

## **Fatal blunders**

(by N.T.Ravindranath)

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There are many disturbing developments taking place in India under the Modi rule. In one such development, Many Chinese dissidents from around the world came to India in the last week of April, 2016 to attend an international conference, called the 11<sup>th</sup> Interethnic/Interfaith Leadership Conference, convened by the Lalai Lama at Dharmasala, in Himachal Pradesh, mainly to discuss about ways and means to facilitate transition to democracy in Communist China. Delhi not only gave permission to Dalai Lama to hold such a conference in India, but granted visas to Chinese dissidents like World Uyghur Congress leader Dolkun Isa, who has been dubbed as a terrorist by Beijing. China has got a red corner notice issued against Dolkun Isa by the Interpol. Dolkun is a frontline leader of Uyghur's struggle for greater political and religious freedom in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. Isa was repeatedly jailed for his activism against the Chinese rule in Xinjiang which is called East Turkestan by the Uyghurs. He fled from China in 1997, sought asylum in Europe and became a citizen of Germany in 2006. Dolkun Isa is the vice president of East Turkestan Liberation Organization. Under mounting pressure from a fuming China, India however cancelled the visa granted to Chinese dissident leader Dolkun Isa and eight other Chinese dissidents, including Lu Jinghua and Ray Wong, who were to attend the conference at Dharmasala. However, the four-day conference did take place as scheduled from April 28 to May 1, but in a much smaller scale as a closed-door meeting at Dharmasala, the seat of Tibetan government in exile in India.

The conference titled 'Strengthening Our Alliance to advance the People's dream: Freedom, Justice, Equality and Peace' was organized mainly by a US-based organization called "Citizen Power for China", which is led by an exiled Chinese dissident and a 1989 Tiananmen Square activist Yang Jianli. Two other organizations which co-sponsored the conference include Initiatives For China (IFC) and the US Institute for Peace (USIP). The IFC is dedicated to advancing a peaceful transition to democracy in China by bringing together various ethnic groups in China. It is funded by National Endowment for Democracy. The USIP is entirely funded by US State Department. It acts as an instrument to advance the US agenda in other countries. 69 foreign delegates including Chinese dissidents, Uyghur rebels, representatives from many western countries, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and also some Falun Gong practitioners participated in the conference.

The 'Citizen Power for China' had held such conferences earlier in Boston, California, Taipei and Washington. The US may have its own vested interests in needling and antagonizing China by holding such anti-China conferences. But why should India fall into such a US trap and take an

extremely hostile stand against China? Our relations with China have been on the upswing since last few years and India should have maintained this momentum and deepened the ties further. India reportedly allowed the holding of an anti-China conference in India in retaliation to the Chinese role in blocking India's proposal to impose UN sanctions on Pakistan-based terrorist Moulana Mazood Azhar. The so-called UN snub by China over the Moulana Mazoor Azhar issue is not a serious matter. China and Pakistan have been maintaining very close ties for quite a long time. Mazoor azhar is considered as a strategic asset by Pakistan. When India proposed sanctions against Moulana Mazood Azhar, it was obligatory on the part of China to protect Pakistan's interests over the issue. China has blocked such Indian proposals calling for UN sanctions against Pakistani terrorists in the past as well. It is a minor issue, because even if the UN sanctions were imposed, it is not going to make any difference as long as Pakistan gives a protective cover to Mazood Azhar and the US remains to show only lip sympathy to India's cause. The stand taken by China on Mazood Azhar issue was an unfriendly act, but on expected line. But India's so-called retaliatory step against China was highly provocative and foolish. An international conference organized by Dalai Lama and some US-backed organizations demanding an end to the Communist rule in China and liberation of Uyghur autonomous Region from China amounts to a direct challenge to the present ruling regime in China and China's territorial integrity. How can India allow such a meeting to take place in India?

The Indian media seems to have deliberately downplayed the gravity of this anti-China conference. Instead, the media had been exaggerating the gravity of the Chinese act of blocking the Indian proposal in the UN calling for sanctions against Pakistani terrorist Mazod Azhar. The Dharmasala meeting is a much more serious issue and it cannot simply be called as a retaliatory step. This is bound to have serious repercussions on our relations with China.

