An Unsuitable System And Unscrupulous Style Pushing India Towards Disaster
India Needs A Restructuring Agenda

1. Things do follow their own logic in time and space. And they never and nowhere proceed haphazardly in any human endeavour. Therefore, one can tackle a thing only by first understanding its logic and then properly responding to it.

I. Main Parties' Unscrupulous Politics

2. How does the logic stand with regard to the 12th Lok Sabha elections (a mid-term poll) now confronting the Indian people? The basic point worth considering here is whether this election has arisen out of the social need of the Indian people or someone else.

3. From whatever angle one may look at the above question, one cannot fail to see the fact that the Indian people today are groaning under the intolerable burden of unprecedented corruption, crime, violence, human rights violations, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, houselessness, increasing diseases, lack of drinking water and health-care, delayed and high cost justice, atrocities against women (rapes, kidnappings, etc.), communal riots, caste conflicts, power breakdowns, telephone failures, stinking filth depots, bad smelling public toilets, transport bottlenecks, traffic accidents, shoddy goods, all-round inefficiency, sub-standard drugs, food adulteration, short weights, illicit liquor, drug trafficking, smuggling, gambling, all pervading black market (e.g., admissions to schools, colleges, hospitals, railway reservations, cinema tickets, test matches, hiring a room or shop, connections for water, electricity, telephone, ration card, gas facility, etc.), bogus chit fund companies and employment exchanges, false universities, forged currency dealers, tax evasion, money laundering, manipulation of foreign trade, transfer of illegal

money to foreign banks and so on. Except miseries and troubles, there are very few matters of cheer for our people. Obviously, the top priority of the Indian people is to first lessen and then get rid of the burden of their back-breaking problems. That is why there is lack of enthusiasm among the people about this election.

4. The other main factor concerning any election is the given political balance of forces, i.e., political parties and politicians. When we turn to this side, we find that the 12th Lok Sabha elections are the logical outcome of the post-1996 poll process that ran for 18 months and evolved under three regimes, i.e., 13 day Atal Behari Vajpayee ministry, 10 month Deve Gowda rule and 7.5 month Inder Kumar Gujaral government. Had any of these three regimes managed the political process in accordance with the social need of the Indian people, the mass worries would have come down and the question of a mid-term poll scarcely arisen on the national agenda. But blinded by the lure of personal power, each one disregarded the main concern of the Indian people and imposed its own opportunistic agenda on them.

5. The main concern of the Indian people had then been concretely reflected by their verdict in the 1996 poll (or the 11th Lok Sabha elections). This verdict showed that the people were dissatisfied with the performance of all the main parties, that they had no preference for any single party, that they considered them all as chips of the same opportunistic block and that, in view of the absence of a credible alternative, they wanted the existing main parties to coalesce in the running of the administration on the basis of a commonly agreed public welfare agenda. But motivated by the politics of opportunism, the main political formations—BJP, Congress, JD-LF, regional parties, etc.—tried to twist the verdict in their respective favour.

6. The BJP, with its marginal majority in the Lok Sabha over its two rivals, interpreted the verdict as a mandate in its own favour, ignoring the fact that it had secured merely 23.9% of the total number of polled votes and less than 1/3rd of the total number of Lok Sabha seats, i.e., 161 out of 545.

7. The Congress and the 13 party UF explained the verdict as a vote against communalism and in favour of their brand of secularism—distorting the fact that none of the parties did contest this election (or any earlier one) on such an issue. It is well known that, while the then ruling Congress sought the votes by projecting the issue of stability and performance of the P.V. Narasimha Rao government, the two main opposition combines

(e.g., the BJP and its allies, on the one side and the JD-Left Front and its partners, on the other) tried to cash on Rao government's corruption and non performance. Obviously, anti-Congressism was the dividing line between the Congress and its two political rivals. Thus, the misinterpretation of the 1996 poll verdict by the three main political formations was bound to lead to distortions in the political process.

8. Twice during the past 18 months—once during its 13 day government in May 1996 and then after the resignation of the Gujaral Ministry in November 1997—the BJP's much-trumpeted value-based politics got exposed when it tried to grab power by causing defections in other parties through the use of money and power. It even began to explain its nationalism in terms of Congress type secularism, leaving *Hindutva* aside.

9. The UF hypocrisy became obvious from its contradictory reasoning which, on the one hand, included the Congress vote in the secular account and quietly accepted Congress support in forming its government, and, on the other, adopted a public posture of treating BJP and Congress as equally dangerous. Its double-dealing was further evident from the fact that, while it boastfully characterised Congress' unconditional support to the UF Government due to the latter's own poll compulsions and without any demand on the UF side, it meekly replaced Deve Gowda by Gujaral on a back out threat from the Congress.

10. Obviously, this opportunistic politics, with its manipulative-cum-confrontationist style, did not reconcile with the parameters of coalition politics. The latter demands the fulfilment of three conditions, i.e., (a) a complete, and not half-hearted agreement on a common minimum programme, (b) a fully democratic mechanism for conflict resolution and decision taking, and (c) a firm adherence to the principle of non-interference in one another's organisation and non-poaching in one another's constituency. If these conditions are rightly observed, coalitions can be as stable as one party governments generally are. Coalitions have proved quite stable in the Scandinavian countries (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, etc.) or the low-lying countries of Europe (e.g., Holland, etc.), while Italy's over 50 coalitions, having been based on expediency, had been marked by relative instability.

11. The main failure of the UF government and its outside supporter, i.e., the Congress, had been the ignoring of the said three essentials of coalition politics. Neither the UF nor the Congress tried to chalk out a mutual working plan in accordance

with coalition principles. It was not due to any ignorance of these principles on their part. In fact, they had no need of any such code of conduct. Because, based on the naked lust for power and money and crude trickery, both wanted to ditch each other at an opportune moment by causing splits in one another's parliamentary group.

12. Unscrupulous politics and deceptive style can, despite favourable conditions, never lead to positive results, not only for the people in general, but also the unscrupulous practitioners in particular. This is obvious from three facts.

The first is the bankruptcy of the UF-Congress alliance's ideology of secularism which had, while having been projected as a rallying point for the Indian people and a weapon to contain and weaken the 'communalist' BJP, actually resulted in the enhancement of BJP's political influence, both in breadth and depth, on the countrywide level and the relative decline in the political prestige and position of both the UF and the Congress, including an all-out setback to the JD which held the top place in the UF government and produced two Prime Ministers, one of whom is now contesting the Jallandhar Lok Sabha seat by forging a clandestine deal with the BJP-SAD combine with the tacit approval of the UF.

The other is the hollowness of the so-called Gujaral Doctrine which had, while claiming to be a technique of conflict resolution, in fact led to increased tension and stepped-up armed clashes on the Indo-Pak border and a new nuclear weapons and missile race between India and Pakistan; greater human rights violations in the country as a whole and in Jammu-Kashmir, Assam and the North-Eastern states in particular; and factional groupings in the SAARC on the sub-regional basis, namely, the sub-regional grouping of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal versus that of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with Maldives standing in between for the time being.

The third fact is the pretentiousness of Deve Gowda's poor farmerism and rural reconstructionism which had, instead of bettering the lot of the farmers and the rural people, only worsened the state of Indian agriculture, as reflected by farmers' suicides in Andhra Pradesh, starvation deaths in rural Orissa, firings on farmers protesting for the resolution of their problems in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, genocide of poor farmers by landlords in Bihar, farmers protests in Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, UP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, etc., against spurious pesticides and seeds, irregular supply of water and electricity, low official

rates of agricultural products, inefficient arrangements at the official purchasing centres, etc.

13. Thus, a review of the historical context of the 12th Lok Sabha elections shows that the three main political formations of India committed three sins in the period following the 1996 poll. Firstly, they violated the public mandate of the 11th Lok Sabha elections by upholding inter-party issueless confrontation instead of issue based consensus. Secondly, they adopted a callous attitude towards the burning mass problems. And thirdly, they did a great harm to the national interests of India by complicating the problems of the Indian polity, economy, culture, security and foreign affairs through their opportunistic perspective.

II. Money And Muscle Power
Distort Peoples Verdict

14. Turning to the historical experience of the pre-1996 ten Lok Sabha elections in India, one finds that things have not gone well from the very beginning of the post-1947 India's electoral process. It was in the first three Lok Sabha Elections (1952, 1957 and 1962), held during Jawahar Lal Nehru's Prime Ministership (1947-64), that the evils of money and muscle power and communalism and casteism began to raise their ugly heads in the electoral contests. The position went on deteriorating during subsequent regimes.

15. Under Lal Bahadur Shastri's helmsmanship of the government (1964-66), there was no Lok Sabha election. But, in the post-Nehruvian phase, the increase in the struggle for power between the leaders and among the factions inside the Congress gave a boost to the politics of opportunism.

16. In the three Lok Sabha elections (1967, 1971 and 1977) during the first phase of Indira Gandhi's rule (1966-77), the politics of opportunism acquired a new dimension in terms of corruption and crime, leading to the throttling of India's fragile democracy by the imposition of emergency from 1975 to 1977.

17. Under the Janata Party government led by Morarji Desai (1977-79), the power struggle between the different ideologically oriented groups (such as Jan Sangh, Socialists, Congress-O, BKD, etc.) kept the pot of opportunist politics boiling.

18. In the 7th Lok Sabha elections (1980), held during the caretaker Prime Ministership of Charan Singh (1979-80) who was totally dependent on Congress' Sanjay Gandhi brigade, the politics of opportunism made a further headway.

19. The second phase of Indira Gandhi's rule (1980-84) was

marked by the intensification of mafiaism, on the one hand, and communalism, on the other (including the Indian army attack on the Golden Temple, the opening of the foundation conference of the Vishva Hindu Parishad by Indira Gandhi, creation of a wedge between Jammu region and Kashmir valley on the issue of Farooq Abdullah's Resettlement Bill, etc.).

20. The 8th and the 9th Lok Sabha elections (1984 and 1989) were held during Rajiv Gandhi regime which was characterised by various kickback scandals (e.g., Bofors, HWD, etc), on the one hand, and a number of communal incidents, on the other (e.g., 1984 anti-Sikh riots, contesting of 1984 Lok Sabha elections by the Congress on anti-Sikh plank, unlocking of Babri Masjid and laying the foundation stone of Ram Mandir, etc.).

21. Following the 9th Lok Sabha elections, the V.P. Singh government (1989-90) represented an unprincipled coalition which was, without any common minimum programme, run from outside by an alliance of JD, BJP and the Left Front, and which legalised caste as the basis of reservation in government jobs for backward castes (instead of the norms of poverty as the principle of reservation for all people below the poverty line)—resulting in the immolation of about 200 youths.

22. The Chandra Shekhar government (1990-1991), depending entirely on Rajiv-led Congress for its existence, acted in accordance with the needs of its benefactor and tried to underplay the issue of Bofors by characterising corruption as a non-issue.

23. After the 10th Lok Sabha elections (May-June 1991), carried during the Chandra Shekhar's Prime Ministership, the Congress regime headed by Narasimha Rao, with its unparalleled record of scams and scandals, transformed itself from a minority government into a majority one through bribery and corruption—thus posing a facade of political stability but actually undermining the national unity with its dubious role in the demolition of Babri Masjid and the burning of historic Cherar-e-Sharief shrine in Kashmir valley.

24. A note-worthy fact in the past eleven Lok Sabha elections had been that, in every such exercise, the mainstream Indian parties, their leaders and candidates—all had distorted the people's verdict by the use of money and muscle power. Further, they had made loud promises to establish a paradise on the Indian soil. But, the net effect of their 50 years of repeated declarations has been that the pre-1947 problems (like corruption, communalism, casteism, female oppression, poverty,

inequality, unemployment, price rise, etc.) have become acute, while new ones have emerged (such as criminalisation of politicians, scams and scandals, militancy, drug trafficking, etc.)—thus further complicating India's problematic situation.

III. Power And Money—
Only Purpose Of Main Parties

25. Today, fifty years after Indian independence, the public belief in the country's future remains shrouded in suspicion and doubt. No one knows for sure where the country is heading. This doubtful impression comes from the perception that India, as a collectivity, has proved to be a poor performer, though Indians have, as individuals, distinguished themselves in many fields. Here, as one looks at facts, they speak for themselves.

26. In the realm of human development, about 62% of Indian population remains in the category of the poor, 40% below the poverty line, 33% houseless, 25% devoid of safe drinking water and 75% lacking lavatory facilities.

27. Population-wise, the increase of 618 million population (from 342 million in 1947 to 960 million today) has been resulting in serious social distortions.

28. Environmentally, India has become one of the most polluted countries in the world, with increasing water contamination and air pollution, decrease in water availability, degradation of 40% of cultivable land and denudation of half of its forest area.

29. In the realm of politics, the "biggest democracy of the world" is characterised by all types of social evils—criminalisation, corruption, communalism, casteism, violence, etc.

30. In the economic sphere, inefficiency, high cost of production, low productivity, poor quality, outdated and anti-environmental technology and fiscal imbalances have become the main features.

31. Culturally, the vulgar type of behaviour, such as sycophancy, double-dealing, lying, deceit, fraud, money making, muscle power use, etc., have become the normal norms of life.

32. In foreign-cum-defence matters, regional superpowerism continues to be India's dominant theme. The route of regional superpowerism has already led India into four wars with its neighbours—Pakistan and China. Even after the end of cold war era, when global military expenditure has been coming down by $4 billion each year since 1987 and when every region of the

world has already reduced military spending, India remains on the same military track—with the distinction of having been the biggest importer of weapons among the developing countries.

33. The main fault with the post-1947 Indian national process has been that it had never made the people, particularly the deprived masses, and their natural environment as its focus and priority. That is why education, health, other social sectors and ecological questions have remained neglected during the past half a century. They never became issues at any election in India. For the only issue with all the national parties has been their sole concern of grabbing power and money by hook or by crook.

IV. India's Social System Clashes With Social Realities

34. The basic cause of India's poor performance lies in its perspective of nationalism (or social system) which is characterised by five main weaknesses:

(a) Historical chauvinism which considers India as a unique land (or a special creation of God) and traces Indian nationalism in remote antiquity (ignoring its evolution in recent times). Thus, by identifying itself as being the only one of its kind, it places itself above the world human civilisation of which it is one of the main contributory factors. (b) Majoritarian secularism which considers the majority community as the basis or the mainstream of the Indian nation and demands of all minorities to adjust their beliefs, customs and traditions to the majority ones. (c) Centralised system (i.e., polity, economy and culture) which considers India or its people as of one category, with minor variations. (d) Unscrupulous political methodology which allows the use of corrupt and criminal means to grab power and make money. (e) Caste based social justice (instead of poverty and deprivation based) which promotes casteist outlook and confrontationist style in dealing with social problems.

All these features clash with the fundamental reality of India as well as other social realities.

