edifice in the extreme.

The constitutional role of the military is to defend the nation against external armed aggression or threats to the integrity of the State through the device of deterrence or, should the need arise, through combat operations. It is trained and equipped for this purpose. When it is deployed to quell internal disturbances or armed insurgencies, it is done so with caution (since it denotes a

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failure of polity), with acute sensitivity on the part of the military (such deployments involve the taking up of arms against ones own, a task repugnant in the main) and with a protective mandate. In India the guardianship provided to the soldier takes the form of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 (AFSPA) which not only reflects the powers given to the military in the circumstances but also the fact of it being a measure of last resort when the administrative machinery has collapsed, anarchic conditions prevail and the writ of the State is illusory. Time and time again the military has run the gauntlet and continues to do this thankless task with admirable success.

On the flip side is the insensible and indolent approach of the politico-bureaucratic nexus that fails to appreciate that the military in the circumstances can only provide temporary solutions, as indeed the law never intended otherwise. Political indolence, administrative callousness and poverty of imagination assures failure to exploit the breathing space provided by the military and the result is invariably a shoddy fallacious civil solution that provokes a backlash often more severe than the original disturbance. How else does one explain the fact that in certain regions of the North East the AFSPA has been in force since 1958 while in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990?

Political apathy was never more apparent than in a recent case when on 28 June 2013, a senior minister of cabinet rank proclaimed in Kashmir while referring to an alleged mass gang rape by the army in Kashmir 22 years earlier (23/24 February 1991) to say that he felt "ashamed at the incident and regretted

his inability to do anything about it". It is incredulous that the Minister was ignorant that the Central Government had dismissed the incident as never having occurred while the Press Council of India (PCI) team, which visited Kashmir in June 1991, claimed that charges against the army were a "well-concocted bundle of fabricated lies." (telegraph, 2013) So what was the intention of the Minister other than to deliberately malign and denigrate the only institution that has so often stood between internal anarchy and national stability in exchange for some political points.

And then at the time of this writing comes an even more sinister incident in the run up to the West Bengal Panchayat Elections when a politician at a rally incites his constituency to bomb Police Stations and rivals to his party. (Times Now, 2013) Appallingly the voices of our lawmakers from Parliament have remained deafeningly mute; while the Temple sustained a battering.

IV

THE ANATOMY OF INTERNAL DISCORD

The close correlation between internal discord and State security is in effect the relationship between the democratic impulse of the people, constitutional orientation and implementation of policy and the credibility of military institutions. Quite elementally, the erosion of one facet of this Trinity cannot leave the other two undamaged. In a perversion of reality, denial has become the drift in contemporary Indian politics. Policy makers and its implementers fail to recognise that internal disturbances are not a unitary or even a phenomenon whose resolution is wholly a task of the military, but a compound of many elements ranging from politics to technology to administrative incompetence to human emotions.

While it is preposterous to imagine in a democracy a unity between internal

political dynamics and military purpose (since historically and as the experience of our Western neighbour will testify such harmony never makes for sound domestic policies); there is, however, an imperative for understanding consequentiality of political action or inaction and its impact on the Trinity..

V

CONCLUSION

STATE SECURITY AND THE TRINITY

Looking back at the history of the Indic Civilisation, we as people were never beset with far reaching and at times perilous decisions that today nation building has thrust upon us. Earlier, the very expansion and contraction of civilisation imposed choices before a select few who ran empire; the bulk of the denizens enjoyed an innocent form of security that can only be termed as 'sanctuary without representation'. But with the evolution of the idea of the Indian Nation, progression to independence and nationhood; the need to nurture and abide by a set of foundational principles that forms a bond between the people and their chosen destiny becomes an imperative and takes the form of the Constitution. State security and the Trinity are at the core of this design; the former as a collective belief while the latter provides the motive force. To injure any facet of the Trinity is to grievously distress security. For lawmakers to indulge in acts that shake the foundations of the First Temple is therefore perfidy.

The words of Joseph Stone, the American constitutional lawyer rings an ominous note which our political class will do well to take heed of "The Constitution has been reared for immortality, if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title. It may, nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly, or corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, the people. (Joseph, 1851).