In fact, the Dalai Lama was primarily responsible for India's strained relations with China. Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959, Dalai Lama had escaped from Tibet and came to India seeking political asylum, and despite earning the displeasure of the Chinese leadership, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had granted asylum to Dalai Lama and his supporters. Not only that, the Indian government allowed Dalai Lama to establish a Tibetan government in exile in India and even allowed Tibetan refugees to conduct anti-Chinese demonstrations in India during the visit of senior Chinese leaders to India. It was this indiscretion on the part of India that led to a steady deterioration in our relations with China which ultimately led to a border war with China in 1962. Now, a rising China with its growing economic clout and military might, has started flexing its muscle by imposing restrictions on right to navigation of other countries in the South China sea where it has developed a man-made island. A worried US is trying to contain China by turning all the countries in the region against China. The Dharmasala meeting of Chinese dissidents has to be seen in this context as a sinister plot by the US to create tension between India and China. The US role in organizing this

anti-China conference is clear from the fact that the conference was entirely funded by National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which is a front organization of the CIA. The US-based Citizen Power for China (CFC) and Initiatives for China are also funded by National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This exposes the American conspiracy behind the anti-China conference in Dharmasala.

Another interesting fact to be noted is that Dr Katrina Lantos Swett, a commissioner of US Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) was allowed to attend the anti-China conference at Dharmasala. The USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan US federal government commission, dedicated to universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. The USCIRF reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations and makes policy recommendations to the US President, Secretary of State and the Congress. In February, 2016, the government of India had denied visa to members of a USCIRF delegation led by the same Katrina Lantos Swett who were scheduled to visit India in March, 2016 to study the religious freedom violations in India. Within hours after reaching Washington after attending the Chinese dissident meeting at Dharmasala in India, Dr Katrina Lantos Swett released the latest US Commission for International religious Freedom report giving India a negative rating and keeping India on its watch list. Other countries with such negative rating include China, Russia, Cuba and Indonesia. The USCIRF is not at all concerned about rights violations in friendly countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel. Obviously for USCIRF, India is not a friendly country. It may also be recalled that USCIRF was responsible for the US government's decision to deny a visa to then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi in 2005.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/delhi-redfaced-over-uturn-on-visa-to-us-official/article8548404.ece>

The USCIRF has kept India in its watch list since 2009 for religious freedom violations in India, and India had consistently refused permission to USCIRF delegation to visit India for monitoring such violations in India. The permission given to Dr Katrina Lantos Swett to attend the Chinese dissident meeting in Dharmasala was highly inappropriate going by her past records on assessment about religious freedom violations in India. It is time we realized that the US is not a trusted friend, but a treacherous and unreliable friend.

India is now peeved with China for refusing to support India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group. There was no need for India to go begging for its entry into the NSG when the NSG meeting in 2008 had already granted a waiver to India for indulging in nuclear commerce. If India was so much interested in getting an entry into the NSG, why did we antagonize China by allowing a meeting of Chinese dissidents to take place at Dharmasala in India in April, 2016?

**India decides to sign the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) with the US**

The Modi government has started talks with the US leaders on signing the proposed military Logistics Support Agreement with the US. After signing the Defence Framework Agreement with the US in June, 2005, India had been under a lot of pressure from the US leaders to sign the Logistics Support Agreement with the US. The US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter during his visit to New Delhi in April, 2016, had stated after talks with Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar that both India and the US have in principle agreed to sign the Logistics Support Agreement that allows the two countries to use each other's land, air and naval bases for refueling, maintenance and repair. India's decision is a clear departure from the past as this would draw India into a military alliance with the US and undermine India's traditional autonomy. But Modi's advisors, concerned with an assertive China expanding its influence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, seem to have succeeded in persuading Modi to succumb to the US pressures to draw closer to the US. The decision is also influenced by India's keenness to access US technology for Modi's 'Make in India' plans to build a domestic industrial base, including the defence. India has already started the necessary spade work for building its biggest ever indigenous aircraft carrier in cooperation with the US with the US sharing its coveted electromagnetic launch technology with India which will allow heavier planes to take off from its flight deck.