35. The fundamental Indian reality has been that modern India, having arisen as a single geo-political unit under the British rule, represents a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual entity. This fundamental multi-sided reality demands a fully federal (or a type of confederal) and completely decentralised system. But the above-stated features of Indian nationalism stress and tend towards uniformity.

36. It was this cleavage between the above-stated Indian nationalism (as propounded by Gandhi and upheld by Nehru and the Congress party) and the fundamental multi-sided Indian reality that led to the 1947 partition of India. And it is the same split that goes on hindering India's unity, stability, development and progress in the post-1947 period and that has evolved India as a poor performer.

37. Of the other social realities, one has been the emergence of a multi-party parliamentary system which requires an adherence to the rule of law and the government's accountability to the people. But India's national perspective (particularly its unscrupulous methodology), by undermining rational thinking and ethical norms, harms both the rule of law and the government's accountability.

38. Another social reality has been India's age old under-development (like so many other developing countries) which demands an equitable and sustainable development model and its peaceful and non-confrontationist path of resolving all conflicts, external as well as internal. But India's national perspective (especially its historical chauvinism) has diverted it towards a regional superpower model that gives first priority to militarism (instead of human resources and environmental development) and that tries to lord over the poor, deprived and weak and be useful and soft to the strong.

39. Still another social reality has been the widespread existence of age old mindsets and attitudes, operating in the form of superstitions, miracles, myths, magic, etc. These illogical themes continue to hold back the people in attaining a scientific-technological outlook and rational views, without which the optimal utilisation of human capacities and capabilities is not possible. However, the perspective of Indian nationalism not only perpetuates traditional mindsets and attitudes, but also motivates the people to seek power and money alone. Thus, it develops merely a one sided human personality which cares solely for self and harms the social cause. Conversely, it throttles all such agendas and initiatives which mould rational humanist way of thinking and behaviour.

40. Further, another social reality, but a highly important one, has been the recently emerged process of globalisation or the interdependence of countries which demands the step by step integration of India into the global economy, politics and culture. But, India's national perspective (its historical chauvinism in

particular) hinders this social need by considering India as an unparalleled phenomenon.

41. The various excuses of India's failures are either one sided or without substance.

42. For example, BJP accuses pro-minority secularism, upheld by the so-called secular parties for the ills of India, and suggests the alternative of pro-majority secularism for national rejuvenation. But BJP's own trials in various states, particularly the recent one in UP, prove the hollowness of its claim. In fact, both the majority and the minority secularisms are equally irrational. As demonstrated by historical experience, secularism is, and should be, based on rational humanism and nothing else.

43. Similarly, JD, BSP and Left Front hold upper caste oppression as the basis of India's troubles and put forth their social justice formula "upper caste vs lower caste." But the experiments of Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mayawati in Bihar and UP have proved the worst models in terms of corruption, crime and violence.

44. Oppression of every type hinders growth, development and justice at all times and places. But it cannot be ended by the confrontationist and revengeful theories of social justice as the experience of class vs class model in the former Soviet Union and other communist countries had proved. In our times, oppression of every variety can be ended by adopting the rational humanist theory of social justice.

45. Further, the theory of foreign hand as the cause of our ailments is ruled out by the fact that a foreign power, howsoever powerful, cannot generate the criminalisation of Indian polity, distortion of its economy and degradation of its social values.

Furthermore, the idea that India's huge size hinders its development is negated by the fact that the smaller countries are today uniting into bigger regional units the world over for faster growth. China's develomental experience also refutes the idea of huge size as a roadblock to progress.

46. Blaming above-mentioned secondary factors for our own follies—like historical chauvinism, majoritarian secularism, centralised system, unscrupulous politics, caste based social justice, etc.—is no way to treat a serious social problem.

V. Setting Matters Right

47. Taking into account the foregoing facts, the problem of setting matters right in India demands the sorting out of three

questions: (a) A realistic agenda that restructures India corresponding to existing social realities; (b) An organisation to carry forward the above agenda; and (c) A proper response to the l2th Lok Sabha elections—a response that shows the double-dealing character—i.e., saying one thing, but doing another—of the mainstream parties, clarifies the theoretical confusions created by these parties and prepares the people to vote on the basis of principles and not expediency.

(A) India's Restructuring Agenda

48. Any restructuring agenda demands a thorough consideration of three principles: (a) Learning from the past experience which shows that the post-1947 India's national model had not worked and needs restructuring; (b) Taking into account the present reality of emerging regional communities the world over which demands that India's restructuring be made in the light of the developing SAARC community; and (c) Adopting a correct future vision which demands that, corresponding to the most dominant social trend, i.e., the globalisation or the interdependence of countries, India's restructuring should have the vision of an emerging global human society.

49. The above essentials underline that the basics of India's post-1947 independent nationalism (or national model) be replaced by the fundamentals of an interdependent (or global oriented or human oriented) nationalism (or national model). The main features of this model may by as under:

(i) **Vision:** To establish a rational, just and fair global human society in the long run and South Asian Community (SAARC) in the years ahead, both of which will be nature-friendly, on the one hand, and people-friendly, on the other.

(ii) **Aim:** To establish a rational, just and fair social order in India immediately, serving the interests of both man and nature.

(iii) **General Approach:** Scientific realism which studies a process through observation, experimentation and systematisation.

(iv) **Social Perspective:** Rational humanism.

(v) **Genuine World Peace:** To strive for ensuring a genuine peace in the world by discarding the politics of superpowerism and its confrontationist mode, reconciling the interests of various nations, defusing regional tension points, proceeding towards complete disarmament, vesting the control of atomic weapons in the UN, etc.

(vi) **SAARC Security and Development:** To resolve all bilateral disputes through the SAARC mechanism and seek a tripartite solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem by establishing a joint Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over the state which will be responsible for that state's defence, foreign affairs and currency, while ensuring semi-independence to the state and maximum possible autonomy to each ethnic region in the state. This will open the way for the development of SAARC which, in due course, is likely to grow into a free trade common market area with a regional security system and a confederal political union. Also to pledge together with Pakistan not to manufacture the nuclear weapons and its related delivery system.

(vii) **Democratic Order and Peoples Empowerment:** To resolve all internal conflicts through dialogue. To organise India on a federal/confederal basis—giving the states semi-independent status and a special status to Punjab. This will help in resolving India's ethnic, communal and casteist conflicts. Full democratisation of all institutions. Upholding of the rule of law to be exercised through the empowerment of the people (i.e., their involvement in decision making, supervision of all developmental works, right to information, ending of all social and economic disparities, right to call for a plebiscite on any national issue, etc.) at all levels and interpreted through the judiciary, without any power of contempt. To decide the controversy between judiciary and legislature on any law through a plebiscite. To carry out state funded elections at every level, free from money and muscle power.

(viii) **Sustainable and Equitable Development:** To promote the interests of nature (i.e., conservation of environment and natural resources), on the one hand, and people (i.e., removing inequalities and disparities, such as, rich-poor, rural-urban, gender inequality, etc.), on the other. To involve the people, especially the women in the work of environmental conservation and population control. To strive for a balanced economic growth, having a closer integration with the global economy and operating through the twin principles of market generated growth and state organised social justice.

(ix) **Value System:** To promote rational humanist thinking and democratic behaviour.

(x) **Foreign and Defence Matters:** To follow cooperation and friendship with every country of the world and reduce defence expenditure by 50% after the proper resolution of Jammu-

Kashmir problem.

50. The afore-mentioned restructuring agenda necessarily comprises several components. These are so integrated that no single component can work if detached from others. For instance, the question of the empowerment of the people can work only if combined with a policy of peace. Under conditions of cold war against Pakistan, the issue of sustained development will work only on paper.

51. Undoubtedly, India can today become a crisis free country if it opts for the above restructured model which properly responds to all the national and global issues, arising out of the new historical era of globalisation. Most of the post-1947 Indian failures are due to its irrelevant national models. Definitely, India's traditional recipes—like Gandhian *Ram Raj*, Nehruvian Socialism, JP's total revolution, Golwalkar's *Hindutva*, Lohia's *Mandalvad*, anti-BJPism, anti-Congressism, American Presidential System, etc.—are unable to meet the social requirements of the new globalised era. Sure enough, the world recognised old national theories—the market oriented Western Liberalism and the public sector geared Communism—are in decline and unable to face the new world challenges, i.e., environmental degradation, population explosion, ethnic assertion, etc., created by themselves. No doubt, in the absence of a newly required appropriate paradigm, the countries are swinging back and forth between different traditional samples. But, finding no way out, everyone is on the lookout for something new.

(B) Needed A Broadest Possible Front

52. The most crucial problem concerning the afore-mentioned agenda is the question as to how it can be put into practice. Obviously, it demands the formation of a broadest possible federal/confederal front that carries out this agenda to the people. Even those who agree with its points (v), (vi) and (vii) may be admitted into it.

This front would be quite in accord with the plural character of India, with different ethnic and regional aspirations. It would be relevant in a prolonged era of united fronts and coalitions, especially at a time when there is widespread cynicism about the mainstream centralised parties.

It may be formed at any level. According to given conditions, some other democratic issues may also be included in the agenda at any place.

(C) Vote On Basis Of Principles And Not Expediency

53. This election is taking place at a time when an atmosphere of instability and insecurity prevails all around. Everyone is feeling uncertain about the future. No one knows where we are heading. The existing situation is characterised by four broad features.

Firstly, there prevails a general disillusionment about the motives, behaviours and performances of the mainstream parties and politicians. The people have become disenchanted with their money and muscle power based manipulative politics. They have felt that there is no basic difference in the agendas, priorities, styles and records of these brands and that they are chips of the same block. Obviously, the credibility of the parties and the politicians has sunk to its lowest ebb.

Secondly, the mainstream parties have broken all their past records of political immorality and deception by resorting to horse trading, defections, unholy alliances, double-dealing, etc. The lust for power and money has made them loose all sense of proportion. Just look at how Congress, which swears by Gandhism and stability, has joined hands with BSP which abuses Gandhism and upholds instability; how BJP has shelved its Hindu distinctiveness and its primary agenda, i.e., construction of Ram Mandir, enforcement of a common civil code, abrogation of Article 370, etc., to get minority votes; how CPM has, in order to get lion's share in power, made an about turn from its "fundamental proletarian principle of not joining a bourgeois dominated government"; how Shiv Sena has changed its agenda from Ayodhya Ram Mandir to Ayodhya national monument; how JD has backed up Gujaral to have a tacit understanding with BJP-SAD alliance; how Laloo and Congress or BJP and AIADMK, Hegde, Mamata and Navin Patnaik have come over a common platform; how an opportunist combination of communists, Mandalites and former socialists (a leftover of Nehruvian brigade), who had opposed Nehru in his times, has now made Nehruvian public sector as its cause.

Thirdly, there is no special national issue for discussion with any party. All the main contesting parties are stressing the same one point fundamental agenda, i.e., to restore stability in the country. Their only difference on this issue is that each one projects itself as the harbinger of stability, while depicting its rivals as the creators and the carriers of instability.

54. By their theme of stability they only mean a government that sustains itself for five years through corruption, mafiaism and

the loot of the people. But this is only a superficial view of stability.

55. Stability literally means firmly established. By this reckoning, political stability means firm establishment of a political process, i.e., a stable condition of the voters, parties, politicians and the administration—with the voter as the decisive factor or the starting point. If he is discontented with the parties, politicians or their agendas, this will get its reflection in the voting pattern and consequently the composition of the government.

56. What causes dissatisfaction among the voters? Surely, it is nothing else than corruption, criminalisation, violence, deceit, fraud, poverty, unemployment, human rights violations, gender inequality, discrimination against minorities, social-economic inequality, lack of safe drinking water and health-care, illiteracy, communalism, casteism, etc. Accordingly, it is the afore-mentioned elements that have alienated the Indian voter from the parties, politicians and their system. And this is now being reflected in the voting process and the shape of government.

57. Then, who has been responsible for this phenomenon. Definitely, not the voters of India. Clearly, it has been the parties and the politicians who have been running the Indian system. A look at the post-1947 national process shows that it has, firstly, been the personality based-cum-family oriented (i.e., essentially authoritarian) fortyfive years Nehruvian rule which had resulted in the generation of these ills in the name of false socialism, secularism and planned-cum-self reliant economy.

Secondly, it has been the so-called progressives (now in the Left Front) who had given critical support to Nehruvian authoritarianism under the pretext of egalitarianism for decades together.

Thirdly, it has been the parties and politicians upholding primordial models (like BJP's *Hindutva*, Lohia's casteism or *Mandalvad*, etc.) who had, by perpetuating the primeval mindsets and attitudes, throttled the process of the democratic conditioning of the people.

If this is not the case, then how is it that, after 50 years of independence, our people are confronted with the same issues. And why is it that Indian parliament had to conduct a special session in the jubilee year of India's independence to find out the reasons of our poor national record and second rate performance.

Going by the evidence provided by 1994 official Vohra Committee report and the reports of so many other official commissions, it has now been an established fact that the present

political instability is an outcome of our unsuitable social system and the 50 year bungling by our parties and politicians. And they are chiefly responsible for the present state of our national affairs.

Whatever they may do, stability cannot be established by their ongoing and recent models—like Kalyan's jumbo UP ministry or Laloo's fodder variety, CPM's confrontationist type in Kerala or Narasimha Rao's Hawala style. Whosoever is voted to power (may be BJP and its allies) is likely to go down the drain sooner than later if he would, without effecting necessary changes, continue to operate under this system and pursue the same old track.

Stability can be ensured only by removing the cause of instability—i.e., the present social system & the mainstream parties.

Fourthly, there are no real electoral choices before the people. In the absence of any viable alternative the mainstream parties are able to lure the people into voting in favour of their candidates. Such a situation demands the taking of following steps: (i) To popularise the fundamentals of India's restructuring agenda. (ii) To bring forth the negative effects of the mainstream parties agendas and their unscrupulous style. (iii) To appeal to the people to participate in the election on the basis of principles and not expediency, reject criminal and corrupt politicians and cast their votes on the criteria of honesty, truthfulness, principled stand and service to the people in favour of rational humanists, social workers (belonging to various voluntary movements, environmental, peace, human rights, *sarvodaya*, etc.), women, deprived, minorities and experts in various fields.

VI. Possible Post-Poll Scenario

58. Today, the pre-poll alignments are quite obvious. And the peoples mood too is clear. These two factors give a clue as to what sort of election results are likely to come.

Given this likelihood, it may not be possible for any single party to get an absolute majority. This shows that these elections are not going to change the basic nature of the ongoing political process. And the post-poll scenario is going to have a higher temperature than the pre-poll one. This means that all outstanding problems as well as new ones are going to shake our national process in the times ahead.