In addition to the LSA, India is also under pressure to sign two other foundational agreements with the US, namely the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA). However, India reportedly has deeper concerns over signing these two agreements as it involves giving the US access to India's encrypted systems, which is said to be opposed by the Indian armed forces.

The Modi government's pro-US tilt is a matter of grave concern. We have always maintained very friendly relations with the US. However, the US had always acted against India's interests ever since India's independence. The US had consistently supported Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute. In 1947-48 war with Pakistan, when India was in a winning position after recapturing two-third of Jammu- Kashmir from Pakistan, both the US and UK put pressure on India to refer the matter to the UN and enforced a cease fire which indirectly helped Pakistan. Even during the border war with China in 1962, when India sought some urgently needed fighter aircrafts and weapons, the US responded positively only after getting a written commitment from India that we will start a dialogue with Pakistan immediately to settle the Kashmir dispute. During the 1971 war with Pakistan, sensing an imminent defeat for Pakistan, the US had sent its 7<sup>th</sup> fleet, including the then largest aircraft carrier USS Enterprise, to the Bay of Bengal to intimidate India from attaining its goal. Some declassified documents later revealed that the Nixon Administration had kept three battalions of Marines on stand by to deter India, and that the USS Enterprise had orders to target Indian Army facilities. The US threat was neutralized only

after the counter threat posed by the Soviet Union which had sent its nuclear submarine and some other war ships to the war zone. The Indian intelligence agencies have undeniable proof of US involvement in encouraging various militant, secessionist and insurgency movements in India like the insurgency movements in the Northeast, Khalistani movement in Punjab, separatist movement in Kashmir, Tamil nationalist movement in Tamil Nadu and the Dalit and Adivasi militancy. The anti-development lobby that opposes all development projects in India are also supported and funded by various US and other western agencies. The US had always tried to stem our progress in nuclear research and missile technology. The US was indulging in all such hostile activities in India to prevent the rise of India as a rich and powerful nation. Because, the US is worried that like China, a prosperous and strong India with its huge size and population could pose a threat to the present world- dominant position of the US in the long run. It was the US-backed NGO and human rights lobby in India which was primarily responsible for all the propaganda unleashed to tarnish the image of Narendra Modi, the then chief minister of Gujarat, as a butcher of Muslims and a brutal dictator. The US had even denied a visa to Modi to visit the US in 2005. The US think tanks had enough inputs to assess the non-corrupt and hard working nature, administrative skills and leadership quality of Modi which could all make him a popular and powerful future leader of India. The US did not want an able and efficient leader like Modi to become the prime minister of India as such a possibility could frustrate their destructive agenda for India. The vicious campaign against Modi carried out by the various US agencies since 2002 was aimed to damage Modi's political career and prevent him from becoming the prime minister of India. However, despite all such efforts and the malicious hate campaign launched against Modi by the various pro-US agencies, Modi successfully out-manuevered all his detractors and became the prime minister of the country after winning the 2014 Lok Sabha elections with a comfortable majority.

When all their efforts failed to stop Modi from reaching the top post, the US agencies changed their tactics and decided to adopt the next best course of winning Modi's favour by using their large network of contacts and other assets among the bureaucrats in India. The plan-B of the US aimed to win Modi's favour was achieved soon with Modi's visit to the US and President Obama accepting Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on January 26, 2015. The strong bond of friendship developed between Modi and Obama has only deepened further during the last two years, which has now started reflecting in our policy decisions like our soft approach to Pakistan, allowing a meeting of Chinese dissidents at Dharmasala and the proposed defence treaties with the US. There is nothing wrong in keeping closer relations with the US, which is a democratic country and the lone super power in the world. However going by the past experience and also by the continued unacceptable activities of various US –sponsored and funded organizations in India, it is clear that the US still harbours evil intentions against India and as such we should never allow the US to interfere in India's internal affairs and influence our policy decisions.

Unfortunately, many of India's intellectuals, think tanks and opinion makers are found to be admirers or camp followers of the US because of the capacity of the US to cultivate them as contacts or assets. There is also a very powerful pro-US lobby among the senior bureaucrats in India. The guiding factors for these bureaucrats to take a pro-US line are based mainly on selfish motives like their desire for getting some plum postings with some UN-linked agencies like World Bank, IMF, FAO, ICAO, WHO, WTO, IAEA or UNESCO. Other motivating factors include their children's career prospects like getting scholarships, green card or jobs in the US. Many security think tanks in the country are also often found influenced by the US through heavy funding by various US agencies. How can these think tanks make an unbiased and objective analysis about the security threats faced by India when they are already indebted to certain western agencies? It will not be in India's interest to sign any military treaty with a treacherous friend like the USA. Instead, we should continue to maintain better relations with Russia and China, notwithstanding China's border dispute with India and its closer ties with Pakistan. We should realize the fact that China is a lesser threat to our security than the US.

### **NDA's Pakistan policy has become flawed and directionless**

Modi's tough posture on Pakistan seems to have been replaced lately by a much softer approach probably because of India's growing ties with the US. In August, 2014, India called off the proposed foreign secretary level talks with Pakistan scheduled for August 2014 in Islamabad, taking exception to Pakistan High Commissioner's meeting with Kashmiri separatist leaders like Shabir Shah. However, in a written reply to the Parliament in the last week of April, 2014, minister of state for external affairs V.K.Singh stated that Kashmiri separatists are Indian citizens and there is no bar on their meeting with representatives of other countries. Then why did we cancel the foreign secretary level talks scheduled for August 25, 2014?

India allowed a Joint Investigation Team from Pakistan to visit the Pathankot IAF base in India to probe the terror attack on Pathankot air base on January 2, 2016. The five-member team led by Muhammad Tahir Rai, chief of Punjab's counter terrorism department, arrived in India on March 28, 2016. Lt Col. Tanweer Ahmed, a senior ISI officer, was also a member of the team. The team was allowed to interrogate 13 witnesses including former Gurdaspur SP Salwinder Singh and record their statements. The NIA also shared all available documents about the four terrorists killed in the attack with the Pakistan team.

The investigation into the Pathankot air base attack conducted by the Indian agencies proved beyond any doubt that the attack was carried out by terrorists belonging to Jeish-e-Moahammad with its chief Moulana Masoor Azhar being the mastermind behind the attack. It was also found that Masoor Azhar's brother Abdul Rauf was one of the handlers of the attack. Moulana Masoor Azhar is considered as a strategic asset by Pakistani rulers and treated like a VVIP in Pakistan. The JIT from Pakistan was also convinced about the Pakistani identity of the

four terrorists killed in the attack. Pakistan has carried out many such state-sponsored terror attacks in India in the past, including the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai. Though, India had made available all the necessary proof confirming the involvement of all the major players involved in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks to the Pakistani authorities, Pakistan has not taken any action against the mastermind behind the attacks or the handlers of the terrorists involved in the Mumbai attacks till this day. The Pakistan's ISI was a collaborator in the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai as per the revelations made by David Headley, an LeT terrorist, now in the custody of the US authorities. Under the circumstances, by allowing a JIT from Pakistan, which included a senior ISI officer, to visit the Pathankot air base and interrogate and record the statement of 13 Indian witnesses, including Gurdaspur SP Salwinder Singh, the NDA government has made a mockery of the Pathankot probe. To add further fuel to our humiliation, a few days after returning to Pakistan, the joint investigation team told the Pakistani media that the attack on Pathankot IAF base was a drama staged by the Indian authorities to malign Islamabad. Such humiliating experiences were quite routine during the UPA regime. But, nobody thought that such things would happen under the Modi government.

During the UPA rule, India suffered hundreds of Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks, including many serial bomb blasts. After every such major terror attack in India, senior leaders/diplomats from countries like the US, the UK and France would come rushing to India to express their support and sympathy for India and pleading to us to show restraint as any retaliatory action would amount to playing into the hands of terrorists. Thus, assured of no retaliatory action, Pakistan continued to indulge in deadly terror attacks in India at regular intervals. Even after the devastating serial train blasts of 2006 and 26/11 attacks in Mumbai, we obviously decided not to fall into the hands of terrorists, and suffered the atrocities silently. Influenced by the evil spell cast by Obama, the Modi government appears to be drifting into the UPA mode.