59. It is the duty of all peace-loving and democratic people to get prepared to meet the newly emerging situation, start mobilising the people from now on in favour of India's restructuring agenda and be ready for the coming ups and downs. 23-01-1998

India's Instability Reflects Voters Troubled Mindset, Federalism Alone Provides Answer

I. A Fractured Judgement

1. As expected, the 1998 Lok Sabha poll has done little to resolve matters. The state of Indian politics remains, as usual, unstable and uncertain.

2. The voter has once again delivered a fractured judgement, denying a simple majority to any single party or alliance.

3. A look at the exact position of seats and vote percentages secured by different parties and alliances shows that, in contrast to the 1996 poll, this time the UF is down by 75 seats and 5 percentage points in vote share. The Congress has stagnated in relation to the number of seats, while its vote share has dropped by about 4 percentage points. Despite its tall claim of gaining an absolute majority, the BJP has fallen short of 90 seats to reach even the halfway mark. Its vote share is less than even the Congress, though 5.52 percentage points up than in 1996. The BJP and its allies have improved their tally, but remained 21 short of a majority in the 545 member Lok Sabha—thus failing to gain a clear mandate. What is particularly significant is that, despite UF's downslide, the vote share of the regional parties has not declined, while about 20 seats had been won by the BJP with the help of its alliance partners. Excluding the vote share of the two main national parties, the BJP and the Congress, the regional and the inter-regional parties' (now comprising about 45 in the Lok Sabha) share of votes totals about 49 percentage points, and total seats comprise 221 in contrast to 181 of the BJP and 141 of the Congress.

II. Meaning Of The Verdict

4. The above-stated essential features of the verdict make its meaning quite clear. That is, it carries no popular mandate for

governance in favour of any party or alliance. In other words, no party or alliance today enjoys peoples' full confidence. That is why there was no wave or enthusiasm among the people in favour of any single leader, party or alliance.

5. Contrary to this objective reality, some politically motivated interpretations, such as a mandate for the Congress and the UF brand of secularism, a vote for BJP sponsored stable government and an able prime minister, the political polarisation on the two national party basis, and so on, continue to make the rounds. But do these explanations stand on facts.

6. For instance, if, for argument's sake, the mandate favoured the Congress and the UF type of secularism, then why had the BJP and its allies topped the score list and the Congress and the UF come at the second and the third places respectively. Again, if it upholds the BJP's cause of *Hindutva* or its electoral issue of stable government and an able prime minister, then why did the BJP itself get a thrashing in its own self-ruled states, like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Haryana, etc., and fail to cross its present less than average Lok Sabha figure as compared with its own target. Similarly, had the mandate been an expression of a newly emerging trend of political polarisation on a two party basis, then the regionalisation of politics would not have gone further ahead. It is obvious that the people voted for something else. Only by probing the peoples mindset, can we understand the meaning of the judgement.

III. Regional Perspective Dominates Voting Pattern

7. Sociology shows and experience confirms that whatever a human being does is the direct outcome of his two sided perspective[1] (i.e., mental view). This two sided perspective comprises (i) a person's individual motive and (ii) his social outlook. Individual motive represents one's self-interest, while the social outlook expresses one's social goal (long, medium or short-term) by which one's individual motive is, and can be, achieved. The two sided human perspective directly emerges from the human species' two sided bio-social nature.

8. As regards the personal motive, all available evidence points out that the biggest factor which prompted the voters to exercise

[1] It may also be called orientation (i.e., one's position in relation to one's surroundings) or outlook (i.e., attitude), motive (i.e., reason for action) or concern (i.e., worry, anxiety or interest) or mindset (i.e., thinking faculty or intention).

their electoral option in favour of one variety of candidates or the other has been their urge to improve the quality of public life, involving the solution of real mass issues (namely, hunger, unemployment, homelessness, education, health-care, drinking water, sanitation, social services, over-population, environmental degradation, communalism, casteism, corruption, criminalisation, lawlessness, violence, etc.). They voted for those whom they considered to work actively for their welfare and reflect their hopes and aspirations. If any party or candidate did not rise upto their expectations, they threw out the incumbent party or candidate and tried a new one even if it meant going back to the one tried earlier. They voted neither for any particular party nor manifesto.

9. The second personal consideration which was instrumental in influencing the voters' behaviour had been the traditionally entrenched ideas of casteism and communalism. Here the voters opted for those who, on the one hand, belonged to their own caste or community, and, on the other, rendered help to them in need.

10. The third thing which played a role in peoples personal electoral liking had been the factor of personality or charisma. It operated at multi-levels—constituency, party, alliance, national, caste and community, but above all the regional one.

11. As regards their social outlook, the perspective of regionalism mainly dominated the voters thinking and behaviour everywhere. This is, because the people perceived their problems as state-specific and thought of seeking their regional solutions. Naturally, they voted on the regional basis, taking into account the performance of the different parties, particularly the ruling one. During the recent Lok Sabha elections, various investigative agencies had reported that the local issues had become more important than the national ones and that 2/3rd of the electorate had said that they were going to vote on regional issues.

12. The perspective of regionalism enhanced the stature and the role of the regional leaders. They did become catalyst in public opinion—making in their respective regions. For example, the voters in West Bengal looked to Jyoti Basu and Mamata Bannerji and not to any national figure. In Bihar, it was Laloo versus all the rest. Kalyan, Mulayam and Mayawati formed the pet choices in UP. Similarly, the Akali-BJP leadership in Punjab, the three Lals in Haryana, Shekhawat versus his rival Congress leaders in Rajasthan, Bal Thakre versus Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra, Patel versus Amar Singh Chaudhary in Gujarat, Naveen versus J.B. Patnaik in Orissa, Naidu versus Reddy in Andhra Pradesh,

Karunanidhi versus Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu, Hegde versus Deve Gowda in Karnataka and Nayanar versus Karunakaran in Kerala, affected the voters electoral considerations. The fads reveal that the all India star performers, i.e., Vajpayee, Sonia, etc., their centralised parties and manifestos proved less effective than their own performing regional leaders and units.

13. Thus, the facts denote that it was the perspective of regionalism that resulted in the casting of votes on regional lines—bringing forth a fractured judgement at the national level (comprising of diverse regions). The awareness of this fact alone enables us to have a realistic understanding of the country's political process and its further development and how to properly respond to it.

IV. Is Regionalism A Trend Or Aberration?

14. Some people contend that the phenomenon of regionalism is merely a deviation from the general national process. They argue that the voting pattern continues to be, as usual, affected by diverse social categories, both traditional (like casteism, religious fundamentalism, etc.) and modern (such as the aim of establishing a clean polity free from corruption and crime, anti-incumbency factor, notion of a centralised nationalism, etc.). No doubt, all these categories do still count in voting style. But these too have become region-specific and operate on the regional lines.

15. For example, if casteism had been a dominant social instinct on the national plane, then the Janata Dal's caste-based social justice would not have been rejected by the Indian people; Laloo, Mulayam and Mayawati would not have remained confined to their respective state fiefdoms; Kanshi would not have lost in the Lok Sabha elections in UP; and the BSP would not have earned the distinction of having been the biggest loser of the security deposits of its contesting candidates. In the same way, had religious fundamentalism been the prevailing social trend in the country, then the BJP would not have halted at 1/4th of the total polled votes in the recent elections and put its *Hindutva* nationalism and core agenda on the back-burner in the post-election period. Further, if a clean polity free from corruption and crime had been the main national concern, then the corruption tainted politicians (like Sukh Ram, Buta Singh, Jakhar, Laloo, Jayalalitha, Muthaih, etc.) would have been trounced in the recent poll and over a dozen notorious crime infected

persons would not have been able to make their way to the present Lok Sabha. More, had the anti-incumbency factor been the principal national interest, then Bengal, Bihar, UP, Punjab, Delhi, Andhra, Kerala, etc., would not have remained unaffected. Lastly, if the notion of a majoritarian (or centralised) nationalism had been the chief national mindset, then the BJP and the Congress would not have stayed at l/3rd and 1/4th of the total Lok Sabha membership. Obviously, none of these arguments negates or undermines the growing trend of regionalism.

16. The politics of regionalism has been under way for quite some time. In the 1980s the TDP, AIADMK, AGP, BSP, etc., emerged on the political scene. The early 1990s saw the rise of the Samajvadi party, Haryana Lok Dal, Samta Party, etc. The pre-1998 election phase was marked by a rapid growth of new regional outfits, like TMC, Biju Janata Dal, Lok Shakti, RJD, Trinamool Congress, etc.

17. Since 1989, the regional parties had doubled their share of seats and votes in the Lok Sabha at the expense of the national parties, especially the Congress. After the 1996 poll, the regional parties have become a major force, playing a crucial role in the making and the unmaking of the central governments. During the recent 12th Lok Sabha elections, the BJP was a junior partner to regional parties in six states, i.e., Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Orissa, Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra, while the Congress conceded its secondary status in Bihar and earlier in UP. Today, 10 state governments are run by the regional parties, while 18 regional parties share power with the BJP at the centre. No centralist national party can this day succeed without the cooperation of the regional parties.

18. Retrospectively, the post-1947 India remained under the political spell of the Nehruvian national model for over four decades. In that period, regional politics and parties constituted merely a marginal phenomenon. Then, the Indian people had many expectations from the Congress' absolute rule, dominating both at the centre and the states. But, the latter failed to deliver, both in regard to peoples aspirations and their basic needs. Not only the old problems remained unresolved, but some new ones were also added.

19. Consequently, the Congress decline set in around 1989 when two new visions of nationalism—i.e., the *Hindutva* and the *Mandalvad*—and their two refashioned advocates, the BJP and the NF (including JD), entered the national mosaic. The Left too

joined on the side of *Mandalvad*.

20. Following the 9th Lok Sabha elections (1989), the politics of anti-Congressism (as adopted by the three major national outfits, i.e., the NF, the LF and the BJP, during their electoral campaigns) brought the National Front led by V.P. Singh to power which was supported on the one hand, by the BJP, and, on the other, by the Left Front. This opportunistic ruling alliance collapsed after 10 months as a result of its own inner bickering.

21. In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress was able to capture power due to the sympathy factor, generated by Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The unsurpassed corruption and the political manipulation practised by the Congress during its 1991-96 rule further blackened its image. And it has since been going downhill, despite its various tricky preventive devices.

22. Meanwhile, the NF had totally fizzled out, while the JD has turned out to be an ineffective body. Though the Left Front and its constituents have still been holding their fort, the ground seems to have started slipping from under their feet. The BJP has grown phenomenally during the past decade, but the 1996 and the 1998 election results denote that it too has reached a plateau.

23. Obviously, the gradual decay of the centralist national parties has been providing more and more space to the regional forces.

V. Regionalism—An Expression Of Indian System's Irrelevancy

24. The rise of regionalism is not a sudden and isolated phenomenon. It has in general emerged because the centralised Indian state and its centralist national parties have failed to properly respond to the social realities of the country.

25. The biggest Indian social reality is that it is a country with the greatest social diversity. No country in the world can match with its immense social variety. Thus, only a suitable response to Indian diversity can hold India together and develop it further.

26. The British colonial rulers, who united India into a single political unit for the first time in human history, controlled Indian multiplicity through a colonial armed force. Never in the pre-British era has the geographical entity of India been constituted into a political unit by any human formation. Thus, we have, except the British colonial practice, no historical experience of managing India's multiple individuality.

27. The British experience is totally irrelevant today. Because, the factor of force is not, and cannot be, a tool of handling social diversity in the present day democratic order. Even benevolent and social justice based authoritarianism or centralism fails, as the Soviet and the Yugoslavian experiences demonstrate, to deal with social complexity in this era. This is because centralism generally adopts suppressive and divisive methods to control diversity.

28 Our own experience shows that had the pre-1947 Congress adopted federalised nationalism instead of majoritarian (or centralised) one, Indian partition would have been averted. Even the world historical experience of the complex national societies—Switzerland, US, Canada, Australia, Belgium, etc.—indicates how they did tackle their social plurality through their respective federalised national models.

29. Refusing to learn from our own pre-1947 experience as well as the world practice of resolving the problem of diversity, we continued to pursue the same old track of majoritarian nationalism or a centralised system in the post-1947 period. And now the results are there for anyone to judge the performance of our "biggest democracy of the world."

30. In the sphere of politics, this system has generated instability, corruption, crime, communalism, casteism, violence, etc.

31. In the realm of economy, it has perpetuated inefficiency, high cost of production, low productivity, poor quality, etc.

32. In the domain of culture, it has strengthened vulgar type of behaviour—such as sycophancy, double-dealing, lying, deceit, fraud, money laundering, etc.

33. In foreign-cum-defence matters, it has pursued regional superpowerism, involving the country into militarisation, arms race, four wars with the two neighbours, Pakistan and China, and an uneasy relationship with the weak South Asian countries.

34. Environmentally, it has turned India into one of the most polluted countries in the world, with increasing water contamination and air pollution, decrease in water availability, degradation of 40% of cultivable land and denudation of half of its forest area.

35. Population-wise, its non-seriousness has further accentuated this issue, with the numbers increasing from 342 million in 1947 to 980 million today.

36. With regard to human development, there obtains the worst case scenario—with 62% of the population in the category of the poor, 40% below the poverty line, 33% shelterless, 25%

devoid of safe drinking water, 75% lacking lavatory facilities, etc.

37. The chief fault of this system is that it has always relied on suppression and political deception to run its centralised order. It has never made the people (particularly the deprived masses) and their natural environment as its priority. Its main concern has remained to motivate the people for grabbing power and making money by fair means or foul. That is why most of its top politicians have become corrupt and mafia based. All the time, they have, with their politics of money, manipulation and muscle power, been engaged in cultivating and rearing a breed of villains. When lawmakers themselves become concealed law-breakers, the fundamental principle of democracy—i.e., equality before law or everyone should be subjected to law—goes into smithereens. Just consider what our new Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, said at the time of the formation of Kalyan Singh's jumbo ministry in UP a few months ago: "It (i.e., the BJP) has to play foul, because others don't stop playing foul." Can a genuine rule of law and a value based democratic order operate under such an all-pervasive political mindset?

38. Half a century long practice of this kind of system was liable to cause a sense of disillusionment and deprivation among the vast sections of the people. Deprivation generally leads to alienation among the concerned masses. Consequently, the alienated people, having become frustrated with the oppressive centralised system, parties and leaders, turned to their respective ethnic-regional groups and leaders to seek solutions to their problems.

39. Obviously, regionalism expresses the irrelevancy of the ongoing system.

VI. Implications Of Regionalism

(A) What Regionalism Is?

40. Regionalism has not descended from space. Nor has it come from outside. It has emerged out of our people's mindset. Because they want a regional solution to their grassroots problems instead of a national one. The ascendancy of the regional parties and leaders (including the well-performing regional units and leaders of the centralist national parties) in the political process verifies this proposition.