### **Failure to act against anti-national NGOs will lead to disaster**

It is generally perceived that the threats to India's security come mainly from Pakistan and China. However, the truth is that the greatest threat to India's security comes from the large network of NGO and human rights organizations in India which are now collectively known as civil society groups. In fact, this third enemy is the most powerful and treacherous because of its invisible nature, secret mission and clandestine activities. Besides the NGO and human rights activists, the civil society groups also include activists from environmental groups, anti-development lobby and the whole lot of pseudo-secularists comprising of many noted historians, academics, anthropologists, sociologists, journalists, lawyers, retired judges and generals. These groups are created, nurtured, funded, supported, guided and used by various western intelligence and church agencies to protect their economic and political interests in the rest of the world and also to ensure that there is no threat emanating from anywhere in the

world to the present dominant role of US-led western block in the world affairs. It will be a fatal mistake to misjudge or underestimate the capacity of the civil society groups in influencing the socio-political developments in different countries. It was the silent operation by such groups that led to the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, by exploiting the internal contradictions within that country.

The civil society groups are active in almost every country in the world. However their aims and objectives may differ from one country to another depending upon the strategic interests of the western lobby, mainly the US, in a particular country. In India, their ultimate objective is a Soviet Union-type break up of this country. Many people may wonder as to why a friendly country like the US would like to see the break- up of India. But, the fact is that it is a grave mistake to believe that the US and India are natural partners. For the US, both India and China are the only two potential future super powers who could challenge the present dominant position of the US in the world affairs at some point of time in future. By facilitating the break-up of India, at least the Indian threat could be neutralized. This is the reason for the US patronage for every secessionist and militant outfit in India, like the Kashmiri separatists, Sikh militants and Maoists. The US and its western allies were upset and angry over the defeat of the LTTE and the killing of LTTE leader Prabhakaran in the final phase of the civil war in Sri Lanka, only because it had upset their plan to use Prabhakaran to carve out an independent Greater Tamil Nadu comprising of Tamil Nadu and Tamil-dominated Eastern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka. Similarly, the continued support being rendered still by various western agencies to certain Sikh groups for revival of Khalistani movement in Punjab is also part of their plan for India's balkanization. Again, It is the foreign-funded NGOs that sustain and support the various insurgency movements in the Northeast. The Maoist movement in India is now totally under the control of the western-funded NGOs.

Prime Minister Modi who was well aware of the misdeeds and anti-national activities of some of the western-aided NGOs in India, had rightly initiated a crack down on some of the NGOs like the Greenpeace India and donor agencies like the Ford Foundation. Two NGOs, run by NGO activist and Modi- tormentor Teesta Satalvad, namely Sabrang Trust and Citizens for Justice and Peace, were in the forefront of the NGO-sponsored hate- Modi campaign launched against Prime Minister Modi in the wake of the 2002 Gujarat riots. As part of the crackdown on NGOs, hundreds of NGOs in India were delicensed or black-listed in India. However, the Modi government seems to have softened a lot lately in its crusade against the western-aided NGOs and other donor agencies, probably under pressure from the US authorities. The Union Home Ministry in a letter written on March 16, 2016 to the Reserve Bank of India, had sought to remove the Ford Foundation from its watch list. It means that banks will no longer require the Ministry's clearance to process the foreign funds coming from the Foundation to any Indian bank accounts. Prior to this order, several US officials, including US Ambassador to India Richard



Varma, had taken up the Ford Foundation issue with the Centre. This is a very unfortunate development. The NGO-sponsored anti-development lobby, supported and funded by various Western NGOs, was responsible for blocking or delaying thousands of prestigious development projects in the country. It is still very active in India, and without stopping the inflow of funds for this lobby, their NGO activism cannot be stopped. Though the Modi government has completed two years in power, there has not been much progress in removing the bottle necks that have crippled some of our prestigious development projects. Details of two such projects requiring immediate attention of the government are furnished below.

### **India-based Neutrino Project**

The government of India had decided to set up a very important and prestigious neutrino research laboratory (INO) in India and had selected Singara in Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu as the most suitable location for this project. The whole universe is filled with neutrinos. They are so tiny that they can pass through anything and everything in this universe. Still, the scientists know very little about these elusive particles. Scientists believe that the study of neutrinos will help us to understand the universe and its origin better. The project report for the INO was submitted in 2002. The approval for the project came in 2007. The Planning Commission also approved the project and allocated a sum of Rs 950 crore and earmarked Rs 315 crore for disbursement during the 11<sup>th</sup> plan. The ministry of environment and forests gave its clearance for the project in 2008. The proposed laboratory was to be housed in a man-made cave beneath the tallest peak of the Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu. There are only handful of such labs in the world, and the INO was slated to be the most advanced among them and was expected to put India in the forefront of neutrino physics.

However, some NGO and environmental activists, who were opposed to this project from the beginning, started a vicious campaign against this project raking up issues like threat to the environment and wild life and spreading all sorts of lies and falsehood. Even some international agencies like World Wild-life Fund also took an active part in this campaign. Even the Forest Department of Tamil Nadu opposed the project and refused to give clearance.

Many eminent Indians like former president Dr. Abdul Kalam, and top scientists like late P.K.Iyengar (former chairman of Atomic Energy Commission) had shown keen interest in early commission of the INO project. In August 2007, eleven leading physicists including Nobel laureates Sheldon Glashow and Masatoshi Koshiro had written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging to intervene in the matter for early clearance for the project. However, the minister for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh rejected the proposal for the INO project at Singara on the ground that the project site falls in an elephant corridor and tiger reserve area. Singara was the site best suited for the location of INO project as per the site selection committee. It was declared as a tiger reserve area only in 2008 where as the forest clearance

for the INO project at Singara was pending since 2006. Thus, it appears that Singara was declared as a tiger reserve area only to strengthen the cause of anti-INO lobby.

Thousands of scientists all over the world are engaged in unveiling the hidden mysteries of these elusive neutrinos. The experiments being carried out by the European Organization for Nuclear research (CERN) at its research lab in Geneva are also linked with the neutrino research. The proton-colliding experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at Geneva with tentative evidence for the existence of Higgs boson (the God particle) has already created a sensation among the scientific community in the world. The neutrino research is certain to open the floodgate of new mysteries and revelations that could shock the mankind. We will now come to know more about the black hole, antimatter and dark energy. The neutrino research is expected to change the complexion of the universe as it is perceived today. The exciting possibilities of neutrino research may one day prove that many of the fictional events shown in the English serial "Star Trek" may not remain fictional any more. Another important fact is that the neutrino technology, just as the nuclear energy, will also have its use in military application. It is possible that those who master the neutrino technology will rule the earth in future. It is such an important project that the Sonia loyalist Jairam Ramesh and the NGO coterie successfully stalled at Singara.

The neutrino project site has now been shifted to the Bodi West Hills in Theni district in Tamil Nadu. It may be noted that the new site was earlier rejected by the site selection committee, for not being good enough for the location of the project. The neutrino project at Singara was to be commissioned in 2012. Because of the green hurdles created by the NGO lobby and the MoEF, the INO project, the country's biggest-ever research facility for basic sciences, will now be delayed by at least 7/8 years. Even at the new site at Bodi West Hills in Theni, the NGO and environmental activists have started a campaign against the project raking up various issues and spreading all sorts of lies and falsehoods to stall the project.

### **POSCO Steel Project in Odisha**

The South Korean steel major POSCO and the government of Odisha had signed a MOU on 22d June, 2005, for setting up a mega steel plant of 12 million tonne per annum capacity at Jagatsinghpur in Orissa. This project with an investment of Rs.52000 crore, would have been the biggest foreign direct investment in India. Other linked components of the project include a captive mine, railway line, a captive port and an integrated township. The project is expected to give direct employment to 13000 people and indirect employment to about 35000 people. The first phase of the project was to be completed by 2010. Out of the 4004 acres of land acquired for the project only 438 acres belong to the local land owners. The company had undertaken all necessary steps for the rehabilitation of the project-affected people. However some local