41. Regionalism is not an abstract term. As a political concept, it denotes a system of power concerning a given ethnic

community, inhabiting a particular region. As a part of a given country (or nation), regionalism assumes two forms. In its extreme form, its representative ethnic community perceives itself as a national entity and not a part of the nation of its concerned country. Here, it stands for an independent state, thus posing a threat to the territorial integrity of the concerned country. The other form of regionalism is that its representative ethnic community, while accepting itself as a part of the nation of a given country, wants the constitutional recognition of ifs particular historical identity. Here, it demands self-rule (or autonomy) within the framework of that nation-state.

42. Regionalism is, thus, chiefly, concerned with the demands of a given regional ethnic community. In its extreme form, it is devoted to the exclusive interests of its representative regional ethnic community, while in its moderate form it combines its regional interests with the given national interests. In its former mode, it itself assumes the national form and opposes the nationalism of which it happens to be a part. In its latter form, it combines the national interests with its given ethnic or regional interests. But, if the interests of moderate regionalism are not reconciled with the national interests in time, then it may, and can, develop into the extreme form.

43. The rise of moderate regionalism in a plural country represents not a negative, but a positive development. It is positive in the sense that it gives expression to the ignored diversity of a given country. In India's case, it denotes the misperception of the country's diverse social reality by its centralised Constitution and consequently the irrelevancy of the latter. In other words, it indicates people's dissatisfaction with India's centralised system and centralist parties and their preference for the regional ones. For the time being, Indian regionalism has, while demanding more powers for the states, not raised the question of granting maximum possible autonomy to the states or restructuring of the Indian system on a fully federal basis. But the situation which has now developed in the polity is highly unstable and uncertain.

44. In the present political balance of forces, the impact of the centralist national parties has somewhat declined, while the political weight and the bargaining power of the regional parties has further increased. The BJP's plus-20 Lok Sabha seats are doubly negated by the centralist Janata Dal's loss of 40 seats in the recent elections. If this trend gets strengthened and the

regional parties come to hold the central space, then how the current centralised system is going to cope with that situation.

45. Even after the 12th Lok Sabha elections, a confusing state has emerged in the political process. A highly diverse Lok Sabha has come into being in which about 45 parties, with varying ideologies, agendas and priorities are involved. The emergence of multi-polarism in the polity generates problems in the working of India's centralised constitutional device. It logically turns the governmental business to mainly harmonising of relations among the coalition partners and to go on plugging the breaches sometimes here and sometimes there.

(B) Has India Any Inbuilt Corrective Mechanism?

46. Some people hope that the present Indian system has some inbuilt mechanism to tackle various types of complications. But this is not supported by facts. For example, it has been under this system that our political process has become more criminal, corrupt, communal, casteist and violent, our human resources have remained in the grip of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, homelessness, ill health, etc., and our natural environment—i.e., air, water, land—has turned further degraded. Almost all the basic public needs have been promised in the Indian Constitution. But not a single one has, during the past 50 years, actually flowed to the people. On what basis can one expect better future systemic performance? In fact, this Constitution constitutes the basis for all the maladies now facing India.

(C) Is There A Trend Towards Two Party Mechanism?

47. Others desire the evolution of a single party majority or a two party polarisation in the polity to mend the political process. But no political analyst accepts that there is any likelihood of a single party rule or a two party polarisation in our country in future. The reason is that this possibility is blocked by peoples cynicism about the centralist national parties; public way of viewing grassroots problems in terms of regionalism; and masses' low interest in such national issues as national stability, national unity, manufacturing of nuclear weapons; etc. The fractured national vision between the Congress' majoritarian nationalism, BJP's *Hindutva*, Mandalised parties' casteist social justice and various regional perspectives also hinders this possibility. A fact worth observing is that the fifty year long practice of the Indian centralised system and the centralist

parties has failed to create a stable sense of belonging to one national unit among the Indian people. They still view them either in ethnic, religious or casteist terms. There is a lack of political, economic and emotional integration among the people of different regions. How fragile is our national unity can be seen from the fact that even a rumour of a communal or casteist clash or any provocatory report concerning Karnataka-Tamil Nadu water dispute can puncture it at any moment. An atmosphere of distrust and suspicion still prevails among our social groups.

(D) Can Coalition Politics Work?

48. There is a considerable feeling among the literate people that the coalition politics can work to redeem our complicated political situation.

49. However, some important factors hinder the coalition process in India. Firstly, it is hampered by the remote possibility of a coalition between the three main centralist national parties, i.e., the Congress, the BJP and the UF due to their opposed national visions—i.e., majoritarian nationalism, *Hindutva* and *Mandalvad* (or a casteist social justice theory)—and their confrontationist politics. Secondly, it is hampered by the conflict between the centralist perspective as demanded by our centralised polity and as upheld by the centralist national parties, on the one hand, and the different regional visions as pursued by the various regional parties, on the other. No such obstacle exists for the coalitions at the state level where a single regional perspective predominates, whosoever the partners. Thirdly, the coalitions in India are generally based not on principle but political expediency whose sole aim is the lust for power.

50. The above facts are confirmed by the experience of the coalition business in India. The recent UF coalition experience indicates that UF had no fundamental principle of unity and thus lacked a direction. Its common minimum programme was merely an amalgam of certain general points, devoid of any aim, strategy, priority, etc. The 11th Lok Sabha mandate demanded an atmosphere of cooperation, conciliation and consensus among the political forces in India. Contrary to this, the UF, in league with the Congress, launched a confrontationist platform under the smokescreen of fighting communalism and defending secularism. Now, the bitter facts of the rise of BJP to power and the UF drubbing in the 12th Lok Sabha elections, accompanied by the post-election UF crisis, clearly confirm that its fraudulent secular

stance was only a political trick to grab power. Communalism and its chief manifestation, i.e., the BJP, should, and can, only be combated through a rational ideo-political agenda and not by political manipulation as often resorted to by the Left parties and the Congress or certain caste oriented social justice parties.

51. The coalition experience of 1967, 1977 and 1989 falls under a different category. This pertains to a period when the centralised Indian system and its main advocate, the Congress, had not entered their basic crisis. The fundamental weakness of those coalitions had been that these were not founded on any positive agenda. Basing on their single point programme of anti-Congressism, they sincerely upheld and pursued the Nehruvian Congress model. This dichotomy was beyond public comprehension which doomed these genuine projects.

52. As regards the BJP's coalition line, two points need to be emphasised. One is that, during the election phase, it tried to compromise with the politics of regionalism in every state, cover up its communal image by a human face and follow a pragmatic style. This helped it in achieving relatively better results in the elections. The other point is that, in the post-election period, it adopted a flexible standpoint by accepting the moderate agenda as negotiated between it and its allies and shelving its fundamental principle of *Hindutva* and its core agenda.

53. Some people argue that if coalitions had worked successfully in Europe, then why they can't work in India. The major difference is that the respective Constitutions in the European countries accord with the nature of their given people and the given party mechanisms correspond with their respective constitutional principles, while, in our case, there is no proper balance between our people, the Constitution and the party mechanism.

54. In the multi-ethic European countries, like Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, etc., the viability of the coalition process is facilitated by their respective federal constitutional principles and federal party mechanisms, while in the ethnically homogeneous states, the centralised constitutional principles are matched by the existence of centralist party mechanisms. That is, in the case of the European countries, there is more or less equilibrium between the nature of their given people, the character of their given Constitution and the quality of their given party mechanism. Contrary to this, our Constitution is highly centralised, the people are the most diverse lot in the world and the party mechanism is partially centralist and partially regionalist.

55. Further, almost all the coalitions in Europe are formed before the elections on a common programme and strategy, while nearly all our coalition business is conducted in the post-election period on the chief consideration of lust for power.

56. The foregoing facts show as to why our coalition process could not smoothly work and why it was continuously marked by inconsistencies, manipulations and contentions.

(E) Some Other Devices

57. Still many political devices suggesting new constitutional formulae to arrest the volatility in our political process—namely, modifying our Constitution to the effect which changes our parliamentary form of government into the presidential one, or which ensures the direct election of the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers, or which fixes a five year permanent tenure for the Lok Sabha—are afloat. All these constitutional schemes are oriented towards the further centralisation of the polity. Obviously, more centralised response to the politics of regionalisation cannot yield positive results.

(F) Needed A Clear Vision

58. The situation calls for a clear vision of where our political process is heading, rather than drifting with it. An unstable and uncertain polity contains grave potential threats. It is time for the country to change its political chemistry on a realistic basis. If the country is to remain one, it has to sort out the fundamental principle which gives an appropriate answer to its social diversity and forms the foundation of our national unity.

VII. Basis Of India's Unity With Its Diversity

(A) A Long Standing Problem

59. What should be the fundamental principle that harmonises India's unity with its social diversity? Here, social unity denotes our nation; social diversity expresses the diverse shades (i.e., ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, casteist, etc.) of our people, while the fundamental principle represents our nationalism or social system—i.e., the theory (Constitution and all type of laws, political, economic, cultural, etc.), practice (rules, procedures, etc.) and state structure (legislature, executive, judiciary, administration, army, etc.)—which acts as a medium between our nation and its diverse constituents.

60. The above question has arisen from our peoples recent judgement which has carried forward the trend of the regionalisation of politics—a trend initiated by the 1989 verdict, continued by the 1991 poll and strengthened by the 1996 mandate. The persistently increasing assertion of this trend is an expression of peoples dissatisfaction with India's centralised system which depowers the people, hinders the development of human resources and weakens the national unity by promoting criminalisation, corruption, communalism, casteism, violence, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, fraud, immorality, etc. Unless this break between the peoples mindset and the centralised social system is properly resolved, the turbulence in our political process cannot be stopped and India's forward movement ensured.

61. If we look a little back at our national happenings in the early decades of this century, we find that the problem of the balancing of our social unity with its social diversity has, in fact, been with us since the beginning of the phase of our ongoing nationalism. At that time, it existed in the form of Hindu-Muslim problem. However, the pre-1947 Gandhian nationalism (i.e., the dominant nationalism of that era) failed to handle this question amicably and consequently the country got divided into India and Pakistan. The role of British colonialism and Islamic nationalism in the partition affair was logically secondary.

62. The real cause underlying partition was not any type of religion, but the majority-minority relation (or the proportion of majority-minority share) in political power, economic resources, cultural (including gender) issues, and matters of security and identity. For about half a century, the Congress and the Muslim League went on negotiating on these issues. Sometimes, they even struck compromises (e.g., 1916 Congress-Muslim League Pact, the 1946 Congress and Muslim League acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, etc.) to be ruptured again and again—finally leading to their collapse in 1946.

(B) A Basic Issue For Every Social Unit

63. History shows that the question of the social system which forms the basis of the interrelationship between a given social collective (i.e., ancient clans, tribes, feudal kingdoms or present day nations) and a given social individual (may he be a person or family, class, ethnic community, etc.) has always constituted a fundamental issue in every given society or social unit. The social

system deals, or has dealt, with five main forms of social relations, viz., political, economic, cultural, security related and identity concerned. Every society and social unit has to modify or adjust its social system according to the changes in its various types of social problems.

64. The above-stated five main forms of social relations are related to human urges or needs—mental, physical or social—and constitute human conditional or unconditional reflexes. They (singly or collectively) have formed the main reason for all types of social unity or social conflict (including war) within any social unit.

65. Historical experience shows that any social system, which accords with its given social reality, succeeds in motivating the people for its social cause and this leads to great achievements in social progress.

(C) Post-1947 Congress Experiment

66. In the post-1947 period, the then ruling Congress, guided by the Gandhian national perspective, on the one hand, and the Nehruvian socialist developmental model, on the other, embarked on the path of creating a strong Indian nation with its specific aim to build a prosperous and equalitarian social life (free from poverty, unemployment, homelessness and other social ills) at home and make India a regional superpower in Asia (by crushing the defiance from Pakistan).

67. The internal developmental strategy was put into effect through the alliance of the Congress hierarchy (which then held the levers of power at all levels) and the administrative bureaucracy, while the external project as usual remained in the hands of the foreign and the defence experts. Both the enterprises produced disastrous results—with unproductive investment of our meagre public resources in arms build-up and the loss bearing public sector enterprises, on the one side, and the perpetuation of all sorts of social vices in our political, economic and cultural processes, on the other—making the public life more miserable and horrible.

68. The poor national performance rested with two reasons. One was the Gandhian national perspective which was based on the principles of majoritarianism and a utopian nation (whose ancestors according to Gandhi created, in the remote past, the peak of human civilisation—representing the best of everything that the human beings could or would do again). This outlook resulted in the determining of wrong social priorities. The other

reason was the Nehruvian developmental model which, while relying on elite groups, totally ignored the role of the people in social growth. This is also verified by the example of the former Soviet Union and similar other countries in which the disregard of the peoples role and the dependence on the party and the state bureaucracy in their developmental models resulted in the collapse of the communist system.

(D) JD And BJP Trials

69. Around 1989, two outdated social concepts appeared on the national scene. One was the caste based *Mandalvad*, advocated by the JD and the BSP and supported by the Left. The other was the Hindu religion based *Hindutva*, sponsored by the BJP. Both these theories are irrelevant and meant to only garner votes for the concerned parties. The unviability of *Mandalvad* is obvious from the rout of the JD, the setback to the BSP and the stagnation of the Left in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The impracticability of the *Hindutva* can be seen by its deletion from the BJP's post-election national agenda and the BJP's setback in its own ruled strongholds of Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

(E) Needed Consensus On A New Agenda

70. Following the recent Lok Sabha elections, the emergence of a far more unstable and uncertain political situation in the country demands a proper response. The three different main centralist agendas have little relevance to the existing multi-sided social reality. Such a situation demands that all national and democratic forces come together and try to arriving at consensus on a realistic agenda, corresponding to India's conditions.

71. As regards our approach, we hold that any agenda dealing with the present Indian reality should make the Indian peoples involvement and empowerment as its central theme.

(i) Why Instability?

72. The first question concerning India that needs an answer is why this country's polity has become unstable and uncertain. The basic reason is that the character of any polity is determined by its electoral process which, in turn, is decided by the given peoples voting pattern. Thus, the political instability and uncertainty in India is essentially a reflection of our peoples troubled mindset which gets its reflection in a fractured mandate.

(ii) How Peoples Mindset Got Upset?

73. The next question that needs an answer is how our peoples mindset has got upset. This is because of the existence of a highly troublesome and disgusting situation in our country.

74. Briefly stated, about 40% of our population (i.e., 400 million people) live in absolute poverty—with no job, no home, no proper food, no electricity and water, no-nothing. Over 200 million survive without safe drinking water and have no access to basic health facilities. Over 1/3rd of population (i.e., 323 million people) have no houses of their own. Ten million live in slums. About 470 million are totally illiterate. Over 5 crores are totally unemployed, while the number of under-employed totals nearly 300 million. Ten percent of the country's population comprise of invalids who remain a neglected lot. Over one hundred million agricultural labourers (about 25% of our work force) constitute the poorest strata of our society, but, fifty years after independence, the bill about their minimum wages remains still confined to the parliamentary cold storage.

75. Key issues remain unaddressed, while non-issues are occupying the centre stage. For example, 62% of India's population comes under the category of the poor and India houses about 40% of the world's poor people but spends $13-14 billion a year on defence. India comes 142 in the world where our per capita income is concerned. But it comes first in total arms imports. Our purchase of military hardware costing nearly $4.5 billion could finance primary education for 85 million children, safe drinking water for 220 million people and family planning services for 22 million couples. In Nagaland, over Rs 30,000 crore have been spent to control 12 lakh Nagas (i.e., Rs 2.50 lakh per capita expenditure) during the past 50 years. Surely, this political, non-military problem could have been solved on the political basis long ago. But the infatuation with great powerism blocked this course. As many as 150 new projects worth Rs 1,78,600 crore have failed to take off in the last two years, giving a big blow to the industrial development of the country.

76. According to the 1997 UNDP report, India ranks 138 among 174 countries in the matter of human development index (HDI), but it comes first concerning poverty, illiteracy, ill health, unemployment, houselessness, etc. It contains the biggest number of TB patients, diabetics, blind, etc., according to a WHO report.

As much as 80% of Indians, according to a survey, want to go abroad for work. Brain drain goes on unabated. About 6,000

highly trained Indians settle abroad every year—40% of them are engineers, 10 to 12% doctors and 15 to 20% scientists.

77. In the sphere of economy, India counts nowhere in the world. While the Chinese economy is moving at a breakneck speed, the Indian economy continues to be limping from one crisis to another. Last year, there had been a 2% drop in the country's agricultural production, slowdown in the industrial growth and a 2% fall in the overall growth rate. Experts feel that the country is heading towards a public debt trap due to the respective high fiscal deficits. It is casting its shadow all over the economic process.

78. Criminalisation, corruption, communalism, casteism, and gender oppression and violence continue to mar India's political process. According to the Transparency International, India occupies the 8th place in the list of the most corrupt countries in the world. Mafia culture has spread far and wide. According to the 1994 Vohra Committee report, "Mafia is running a parallel government in the country."

79. Rule of law is one of the most important fundamentals of a modern democracy. But this has been the most abused and misused basic of our nation since 1947. Money, muscle power, manipulation and trickery have gone on playing havoc with our democratic process. Now, we have reached a stage where the politicians and the parties are only interested in establishing their own rules rather than the rule of law, while the executive and the judiciary are fiercely competing—with each trying to prove its supremacy over the other instead of acting according to law.

80. The Indian law, with only a few exceptions, continues to contain big loopholes. Many of the laws are tilted in favour of the dominant sections and even criminals. They are definitely biased against the poor. The legal vagueness and incoherence provides opportunities to the executive, judiciary and police to bend the law according to their convenience. According to expert reports, some 7,000 to 8,000 archaic laws continue to occupy the place of honour in the statue books of the central and the state governments. They provide sweeping powers to the executive and also the judiciary. Some three crore cases continue to be pending before the courts, including the supreme one. Thus, the weakening of the rule of law is also one of the main reasons for the rise of the mafia rule.

81. The country's foreign-cum-defence matters still continue to be dominated by a "big brotherly" attitude towards the smaller

nations, while conciliatory-cum-docile approach is pursued in relation to big powers, like the US, China, etc.

82. Moral values have lost all meaning. Power grabbing and money laundering have come to be the be-all and end-all of life for the dominant sections of our society. For them, double-dealing, trickery and fraud have become common behavioural norms.

83. The environmental question and the population problem have assumed serious dimensions. All environment conservation plans and population control strategies have gone haywire.

84. The country is in a sorry state of affairs. The most annoying aspect of this situation is that our state is serving the interests of the dominant sections (through education, health, science, telecommunications, roads, airways, transport, subsidies, police, intelligence, bureaucracy, army, etc.) at the cost extracted from the poor and the lower middle class (through excise, taxation, inflation, etc.). It implies a net transfer of resources from the low income groups to the higher ones. This continues to widen the gap between the rich and the poor—thus causing more and more mass alienation. Such an unjust and irrational system can only be replaced when the masses become aware of its unfairness and unreasonableness.

85. The 1998 poll has brought forth the most fragmented polity in India. The BJP led alliance (and the BJP itself) has been marked by so many political confusions and fractures that it is soon going to be proved a non-performer

(iii) Why Things Have Gone Wrong In India?

86. The third question is why things have gone wrong in our country. On whom the responsibility lies for the present situation. This only happens when the subjective and the objective do not correspond.

87. The chief cause of the breach between our objective (i.e., the present day Indian social reality) and the subjective (i.e., our answer to the given Indian social reality) rests with our Constitution which constitutes the bedrock of our social system. The centralised (or the unitary) nature of the Constitution does not reconcile with the country's composite nature or our peoples plural character. The Constitution, having been guided by the Gandhian nationalist approach and grounded in the social reality of the 1947 communal partition, considers the Hindu-Muslim distinction as the only basic reality of India. The other

distinguishing features of the Indian social diversity—i.e., ethnic, cultural, linguistic and regional—are viewed by it as ordinary and non-basic. It thinks that the characteristic of the Hindu religion of India is the over-riding nature of the Indian people and thus of its nation. And there lies its misperception. Because all features have their own importance and need proper handling. However, the post-1947 experience shows and the practice of 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections confirms that the ethnic-regional factor has been outpacing all the rest.

88. A centralised or unitary state naturally works for a uniform politics, economy and culture and tries to bring the neighbouring countries under its centralised influence. This creates tensions among different categories (whether ethnic, cultural, religious, casteist, etc.) of the Indian people which weakens national unity. This is why, fifty years after independence, there is lack of emotional integration among various social groups and why the question of national integration remains a perpetual issue before the country.

89. The centralisation of the whole power at the centre creates the lust for power and money and makes them as the most powerful motivational factors. The personalisation of power-cum-money (delinked from the social aspect) leads to the detachment of politics from morality (i.e., a social element) and consequently the use of all means, mostly the foul ones.

90. Secondly, the fault lies in the prevailing unscrupulous politics (as mainly advocated by the centralist national parties) whose sole aim is power grabbing and money making by hook or by crook. This has necessarily resulted in the perpetuation of criminalisation, corruption, communalism, casteism and violence, representing powerful destabilising forces and threatening the very existence of the Indian state.

91. Thirdly, the responsibility falls on the judiciary which had done little to develop the rule of law and protect its erosion. To develop the rule of law, it has hardly ever pressed in a forceful and consistent way for the re-evaluation and the updating of the archaic and irrelevant part of the Indian legislation. Without taking into account the constantly changing nature of the modern democracy in correspondence with the alterations in the social conditions, one of its mechanical judgement makes the 1947 reality based basic structure of the Indian Constitution permanent for all times and climes. To protect the erosion of the rule of law, there are a number of judgements in which it has

defended even the arbitrary acts of the executive (e.g., its defence of the 1975 Emergency).

92. Fourthly, the fault resides in the foreign-cum-defence policy of regional superpowerism. It has led us into four wars with two of our neighbouring countries (i.e., Pakistan and China) and kept us on a confrontationist course against Pakistan. By imposing a heavy burden on our meagre financial resources through its high cost policy inputs (i.e., armaments, missiles, experiments on nuclear weapons, etc.), it has, since 1947, been a white elephant for our weak kneed economy.

93. Fifthly, the political standards of behaviour, marked by double-dealing, manipulation and trickery, also share the responsibility for the present state of country's affairs.

94. Lastly, it has been the national economy which, having been characterised by inefficiency, imbalances, inequity and unsustainability, has failed to reduce its financial distortions and cost of production and improve its productivity, quality and sustainability—thus worsening the quality of our social life.

95. The foregoing facts demonstrate that the danger to our country is arising from within rather than coming from outside. It is the erosion of our rule of law, criminalisation of the polity, corruption, communalism, casteism, violence, lawlessness, confrontationist security policy, cheating and fraud, immorality, inefficient economy, etc., that are undermining our national interests and causing step by step destabilisation of the nation.

96. The various excuses of our country's failures put forth by different approaches, i.e., pro-minority secularism, upper caste oppression, foreign created troubles, India's huge size and population, etc., indicate misperceptions about this country's multi-sided social reality.

(iv) What Should Be Done?

97. The fourth question that needs an answer is what should be our response to the troubled state of our national process and its causes. A realistic answer is the one that responds to the immediate issues of the Indian people, on the one hand, and the fundamental principles of their social system, on the other. It should, thus, emphasise a two sided agenda—the immediate and the basic.

98. The immediate agenda should comprise the immediate mass problems and the issues of injustice. At the moment, the main mass problems are: elimination of poverty, unemployment

and homelessness, provision of safe drinking water, health-care, education, roads, transport, electricity, telephone, justice with women, working children, agricultural labour, tribals, invalids, old people, the peoples right to information, the supervision of all development works by the concerned people, the peoples involvement in the decision making process, the empowerment of the people, especially the deprived, and so on.

99. The main issues of injustice include the illegal and immoral ideas and activities, i.e., criminalisation, corruption, communalism, casteism, cheating, fraud, lawlessness, violence, etc.

100. The basic agenda consists of the systemic changes as demanded by the diversity of our people (or nation).

101. As regards the immediate agenda, the government should be persuaded and pressed to solve the immediate mass issues by taking three steps: (a) Providing full information to the concerned people about the government policy/plan on the given issues through authentic means. (b) Involving a representative committee of the concerned group in the implementation of the government policy/plan in every given area (with panchayat or ward as the minimum operational unit). (c) Association of a local all party representatives committee (with equal representation to all types of big and small parties) alongwith the concerned group committee in the implementation of any government policy/plan. This two type mass involvement will ensure the maximum possible just implementation of the given policy/plan and an effective check on the blatant corruption.

As regards the issues of injustice, the peoples involvement should be ensured: (a) in various humane and democratic socio-cultural activities, (b) in the decision making processes concerning their problems, (c) in the supervision of all development works, (d) in the campaign against corruption to be organised by the Lok Pals at different levels, and (e) in the movements jointly sponsored by local all parties committees and the administration at the block level for the conservation of environment, improvement of sanitation and population control.

102. With regard to the basic agenda, the complex Indian social reality, with its context in the world reality of the interdependence of countries (or the globalisation of nations), demands the following measures.

103. The systemic change from a centralised state to federalism-cum-confederalism. Federalism is a superior form of democracy. It is the most effective system in preserving the unity

and the diversity of a country. In general, freedom has a firmer foundation under federalism than in any kind of a unitary state. India's instability and uncertainty can only be ended under a federal system. Federalism and regionalism cannot be equated. The two concepts connote different meanings. Regionalism is a narrow parochial concept which is not suited to a plural society. Federalism is a broad democratic concept.

104. Confederalism is a still higher form of democracy than federalism. While federalism either accords an equal status to the federal centre and the federated states or gives the federal centre the supreme position, confederalism accepts the sovereign position of the confederated states.

In the newly emerging epoch of globalisation, confederalism is acquiring an increasing relevance. The UN and all other international bodies, like IMF, WB, WTO, as well as various regional groupings, such as EC, ASEAN, NAFTA, Mercouser, etc., represent a confederal model in which every confederating unit possesses a confederal sovereignty.

105. A federation-cum-confederation should be based on two types of states—those which vest in the centre a given number of subjects, like foreign affairs, defence, communications, currency, and those which give to the centre one or two subjects or none at all but want to remain an associate member of this centre.

106. The Indian federation should base itself on the rule of law with peoples empowerment as its important component. The interpretation of law should as usual remain with the judiciary. The controversy between the judiciary and the legislature or executive on any law should be decided through a plebiscite and all internal conflicts resolved through a dialogue.

107. The Indian federation should strive for ensuring a genuine peace in the world by adopting a policy of friendship, cooperation and consensus, of total disarmament (including nuclear weapons), and reforming of UN on the democratic principle of universal franchise and ending the present veto powers.

It should strive to resolve all bilateral disputes with other countries either bilaterally or through the SAARC mechanism. It should seek a trilateral solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem by establishing a joint Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over the state. This Condominium will be responsible for that state's defence, foreign affairs and currency, while ensuring semi-independence to the state and the maximum possible autonomy

to each ethnic region in the state. This is likely to open the way for the development of the SAARC. After a proper resolution of Jammu-Kashmir problem, the defence expenditure should be reduced by 50 percent.

108. Its economic approach should be characterised by three fundamentals—sustainability, productivity and equality. These three fundamentals should be developed by harmonising the three imbalances, i.e., those between environment and human society (through the conservation of environment and the development of human resources), between one human (or human group) and another (by removing inequalities and disparities among humans, e.g., rich-poor, rural-urban, gender inequality, etc.), and between various financial sectors (by removing their gaps) or between different economic factors (by removing their distortions). Striving for a balanced economic growth, it will operate through the twin principles of market generated growth and the state organised social justice.

109. It should stand for a closer integration with the global economy and consistently press for an early international law ensuring the democratic, responsible, open and transparent functioning of the international currency markets, international stock markets and the MNCs. If the international legislation, rules or norms are cleared of all biases in favour of the privileged ones, much of the currency markets, stock markets and MNCs' bungling can be managed and fairness restored in the global economic system.

110. This federation's social perspective should be based on rational humanism and its value system should be the promotion of rational humanist thinking and the norms of humane and democratic behaviour.

(v) Mass Awakening & Involvement Foremost Need

111. No justice or fairness can be attained or a social change brought about anywhere if the concerned people remain unaware of the need for such a change. Every society is, in fact, a product of the given peoples mindset. The people get the government they deserve—this old saying aptly sums up the social truth. No constitution, institution, party or leader can create a fair and just society if there is no fairness and justice in the minds of the people.

112. Thus, peoples involvement is the most important question if the process of change has to be carried to its logical

end. Involvement depends on motivation and the motivation is determined by the rational and the emotional awakening. It is a question of learning by doing and no readymade formula is available to perform a miracle.

113. The inputs required for the process of involving the people are more or less similar everywhere. The only difference lies in their creative or inefficient use. These in general are:

(a) To select the target group of one's work. These groups, in the main, include the rural and the urban poor, houseless, unemployed, widows, women (those belonging to poorer sections), working children, girl child, invalids, scavengers, agricultural labour, bonded labour, unorganised labour (such as building workers, *rickshaw* pullers, etc.), tribals, prisoners, undertrials, old people having no attendant, lumpen elements (such as beggars, etc.), factory workers, office employees, students, youth, minorities, etc. These groups may be broadly classified into four types: (i) group-specific (ii) area-specific (iii) problem-specific, and (iv) Trade Union-specific.