leaders, influenced by some outside NGOs, opposed this mega project raising issues like loss of livelihood of local villagers engaged in betel leaf and cashew nut cultivation and pisciculture. They further alleged that the proposed port at Jatadhari would affect the fishing community in the area, cause damage to the coastline and destroy the nesting habitat of endangered Olive Ridley turtle. These activists have also floated an organisation called POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti to oppose the steel project. This Samiti was supported and guided by the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) led by social activists Ms. Medha Patkar and B.D. Sharma. A section of the villagers under the banner of the Sangram Samiti has been conducting protest programmes like dharna, demonstration, etc. against the project at regular intervals since the day the deal was signed on 22d. June 2005. Instigated by some NGO activists, the villagers have also been using violent means to prevent the POSCO's survey teams and the project officials from visiting the project sites. Medha Patkar and B.D. Sharma had addressed a protest dharna held against the project in front of the chief minister's residence on October 15, 2006. There was a clash between the supporters and opponents of the project at Naugaon, one of the project sites, on 25th November, 2007 in which 12 people were injured. On February 16, 2014, hundreds of people marched to the project site at Nuagaon and torched the POSCO's prefabricated office and brought down a 33-metre long boundary wall.

The POSCO authorities also faced a lot of harassment and delay in getting necessary clearances from the ministry of environment and forests. Thus, this prestigious mega project has been stalled for more than a decade because of regulatory hurdles, delays in land acquisition, problems in securing mining leases and retrospective implementation of Forest Rights Act. The POSCO faced some harassment even from the UN when a UN human rights panel asked the POSCO on October 1, 2013 to immediately halt the \$12 billion mega steel plant in Odisha alleging possible displacement of thousands of people and disruption of their livelihoods.

The region where the POSCO project is slated to come up is known for its gut-wrenching poverty and natural calamities. A mega project like the POSCO plant is certain to bring a lot of development and prosperity to the region, besides creating thousands of jobs for the unemployed youths in Odisha. However, the anti-development lobby is adamant on stalling this project at any cost. Reportedly, the South Korean steel major is now thinking of abandoning this project in view of the continued uncertainties over going ahead with the project. It is high time the Modi government stepped in to save this project.

There are thousands of other projects in the country, similarly stalled by the hurdles created by the anti-development lobby, thereby negatively impacting our economic progress. The government should not only intervene and save all such projects, but enact necessary laws to bring to book all those activists who, influenced by their foreign masters, have adopted anti-development movement as an industry for their personal gains.

## **A western conspiracy to break up India through Village Republic movement**

It was the UPA government which started the Panchayat Raj Day celebrations on April 24, 2010. Rajiv Gandhi was the driving force behind the devolution of power to panchayats. In 1993, two years after his death, 73rd Constitutional Amendment came into force institutionalizing the Panchayat Raj. So far, the National Panchayat Raj Day was celebrated only in Delhi. But this year, as part of the “Gram Uday Se Bharat Uday Abhiyan”, the day was celebrated in all gram panchayats across the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself launched the “Gram Uday Se Bharat Uday Abhiyan” this year on Dr Ambedkar’s 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary on April 14, 2016 by addressing a public meeting at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh. The ten-day Abhiyan concluded on April 24, 2016 with another public meeting at Jamshedpur in Jharkhand which was also addressed by the Prime Minister. The importance that the prime minister has attached to popularizing the panchayat raj system in the country is evident from his finding time to address two public meetings in this regard in different states (Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand) within a fortnight.

### Origin of Gram Swaraj concept

In January 1957, the Government of India had appointed a special committee headed by Balwant Rai Mehta to examine the working of the Community Development Programme (CDP) and National Extension Service (NES) and to suggest measures to improve the functioning of the CDP and NES. The report submitted by the Mehta Committee and approved by the government in 1958 had led to the establishment of a three-tier Panchayat Raj system for democratic decentralization of power in India. The Panchayat Raj system consists of a gram panchayat at the village level, a panchayat samiti at the block level and a zilla parishad at the district level. Gandhiji was a strong proponent of the Panchayat Raj system.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balwant\\_Rai\\_Mehta\\_Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balwant_Rai_Mehta_Committee))

### Role of NGO activists in amending the Constitution in the name of strengthening ‘gram swaraj’ and enacting laws like PESA and Forests Rights Act