(b) To prepare the agenda of the target group, with thorough understanding of its different aspects. A confused and vague understanding results in inconsistency.

(c) To get oneself well acquainted with the target group.

(d) To be good at communication which plays a crucial role in human relations.

(e) To be clear on the social perspective which, alongwith the agenda, has to be conveyed to the concerned people.

(f) To make use of the prepared agenda as a starting point for the overall awakening of the affected people at various get togethers and persuade them to discuss these problems and their solutions.

(g) To enrich the target group's awakening by relating their agenda to the similar problems concerned with the region, country or the world.

(h) To get a core team elected by the participants at each meeting and entrust the core team with the task of further mobilising the social group on its agenda and create new core teams.

(i) After creating certain level of mass awakening and organisation, the problems should be addressed to the concerned official quarters and pressure of public opinion be exercised to get them redressed.

(j) Peoples awakening turns into peoples power through cooperative action. 04-04-1998

Future Of India And Pakistan Lies Together But Jammu-Kashmir Is A Sine Qua Non For Both; Solution Lies In Joint Indo-Pak Control Over Jammu-Kashmir

I

A new situation has developed in the sub-continent. Its basic feature is the internationalisation of the Jammu-Kashmir question—a question of life and death for both India and Pakistan. Long forgotten by the world, Jammu-Kashmir is back on the international agenda. It is now a defacto subject of international focus. All international bodies and numerous countries have called upon India and Pakistan to get it resolved in the interests of world peace.

The issue did not arise from nowhere. It was none else than the top BJP hardliners, who, with their war like threats to Pakistan by linking India's new N-weapon status with the Jammu-Kashmir dispute, pushed the ball to the international court. What Pakistan could not achieve in 50 years, the BJP stalwarts did accomplish it within days. Naturally, Islamabad is extremely happy over this development, while New Delhi is quite perturbed.

II

What are the implications of the internationalisation of Jammu-Kashmir dispute? Firstly, it means that the Jammu-Kashmir issue has become an international concern. The world has recognised that the Jammu-Kashmir question is the root cause of Indo-Pak conflict. It is the principal factor of tension in South Asia. It is a threat to peace and security not only in South Asia but also the world. Now it has turned into a flashpoint which, with its new N-dimension, will, if not addressed in time, jeopardise the process

of world peace and development. This understanding has been reflected in the joint communiqués of P-5 and G-8, and the Security Council resolution. A number of world leaders, including the UN Secretary General and the Japanese Prime Minister, have offered to mediate between India and Pakistan for resolving the long-standing Jammu-Kashmir problem. A durable peace and security in South Asia can only be established on the basis of a solution to the Jammu-Kashmir problem.

Secondly, it means that Pakistan has secured a political point. Jammu-Kashmir is now not only the national problem of Pakistan but also of the world.

Thirdly, it means that the militant activity in Jammu-Kashmir will get a further boost. Already, it had extended to four districts in Jammu region, i.e., Doda, Udhampur, Poonch and Rajouri. With the latest shift in the militant tactics to target the members of the minority community, the objective seems to be to create a sense of insecurity in the minority community and thereby trigger migration and a possible backlash elsewhere—leading to a communal divide and destabilisation of social and economic life. In this sense, the new militancy in Jammu region differs from the militancy that had rocked the valley earlier and cannot therefore be treated as an extension or a spill over of the earlier phase.

The clashes between Indian and Pakistani forces on the LOAC have increased.

Fourthly, the world pressure on India to accept mediation on Jammu-Kashmir will sufficiently increase in the days ahead. Bilateralism will come under attack as a methodology to settle the Jammu-Kashmir issue. India may be able to defy the US, China or some other country. But it will be highly difficult for it to resist or elude the UN of which it is one of the members. If it ever tries to ward off the UN, it will only activate the Security Council.

Fifthly, in South Asia, the process of SAARC will remain halted, Even tensions can grow between India and other members of the SAARC.

The signal, which the present world reality conveys, is that the international community cannot afford the continuation of Indo-Pak confrontation for ever.

III

What are the historical lessons of the 50 year long Jammu-Kashmir problem? Firstly, this problem cannot be wished away by sleeping over. The passage of time had not made it obsolete.

It has only complicated the conflict further. The 1994 Indian parliament's unanimous resolution that Jammu-Kashmir is and was an integral part of India and that Pakistan is only an aggressor that has occupied some of our areas is binding on all the successive governments. No government can survive by differing with this stand. No government can accept plebiscite or third party mediation. It can have only talks on the issue and nothing more. And talks are only meant to ward off the international pressure. The Pakistani national stand that Jammu-Kashmir remains an unfinished agenda of the 1947 partition continues to be the sheet anchor of every Pak government. India has finally repudiated plebiscite as a solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem, while Pakistan still clings to it.

Secondly, the status quo cannot work as a solution. India is satisfied with the status quo. It has often suggested that it is prepared to accept the present ceasefire line or the line of actual control as an international border between India and Pakistan. But the latter had always rejected it. Now Kashmiris too do not accept status quo as a way out.

Thirdly, almost every country in the world accepts Jammu-Kashmir as an unresolved problem between India and Pakistan. No one accepts India's view that Jammu-Kashmir is an integral part of India. The entire world community desires that India should somehow settle the Jammu-Kashmir question peacefully with Pakistan. It is accepted by all that Jammu-Kashmir is a bilateral problem to be resolved by India and Pakistan with the involvement of the Jammu-Kashmir people. The community of nations has no common formula to tackle the Jammu-Kashmir problem. So far, no one has thought of imposing any solution on India or Pakistan.

Fourthly, both India and Pakistan have lacked realism in dealing with the problem. With their pre-set 1947 mindsets, both have sought to sort out the problem on their own respective terms. Each offers nothing except surrender terms to the other. Pakistan insists on self-determination or plebiscite, knowing full well that India cannot accept a proposal which entails Jammu-Kashmir's secession from India. The latter offers status quo, based on force. This is not acceptable to Pakistan which already controls 1/3rd of Jammu-Kashmir State.

Fifthly, the different rounds of bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan on Jammu-Kashmir have produced no result. India and Pakistan on their own, have failed to resolve even a single

contentious case. Whatever problems had so far been settled between them are the result of a third party involvement.

Sixthly, Jammu-Kashmir has become a sine qua non for both India and Pakistan. For India, it is a symbol to prove the validity of its secularism and as a refutation of the two nation theory. For Pakistan, it is a means to demonstrate the truth of its two nation theory.

Lastly, but very importantly, the record of the past 50 years of the politics of confrontation shows that it had produced a very damaging results for both the people of India and Pakistan. This record is so disgusting that not even the operators of confrontation in the two countries can justify it by any standard. Both India and Pakistan remain among the poorest countries of the world. The respective criminalisation of their politics and the unending series of scams shows that those holding power in these two countries are engaged only in a two sided pursuit of power grabbing and money making.

The lesson which Indo-Pak history provides is that unless the deadlock between these two countries is broken, neither the Jammu-Kashmir problem can be resolved nor the way to the progress and prosperity of India and Pakistan be opened.

The choices are clear: conciliation or confrontation. The former leads to peace and development, the latter to war. Coexistence or non-existence—that is the issue.

IV

What are the main developing social trends of the present-day world which enable us to have a realistic vision of the future?

First of all, the general trend of globalisation or of interdependence of nation-states has made it imperative for all countries to follow a two sided path. That is, to link every national economy with the global market, on the one hand, and to form a regional market alongwith the neighbouring countries through regional economic cooperation and integration, on the other. This two sided trend stresses that Indo-Pak relations have come to be interdependent and their future has become common. It makes essential for them to resolve all their disputes and follow a path of friendship and cooperation. If India and Pakistan continue to defy this essential as they have been doing for a long time, they are, with their poor economic and political performance, likely to suffer serious political-economic distortions and even destabilisation. Either they build a bright future by coming closer

together or they turn into non-entities by fighting each other. The SAARC is providing them a way out.

Secondly, the general trend of globalisation demands a peaceful resolution of all disputes, whether between countries or within one country. That is why the whole world demands that the Jammu-Kashmir problem be bilaterally solved between India and Pakistan with the involvement of the Jammu-Kashmir people. Today, military solutions, whether state-led or a group-sponsored, have lost much of their relevance.

Thirdly, the general trend of globalisation demands a fair and a mutually beneficial solution to every problem, including Jammu-Kashmir. That is why none of the countries (even the powerful ones) supports New Delhi's theory of Jammu-Kashmir as an inalienable part of India or Islamabad's version of Jammu-Kashmir having been an Islamic issue or certain groups' demand of self-determination or plebiscite for Jammu-Kashmir. Russia and China, the countries contiguous to Jammu-Kashmir, and Iran, a neighbouring country, all have opposed the idea of an independent Jammu-Kashmir, in view of their assumption of its turning into a US sphere of influence.

The message which the present world trends communicates is that only an agenda of friendship, cooperation, peaceful path and mutual harmony can benefit India, Pakistan and the Jammu-Kashmir people and that the traditional confrontationist standpoints of India and Pakistan are counter productive not only to the interests of the people of India, Pakistan and Jammu-Kashmir, but also of South Asia and the world. These standpoints had already done a great harm to the national cause of the two nations respectively.

V

From the above account, it follows that a fair, just and viable solution to the Jammu-Kashmir problem is the trilateral option that reconciles the national interests of India and Pakistan, on the one hand, and harmonises the interests of the Jammu-Kashmir people with those of the Indian and the Pakistani people, on the other.

The respective national interests of India and Pakistan should, and can, be balanced by establishing an Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over Jammu-Kashmir state (which would handle only Jammu-Kashmir's defence, foreign affairs and currency), while the interests of the Jammu-Kashmir people should, and

can, be harmonised with those of the Indian and the Pakistani people by giving semi-independence to the state, with the maximum possible autonomy to each of the ethno-regional identities in the state.

With regard to the harmonising of the different aspirations and concerns of Jammu-Kashmir's various identities (as required by the second basic feature), these should, and can, be reconciled by adopting a federal Constitution of the state which should, on the one hand, give maximum possible autonomy to each ethnic region, with a provision for further devolution of powers to the district, block and village councils, and, on the other, stand for a single Jammu-Kashmir state, having a common Head of the State to be elected by the ethno-regional councils, and a common High Court, a common Election Commission, a common Public Service Commission, a common Environmental Commission and a common Human Resources Development Commission, all to be appointed by the ethno-regional councils, with one representative from each.

The Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over Jammu-Kashmir will be a new experiment of a new global oriented development model in today's world—showing how the divergent national interests of various nations be reconciled and the different aspirations and concerns of various ethnicities be harmonised.

VI

To popularise the concept of trilateral solution, it is necessary to undertake the following tasks.

(a) To build a joint front of all those forces who accept Jammu-Kashmir as an unresolved problem and stand for its trilateral solution.

(b) To motivate and involve the Jammu-Kashmir people in the process of the peaceful resolution of Jammu-Kashmir problem through a two sided manner, i.e., mobilising them in favour of the trilateral solution and against the politics of gun, on the one hand, and struggling alongwith them for the realisation of their day to day demands, on the other.

(c) To obtain the active support of all peace loving and democratic forces in India, Pakistan, South Asia and other parts of the world in favour of the trilateral solution.

(d) To make an appeal to both the people of India and Pakistan to demand from their respective governments to desist from the path of confrontation and militarisation which has made mass

living miserable in the two countries.

(e) To appeal to both New Delhi and Islamabad to accept the consensus solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem as agreed to by Jammu-Kashmir's various ethnic and regional identities.

VII

Does the upholding of a trilateral solution to the Jammu-Kashmir problem constitute anti-Indianism or anti-nationalism?

History shows that any social formation, whether tribal or national, succeeds only when it upholds the social reality and responds to it properly.

Today, trilateralism is the realistic nature of the Jammu-Kashmir question and joint Indo-Pak control over that state is its proper and viable solution, the realism and the appropriateness of the said two concepts consist in the fact that, corresponding to the spirit of our global era, they balance the interests of three sides of the Jammu-Kashmir problem—i.e., India, Pakistan and the Jammu-Kashmir people. This realistic route is in the true interests of the Indian and the Pakistani people. All votaries of double-dealing nationalism (i.e., the BJP, Congress, JD and the Left Parties) which, on the one hand, accept Jammu-Kashmir as an inalienable part of India, and, on the other, regard it as a bilateral issue, are anti-national and unpatriotic.

Threat Comes From Inside, Not Outside

(IDP's Statement On Indo-Pak N-Explosions)

The recent N-explosions by India and Pakistan have not only jolted the South Asian people but also stirred up the world community to go again into the rationale of N-weapons. This has naturally raised a host of questions which demand proper answers from everyone.

I

The first question is: Does the possession of N-weapons make a country strong and invincible? The global experience provides the answer in the negative. The possession of a very high number of N-weapons by the former superpower, the Soviet Union, and its Socialist Bloc, could not save them from disintegration. The other N-weapon based superpower, i.e., the US, was humbled by the poor Vietnamese in a long drawn guerrilla war. The tiny Cuba had rebuffed the American N-threats for 50 years. Recently the Somalian irregular soldiers forced the US marines to quit their country. Nuclear China had failed to cow down a small island, like Taiwan. Russia was beaten off by the far weaker Chechnya. Nowhere in the world had the nuclear weapons won a single victory so far. The American nuclear bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima were dropped only when Japan had already collapsed. The N-weapons have, despite their destructing capacity, proved mere paper tigers in terrifying and subjugating the people in practice.

II

The second question is: Why do the all-devastating N-weapons not turn into an all-pervading force? This is because the N-weapons are anti-human by nature and no anti-human

phenomenon can become a decisive factor in human society.

III

The third question is: Was India's reasoning—that it needed N-tests to counter the worsening neighbourhood environment—justified? This argument is itself refuted by five facts. One, there has, contrary to government perception, been quite perceptible betterment before the N-tests in India's security situation due to the improvement of its relations with neighbours, including Pakistan and China. Two, if the N-tests were dictated by national concerns, then why did the Vajpayee government shirk to get the cabinet sanction on this strategic question and not take into confidence the Parliament, National Integration Council, its allies, political parties, press, etc. Three, the government's cryptic statement and hush-hush manner themselves point out the fishy nature of the deed. Four, the Indian people had never demanded and do not even now need any such tests. Five, the government has not explained just how the N-tests are going to resolve problems with the said two threatening countries.

IV

The fourth question is: Did Pak logic—that its N-explosions were in response to Indian tests—sounds valid? It is quite irrelevant, because two wrongs cannot make an act right and a wrong initiative and a wrong response make a process doubly bad.

V

The fifth question is: Have the N-tests strengthened Indian national security? The facts show that these tests have by inviting sanctions against the country, fuelling the arms race in the subcontinent, creating the possibility of N-war in our region, inducing other countries to undertake the N-weapon path, and creating war psychosis all around—made our national security more insecure. The eruption of new instability on India's borders and its coordination with the already existing internal instability has created highly threatening situation for our country's security.

VI

The sixth question is: Has the Vajpayee government adopted the N-weapon route in the national interests? The facts denote that it is plainly suicidal. Because it represents not only anti-humanism, but also disregards the UN and other international

bodies, violates the collective will of 149 nations (signatories to the CTBT), invites the international sanctions against the country, isolates India from the world community, makes India a global untouchable, blocks its way to become a permanent member of the Security Council, further complicates the Jammu-Kashmir problem, imposes an unbearable burden on the Indian people (i.e., the fall in the value of the rupee and accompanying price rise, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, illiteracy, ill heath, shortage of essential articles, etc.) and so on. Those parties which are upholding the N-weapons cause—whether actively (like the BJP and its allies) or critically (such as the Congress, Left parties and JD, etc.)—are chips of the same jingoist, chauvinist and sectarian nationalism. It was the theory, practice and organisation of this fanatical nationalism that first resulted in the 1947 partition of India and then led to the turning of India into a global pauper during the past half a century of their rule. The sooner we understand the negative role of these false national forces, the better for our country.

VII

The seventh question is: Where the danger to our national interests has been coming from? The post-1947 facts clearly demonstrate that it arises from inside (New Delhi) rather than outside. Generated by our unitary system and perpetuated by corrupt polity, it is the erosion of our rule of law, criminalisation of the polity, inefficient economy, corruption, communalism, casteism, violence, lawlessness, confrontationist policy with our neighbours, cheating and fraud, immorality etc., that are undermining our national interests and causing step by step destabilisation of the nation.

VIII

This eighth question is: What should be our alternative to a N-weapon oriented defence? The recent global experience demonstrates that a strategy of peaceful path—which shuns N-weapons and rejects military solution to the national issues and adopts dialogue and negotiations as a way to resolving all conflicts (both external and internal)—can really ensure not only national security but also assured growth. This can be seen from the process of development of Japan and Germany (the world's economic superpowers), 14 nations having no defence forces and ASEAN, EC, Mercouser and similar regional groupings.

The present interdependent world demands the upholding of a nationalism that is based on rational humanism, rule of law through peoples empowerment, sustainable development, value related culture and peace directed foreign and defence matters.

The traditional national theories, guided by the norm of peace through strength (such as, political power grows out of the barrel of a gun; if you want peace, be prepared for war; nuclear deterrent; nuclear self-defence; etc.) have all become out-dated.

IX

The ninth question is: What should be immediately done to change the prevailing war-like environment in South Asia? It is necessary that we turn our negative into the positive by awakening and involving the people in the carrying out of the following agenda which brings peace and prosperity not only to this region but also stabilises world tranquillity and development.

* To demand that both India and Pakistan stop N-tests, declare not to manufacture N-weapons and uphold the establishment of a N-free zone in South Asia.

* To demand that the monopoly of five N-weapon states on these weapons be ended and also such weapons placed under the control of the UN General Assembly (not the Security Council) which should be solely responsible for their entire management till their final destruction.

* To demand that all N-armaments be totally destroyed after twentyfive years.

* To demand that India and Pakistan start early talks on the resolution of Jammu-Kashmir problem (the root cause of 50 year long Indo-Pak confrontation) on trilateral basis.

* To demand that the US and China stop playing their super-power games in South Asia, with China secretly inciting Pakistan against India and the US surreptitiously provoking sometimes India against Pakistan and vice versa.

Wrong decisions, while charging high price, are very detrimental to peoples cause. It is never late to mend them or end them, as the case may be. 31-05-1998

Right And Wrong Of N-Weaponry

I

The sub-continental N-tests have opened up a serious debate not only in India and Pakistan but also the world. A number of arguments have been advanced by both the pro and the anti-sides. Our case is as follows.

We hold that, in the post-cold war era, the N-explosions or N-weaponisation is anti-human and a negative social act (whatever its viability might have been in the cold war era). It is not now needed by the people anywhere in the world. And the sooner there is total N-weapon destruction, the better for humanity. Our view is based on both its practical and moral considerations.

II

The first point worth considering is that, in the newly emerged era of globalisation (or national interdependence, with its given global division of labour and balance of social forces), the human problems have become global (i.e., common concerns of all humans). Naturally, they demand a global response which, in turn, needs friendship and cooperation among all the members (at present constituting the nation-states) of the global human community. Without an attitude of friendship and cooperation, the top human problems—i.e., environment, population, sustainable development, equality, social justice, human rights, empowerment of the people, especially the women, resolving of all inter-nation disputes and conflicts within a nation, etc.—cannot be properly addressed. All these gradual changes in human problems, attitude and style have eroded much of the relevance of war and military solution in the tackling of human problems.

Today, wars do not bring decisive victory to one side. All wars in the post-cold war era—Peru vs Chile, Ethiopia vs Eritrea, etc.—had ended in a draw. The immense pressure of the world public opinion forced the belligerents to stop fighting within days and resolve their dispute through talks by harmonising the interests of

each other. Similar had been the case with the internal armed conflicts where neither the state power nor the group militancy succeeded in winning a total victory, finally resulting in a compromise. As a result of the growing ineffectiveness of the military might, the respective national defence budgets of the countries all over the world are getting reduced.

Naturally, if war, military solution and arms are ceasing to be the ultimate factors in the ordering of the world, the N-weapon cannot be a tool of international restructuring. Conversely, it is an instrument of status quo which helps the retention of the old ongoing inequalitarian and irrational global system. This is why all those powers (i.e., P-5, G-8, etc.) who occupy a privileged position in the present-day world are not inclined to set a time bound N-disarmament agenda. India, Pakistan or any other country which adopts the N-weapon road is also oriented by its ultra-national interests. The way to break the N-weapon monopoly of P-5 states is not to enter their nuclear club, but to present an alternative to the N-weapon politics (the ultimate aim of the N-bomb).

The concept of N-weapon as a factor of social order is the updated version of the traditional theory which holds that "the question of political power is determined in terms of military power" or "power grows out of the barrel of a gun" or "if you want peace, be prepared for war." All these traditional theories of political power have lost much rigour because, having arisen out of the old social division of labour (i.e., clanish, tribal, agricultural or industrial) and its given balance of social forces, they do not fit with the present global division of labour and its balance of social forces.

Similar is the misperception of the proposition of N-weapon as a "war deterring" or a "peace keeping" factor. But the whole history of N-weapon shows that it has always led to the arms race, e.g., US vs Soviet Union, NATO vs Soviet Bloc, US vs China, India vs Pakistan. Can anyone deny the fact that the purpose of arms race is to always win the war and not peace? The aim and strategy of peace can never be pursued through the instruments of war. The state of an equal balance of forces is not the result of the good intentions of the belligerents but of chance factors.

The war between the NATO and the Soviet Bloc was prevented non due to the N-bomb, but because of the split between the Soviet Union and China and the gradually crumbling economy of the Soviet Union and its bloc (which ultimately resulted in its disintegration).

III

The second point worth considering is that, in the new era of globalisation, the external peace and security for any country can be mainly ensured not through the N-weapon based defence, but by a peaceful foreign-cum-defence policy which stands for reconciling disputes through give and take. Scores of conflicts, within or without countries, have got resolved the world over by harmonising the interests of the contestants in the post-cold war period. The possibility of a war emerges only when the world gives less than due attentions to a sour point, while the two contending sides or even one of them persist in having the solution on their own terms, as has been the case in the Indo-Pak dispute over Jammu-Kashmir.

The Indian and the Pakistani sides have always insisted to force their respective options on each other and never tried to balance their respective interests. That is, they remained on the confrontationist path even during their negotiations. This path led them to a prolonged cold war, militarisation and three hot wars—thus turning them into chronically sick members of the world.

N-weapon has now added a new dimension to their sickness. By fuelling the arms race in the sub-continent, provoking China by characterising it as the country's potential enemy number one, creating the possibility of a N-war in this region, inducing other countries to undertake the N-weapon course, creating war psychosis all around, getting India isolated from the world community, disregarding the will of the world people and inviting sanctions against the country, it has made our external security more insecure.

We can ensure external peace and security for our country through a peaceful foreign-cum-defence policy which stands to resolve the Jammu-Kashmir problem with Pakistan on a trilateral basis, on the one hand, and to sort out the boundary dispute with China either through the verdict of the World Court or the arbitration by a mutually agreed commission.

IV

The third point worth considering is that, in the new era of globalisation, the internal stability in any country is mainly ensured by improving the peoples quality of life through the elimination of crime, violence, corruption, gender oppression, communalism, hunger, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, illiteracy, ill health, etc., and the establishment of the rule of law,

guarantee of human rights, social justice, gender equality, protection of the rights of weaker sections and minorities, etc.

However, in our country, even 50 years after independence, nearly 40% of our population live in absolute poverty, over 200 million survive without safe drinking water and have no access to basic health facilities. Over 1/3rd of population have no houses of their own. Ten million live in slums. About 470 million are totally illiterate. Over 5 crores are totally unemployed, while the number of under-employed totals nearly 300 million. Ten percent of the country's population comprise invalids who remain a neglected lot. Over 100 million agricultural labourers constitute the poorest strata of our society.

Given the above state of affairs, the foremost priority of our people consists of an action plan to improve the quality of their life and not the manufacturing of N-weapon. N-weaponisation is, instead of being a solution to any problem, only a way to make the peoples living more miserable and troublesome.

V

The fourth point worth considering is that, in the new era of globalisation, the national interests of a country can be served by upholding a global oriented or interdependent nationalism. This nationalism is necessarily directed towards building a just, fair and rational democratic system, based on the rule of law, on the one hand, and its enforcement through the empowerment of the people, on the other; developing a sustainable economy, characterised by growth, equality and sustainability; promoting democratic standards of behaviour; following a peaceful foreign-cum-defence policy; conserving environment; proper managing of population control; and a rational humanist approach.

However, in our country, a centralised and authoritarian system, archaic and cryptic laws, criminalisation of the polity, inefficient and high cost economy, double-dealing style, regionally hegemonic foreign-cum-defence policy and above all a majoritarian nationalism are constantly rocking the boat of our nation.

VI

The fifth point worth considering is that, in the new era of globalisation, a fresh opportunity has appeared before the countries to make gradual reductions in their respective security budgets. And while the national defence expenditures in the world are coming down, unfortunately in South Asia, particularly

India and Pakistan, the military charges are constantly going up.

N-weaponisation has further increased the economic burden of the countries in this region. In India alone, it will, by the government's own reckoning, cost about Rs 20,000 crore over and above the budgetary allocation for defence. In addition to this, it will demand a continuing cost of about Rs 16,000 crore per annum for maintaining a credible deterrent.

VII

The last question worth considering is that, in the new era of globalisation, the N-weapon capability does not bring any specific gain to some country or serve its national interests. This is because, ours is not an age of colonialism (in which the Sun did not set in the British Empire), national hegemonism or superpowerism. That age has passed into history. We are now in the era of evening out. Globalisation demands friendship, cooperation and partnership on equal basis. N-bomb brings in war and confrontation. That is why it is irrelevant in the new epoch, to be consigned to a traditional armoury or a war museum.

Turning to our own case, the primary aim, as advocated by New Delhi, in conducting N-tests was to strengthen national security. But the post-nuclear period has placed every Indian in the nuclear firing line. Instead of peace, it has brought more insecurity not only to India but the whole of South Asia. Instead of facilitating the resolution of the Jammu-Kashmir problem or the Sino-Indian border dispute, it has made their solution much more complicated.

Another argument in favour of N-tests was that N-capability would increase India's international standing. It will help it achieve the status of world's sixth N-power. It will enable it to get a permanent seat in the Security Council. It will raise India's stature in South Asia. But it has only brought us political isolation, economic sanctions and embargos, financial burden, arms race, insecurity, enhanced militancy and the possibility of a N-confrontation with Pakistan. There is no chance for India to become a permanent member of the Security Council or to enter the P-5 nuclear club.

Still, another argument is that N-explosion was a miracle of Indian science and technology. But it is simply a naive remark. Today, N-Physics has become an old science and N-technology is easily available in the world market.

Again, another argument is that N-tests were a necessity in

view of the worsening neighbourhood environment. But when 40% of our people are not assured of two square meals, can detonating an N-device become a proper response. Being the poorest and the most backward country in the world, it is socially and nationally obligatory for us to defuse the hostile surrounding conditions by adopting a policy of peace, based on conciliation and compromise, and discarding the old policy of confrontation and war which had helped generating the adverse circumstances.

VIII

N-tests were a monumental blunder. There was no justification for India going nuclear now or in the past, whatever the rulers' political compulsions.

The negative part of Pakistan in creating a N-threat in South Asia is not less considerable than India.

Our people can still restore India's credibility in the world by taking a correct stand and firmly sticking to it. This would require a change in our outlook from power and money oriented logic to justice and fairness directed rationality. It is this power and money oriented logic that is, under the cover of practicability and the traditional parameters, being used by the forces of status quo to preserve the old inequalitarian and authoritarian order in India as well as the world.

For Building A Prosperous South Asia

Make It A Conflict And Nuclear-Free Zone

I

I. South Asian region, comprising seven nation-states (i.e., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and, Maldives), inhabits about 1/5th of human community (i.e., about 1,500 million people), with shared history, socio-ethnic affinity and an ancient civilisation. It is characterised by geographical contiguity, with rich bio-diversity and natural resources. Yet it today remains the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished and the least gender and child sensitive area in the world.

2. The annual average income of the seven nation grouping at $309 is far below the African sub-Saharan region's $555. Country-wise, national incomes are among the lowest in the world—ranging from Bhutan's $180 to $820 for the Maldives. An estimated half the children are under-weight and more than 220 million people don't have access to health-care. Nearly half the people are illiterate and 40% below the poverty line. The state of its women and children is of course distressing.

3. South Asia requires primary schooling for 126 million children, basic health-care for 690 million, safe drinking water for 770 million people, adequate nutrition for 87 million children and provision of family planning services to 287 million married couples. All this requires a huge amount of finance. But the two members of this region, i.e., India and Pakistan, spend about Rs 55,000 crore on their defence structures alone, with India using $10 per capita and Pakistan $26. Obviously, even one year's Indo-Pak expenditure on their defence managements alone is enough to wipe off the regional problems of illiteracy, ill-health, unsafe drinking water, etc.

II

4. The reason why South Asia remains the most backward

region of the world lies in its non-observance of the methodology of regional cooperation and friendship. The two biggest members of this region, i.e., India and Pakistan, comprising 85% of its population, have continued on the path of confrontation and war since their origin. The result is that they themselves have today become the marginal global players and turned South Asia into the most miserable region of the world.