About thirty years after the implementation of the Mehta Committee report on Panchayat Raj, it was the civil society activists who suddenly raked up this issue of gram swaraj again in the 1980s, and describing it as a dream concept of Gandhiji, started a movement demanding decentralization of power right up to the lowest level of panchayat institutions so as to allow the people at the grassroots level to participate in the decision making process. This movement had the support and patronage of Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi. It was on the initiative of NGO activists and with the support of top leaders of the Congress party, two very important legislations, i.e. 73rd and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution were passed by the Parliament in 1992 with the avowed objective of strengthening Panchayat Raj institutions and urban bodies through decentralization of power. It came into force on April 24, 1993. In 1996, another important legislation called Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) was also passed by the Parliament. The PESA provides a

legal framework for decentralized management of community resources by tribal communities in scheduled V areas in India. One more NGO-sponsored Bill, called 'The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights) Act, 2006' was passed by the Parliament in 2006, which granted the right of ownership of land and control over minor forest produce and natural resources to the inhabitants of the tribal areas. NGO leaders like Pradeep Prabhu (a former Jesuit priest and an advisor on tribal affairs to Sonia Gandhi), late B.D.Sharma (a former IAS officer and tribal leader) and late K.G.Kannabiran (a pro-Maoist lawyer from Andhra Pradesh) had played a key role in drafting the above-mentioned legislations. This also shows the close collaboration between the Congress leaders and activist NGOs.

### Sinister designs behind the NGO-sponsored legislations and constitutional amendments

India is facing the gravest ever crisis today since independence, because of an imminent threat to its very survival as a sovereign nation. This threat has come in the form of a vast network of activist NGOs and human rights organizations, known now as civil society groups, supported, funded and controlled by some western intelligence and church agencies, with the ultimate aim of balkanization of India. All the militant and secessionist movements in India like the various insurgency movements in the Northeast, separatist movement in Kashmir, Tamil nationalist movement in Tamil Nadu, Khalistani movement in Punjab and even the Maoist movement are supported and guided by the civil society groups. The same NGO lobby, backed by the top Congress leadership, was behind the enactment of the above-mentioned legislations and constitutional amendments. The NGO lobby's sudden love for empowering the Gram Sabhas and its proclaimed aim of strengthening the Panchayat Raj system has some sinister designs. When the provisions of the Panchayat Raj are fully implemented, there would not be much powers left with the state and district administration and those who control the panchayat institutions in rural areas and mohalla sabhas in urban areas would become the real rulers of the country. Without the consent of the Gram Sabha, no mining project, whether it is coal, bauxite, iron ore or uranium, can be undertaken by the government, or any development project can come up under the jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha and the Mohalla Sabha. In rural areas, where the major industrial and development projects are concentrated and new ones are scheduled to come up, the Gram Sabhas are almost fully under the control of the NGO activist groups. Since the activist NGOs and Maoists are very active in remote and tribal areas in the country, it will be easy for the NGO activists to influence the gram sabhas and stop all development projects in such areas. It is with such sinister designs that the militant NGOs are concentrating on organizing the masses in the remote rural and tribal areas and pressing for full implementation of the 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution.

### Gaon Ganarajya or village republic movement

Many NGOs like 'Jan Chetana Sansthan' and 'Astha' are working in Rajasthan and other schedule V areas helping the local communities to establish gaon ganrajya or village republics taking the cue from the provisions of PESA. Many villages in those areas have already declared self-rule by

installing stone slabs with their new constitution inscribed on it. (Down to Earth, August 31, 2002). According to Down to Earth (2002) nearly 1500 villages have declared themselves as village republics till 2002. In these villages, the residents control their natural resources like forests, land, minerals and water sources. They have framed effective institutions to manage their resources. They plan, execute and resolve all affairs inside the village. Government officials and programmes are accepted only when the gram sabha approves them. The forest department, police and other officials are restricted to executing programmes chalked out in village meetings.

<https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/7341/393.pdf?sequence=1>

With the establishment of more such empowered gram sabhas and village republics all across India, the NGO lobby wants to stall all developmental activities in the country. Greater threat however is that with the nation-wide implementation of these four controversial legislations, taking advantage of the provisions of these legislations i.e. 73<sup>d</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, PESA and Forests Rights Act, the secessionists in all border states India can now legally secede from India.

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