III

5. Learning from the rapid economic growth of various regional groupings—like the EC, ASEAN, etc.—the seven South Asian countries formed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985. But, since its inception, the SAARC has remained a non-starter. Whenever it tried to get its act together, the Indo-Pak rivalry in one form or the other shut it out. Most of its previous meetings had hardly produced any tangible results. The Indo-Pak confrontation has always acted as the main stumbling block.

6. According to a UN estimate, the SAARC trade (among its seven members) amounts to little over 3% of their total world trade in contrast to 80% for European Community and 20% for ASEAN. A workable common market in South Asia can, as per the centre for Global Trade Development, boost the total trade potential to fivefold (i.e., $15 billion) by the turn of the century from the present level of $3 billion. But this could not be possible for the SAARC in its present form.

7. The ninth Male SAARC Summit in 1997 had broken some ice and created the hope that under the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement, the region would do away with trade barriers for specified products by the year 2001 and become a free trade area, giving a boost to the regional development. Now the recent Indo-Pak N-tests have shattered this hope. There is a fear that the possible escalation of Indo-Pak N-arms race may further worsen the South Asian situation.

8. The other five SAARC members have often complained that the age-old Indo-Pak hostility is the only reason of their association's non-performance. They feel that, without developing friendly relations between India and Pakistan, the SAARC cannot become a medium for the change. Every one of them has, in fact, made diplomatic attempts in its own humble way to break the ice between them at one time or the other. Some of them had even tried to raise the question of bringing

bilateral issues within the SAARC framework. But all this had made no effect on the contending members. Today, their apprehensions have magnified manifold as the region represents the greatest threat of N-war in the world.

9. A common market needs an attitude of friendship, cooperation and partnership among its members. It cannot be built through the mode of confrontation which generates militarisation and arms race. Unless the bilateral disputes and their related cold war policies are properly managed, the question of cooperation remains an empty talk.

IV

10. The historical experience of the EC and the ASEAN shows that both these regional groupings also arose from the ashes of the traditional conflicts among their respective members. The EC arose out of the debris of the second world war and the millennium old historical rivalry between EC's two leading players—Germany and France. The ASEAN originated in the context of a developing conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia in the early 1960s, a conflict that was averted just in time. It took ten years to work out an understanding.

11. However, the course of regional cooperation has enabled these two regional groupings not only to tackle their bilateral issues but also their domestic concerns, like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ill health, etc. The rising economic prosperity has also helped political and cultural matters.

V

12. Obviously, if the SAARC is to become a workable organisation, it will have to defuse all tension points among its members, especially between India and Pakistan.

13. In case, the SAARC fails to take off, the consequences may be disastrous for all the concerned in general, and India and Pakistan, in particular. In general, it may retard the developmental process of all the South Asian countries as compared with other nations in the world. In particular, the economic deterioration in India and Pakistan, coupled with their confrontationist policies and sharpening internal ethnic conflicts, may lead to the destabilisation of both multi-ethnic countries, India and Pakistan.

14. Every sane person earnestly desires that the South Asian countries, especially India and Pakistan, would, by perceiving the implications of the existing Indo-Pak reality, draw proper

conclusions before it gets too late. The experience shows that the two governments can, in view of their enemy perception of each other, not afford to take any compromising position on their contentious issues, especially Jammu-Kashmir. And the South Asian countries, neither singly nor collectively, possess moral or political strength to compel these two countries to take a rightful position.

VI

15. Given this situation, it is necessary that the South Asian people, especially those of India and Pakistan, rise to the occasion and raise five interconnected demands.

(a) That Jammu-Kashmir problem be resolved either through a joint Indo-Pak or SAARC control over Jammu-Kashmir state, with the latter having a semi-independent status and each one of its ethnic regions enjoying the maximum possible autonomy.

(b) That the Sino-Indian border problem be resolved either through the World Court or a mutually agreed commission whose verdict will be binding on both sides. Experience has proved that they cannot resolve this problem bilaterally.

(c) That China gives an undertaking to the UN that it would remove its entire N-weapons from all along the Indian border and not target any South Asian country, including India.

(d) That India and Pakistan destroy all their N-weapons and accept South Asia as a N-free zone.

(e) That urgent steps be taken to develop a South Asian security cooperation mechanism.

Demand UN Assembly Control Over N-Weapons

I

1. Not only the Indian and the Pakistani ones, but every type of N-bomb—whether American, Chinese, Russian, British or the French—is a product of jingoist mindset. Such a mindset arises from an irrational belief in the past or the present superiority of one's own nation (or country) and hostility towards other nations.

2. It is the jingoist mindset that makes the US to consider itself as the overlord of the present-day world. The same mentality underlies "a great nation" theory of China which looks upon itself as the natural pre-eminent power not only of the ancient and the middle ages but also of the post-cold war era. The Slav chauvinism dominated not only the Soviet communist order but remains in place even under Yeltsin's free marketism. Mastery of the colonial world still haunts the British psyche. And France continues to be mired in the Gaullist and Napoleonic mentality.

3. India's liberal Hindu nationalism (as propounded by Gandhi and upheld by all brands of so-called secular forces—i.e., the Congressites, Communists, Socialists, social reformists, etc.) and its tough Hindu version (i.e., the RSS and its *Parivar* sponsored *Hindutva*) digs up its ancient theory of *Bharatvarsha* having been a unique global creation, meant for bigger things with no parallel in the past or the present. Dream of extending the frontiers of the 'Islamic holy land' (i.e., Pakistan) to South Asia and the Middle-East still mesmerise the Pak fundamentalist forces even after the 1971 fateful experience of Bangladesh.

4. The jingoist mindset of the five N-weapon monopoly holding states is obvious from the fact that they do not like a time bound N-disarmament programme and want to retain their monopoly for unlimited period. US opposes even the idea of 'No first use' of N-weapons. Britain and France also do not commit themselves on this point.

5. Nationalism is not jingoist by nature. Some of the nation-

states are today playing a very positive role in social development. For instance, South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, each gave up its own N-weapons, whether they inherited them or not. Argentina and Brazil had the scientific capability to develop N-weapons, but they decided to forego that.

6. Nationalism as a way of life arose from the industrial, scientific, technological and social knowledge, its industrial division of labour and its organisation of the nation-state (with its particular Constitution and laws).

7. Though the industrial set up has been gradually replaced by an info-scientific, technological and social knowledge, its global division of labour and its organisation of an interdependent state (linked with regional groupings and the UN), yet the great power national mindset has not so far been replaced by a rational global mindset.

8. The continuation of such a national mindset is due to the fact that the powerful nation-states, i.e., P-5 and G-8, who monopolise all the informative, economic and military resources, are constantly trying to perpetuate the old continuing unfair and unjust social order both on the global and the national scales and to nourish the ultra-nationalistic attitude among the masses.

II

9. The unfairness and unjustness of the ongoing world system can be seen from the fact that, while universal franchise is the accepted principle of the rule of law or democracy in each country, the UN is regulated by the five veto wielding powers who have reduced the role of the remaining 180 UN members to irrelevance. The same five veto wielding powers also hold the monopoly of N-weapons. The IMF and the World Bank too are controlled by these powers whose voting strength is linked with their share weightage.

10. Next, a handful of the developed countries, with 1/4th of the world population, consume 80% of the global resources, leaving merely 20% for the 3/4th of the humans, living in over 125 developing countries.

11. Furthermore, one half of humanity, constituting its female part, continues to be the victim of ill treatment and misbehaviour.

12. A highly disgusting feature of the present global order is the growing inequality and poverty in the world. The 1995 World Development Report stated: “Corporate executives earn at least 149 times more than the factory workers and the world’s 358

billionaires have a combined net worth equal to that of 45% of the world's population.

13. Some two billion people, well over half of the world's working age population, lived in low income economies and had an annual per capita income below 695 dollars and about 1/3rd of the working age population unemployed.

14. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), about 20% of the developing world population, i.e., about 780 million people, have insufficient food intake and over 192 million children are suffering from protein energy malnutrition.

15. The situation within nation-states is not much different. Despite variations in their socio-economic conditions, certain features remain common in the quality of social life. For example, the political process of every country remains dominated by money power which, in case of the developing countries, is also compounded by muscle power and primitive loyalties. The economic process is characterised by cut-throat competition, speculation and blackmailing, inequality and deprivation of the poor. The unscrupulous ways continue as normal patterns. Human rights and social justice remain the neglected factors everywhere.

16. In almost every country, the legislators continue to enjoy special parliamentary privileges. Judiciary, with its wide-ranging powers under the Contempt of Court law, remains unaccountable to the people. The bureaucracy, equipped with unrestricted powers under the Official Secrets Act and the archaic laws, rules roughshod over the people. The law enforcing agencies behave as law unto themselves. The law goes on favouring the rich and denying their due to the poor and the deprived.

17. All the above-mentioned facts reflect serious distortions within the present-day human society. This state of affairs demands that the human community, both collectively as well as nation-wise, makes a determined effort to set things right. But nothing of this sort has since attained any priority in the UN or the global agenda nor become the passionate concern for any government.

III

18. Taking into account the afore-mentioned inequalitarian and irrational nature of the present day global order, it is highly dangerous to place the monopoly of N-weapons in the hands of five veto holding powers. In this context, both the NPT and the

CTBT constitute unjust and discriminatory treaties.

19. The N-weapons pose a great danger to the entire bio-life on this earth. Under the international laws, the manufacture and use of the N-weapons is inhuman and illegal. The scientists of all countries have been opposing these weapons from their very beginning in the 1940s and demanded their complete prohibition and destruction. But the practitioners of jingoism and hegemonism have, by waving the flag of national interests, refused to listen to any sane advice.

20. The interests of humanity demand that there should be a time-bound total N-disarmament in the world at the earliest. But the UN as well as various nation-states have adopted a strange attitude on this issue. Their support to the NPT and the CTBT in their present forms (which do not prescribe a time-frame for N-weapons elimination) does not represent a rational act. Earlier, the opposition of these two treaties by India and Pakistan was merely a trick to retain their N-options for manufacturing the N-bomb.

IV

21. Given this scenario, it is necessary that the people everywhere take up this issue in their own hands and raise the demand that their respective governments stand up and press for the amending of the present NPT and CTBT to the effect whereby (a) all N-weapons are eliminated within a prescribed period (say, 25 years), (b) all N-weapon states are to hand over the entire control of their respective N-armaments to the UN General Assembly immediately, and (c) the latter is to decide, corresponding to the changing international reality and without any interference from the Security Council, the entire future process of the N-weapon regime—finally leading to their total destruction within the prescribed period.

Evolution Of Agriculture In History

Concept Of Agriculture

1. Agri-Culture denotes both a science as well as an industry.

2. As a science, it signifies a theory that brings forth the knowledge of raising different types of crops from the soil, i.e., foodgrains, commercial crops, fruits, vegetables, etc.; developing agri-resources, like land, water, bio-diversity, forests; and fostering other agri-activities, such as animal husbandry, beekeeping, poultry, fishery, agro-forestry, agro-industry, etc.

3. As an industry, it indicates a system of production that, with its economic, financial, political and cultural dimensions, undertakes to grow and manage various agricultural products and organises all such pursuits concerned with cultivation.

Rise Of Agriculture

4. Agriculture arose some 10,000 years ago when a given set of circumstances created the possibility of the discovery of plant and animal domestication. At that time, Ice Age was coming to an end. The glaciers were in full retreat. The next few millenniums (a millennium denotes a period of 1000 years) were to see the continued extinctions of migratory Pleistocene fauna (animals of a given place or time) which had been the main food supply of the upper Palaeolithic (of the old stone age) hunters. New conditions had arisen for humankind's learning of exploiting the particular plant and animal resources.

5. The discovery of agriculture did not immediately lead to its predominance in human life. For the first five millenniums, pastoralism (i.e., domestication and rearing of animals) constituted the main way of human living. Because the elementary agriculture was not yet viable to meet human food requirements. The pre-10,000 year humans relied entirely on food gathering and hunting for food.

6. Agriculture became the predominant social system in the 5th-4th millenniums BC, when some increase in the human knowledge of agriculture made it more productive and conditions arose for the settling down of humankind near the sources of water. The total population of our planet at that time was about 10 million.

7. Both animal domestication and agriculture are still represented in varying degrees in different countries of the world.

8. Archaeological evidence indicates that the first use of cultivation was made by communities which had achieved some degree of sedentary life through intensive collection of jungle products. Judging from observations of the present day tribals, it is inferred that those early communities had attained certain degree of knowledge of wild plants and their properties.

9. Two early major centres of plant domestication have come to light existing around 6000 BC. One was South West Asia. That is, the region described as Fertile Crescent, extending from the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia through Syria and down the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean to the Nile Valley of Egypt. The other was in the two American continents. That is, the area from the Northern Mexico to the Northern South America.

10. Since its origin, agriculture, as an industry, has been bettered from time to time by improvements in agri-implements, inputs and a diversification of crops.

Radiocarbon dating techniques had shown that, in Mesopotamian plains, the earliest cultivated grains included the large grained emmer (i.e., *Triticum dicoccum* which is ancestral to all other species of cultivated wheat and a descendent of large grained wild wheat) and the small grained einkorn (the descendent of small grained wild wheat, *Triticum aegilopoides*). Soon the farming knowledge spread from one part of the world to another by the continuous migrations of herders and farmers. In the 4th-3rd millennium BC, we find the emergence of farming communities in Egypt, Iran, Indus Valley, China, parts of Europe, etc.

11. The emergence of agriculture in the two Americas has its own history. Archaeological evidence suggests that, in the Northeast region of Mexico, elementary cultivation arose about 6000 BC among people who relied mainly on game and food gathering. The earliest crops included the pumpkin, pepper and the bean. The corn appeared much later. An early variety of maize (a derivative of a wild form) emerged in about 3000 BC. The emergence and spread of farming communities (around 1500 BC) in this part of the world took over three thousand years.

12. The Mississippi Valley and the Peruvian Coast reflect an early diffusion of cultivated plants from the Mexico region. On the Peruvian Coast, a series of cultivated plants had appeared—squash, peppers, gourds, cotton, etc.—by 2200 BC. In the Northern Mississippi Valley, another group of plants—gourds, pumpkin, squash, goosefoot and sunflower—seemed to be cultivated before 1000 BC. In the forests of Amazon and Orinoco arose a tradition of cultivating tropical root crops—bitter manioc, sweet manioc and the yarn around 1000 BC .

13. The change from a food-gatherer to a hunter, next to a herder and then to a farmer, which embraced a period of one to two million years, represented a great historical change. Because, it heralded a fundamental transformation in human civilisation from its ancient to medieval stage. With it, food supply became more dependable and human existence more secure. Human physical labour became less rigorous as compared to the food gathering and hunting activities. This naturally pushed up the rate of human growth.

Development Of Agriculture

14. Early farming technology consisted of digging stick and hoe. Thereafter, it has been continuously bettered, both in relation to implements and crops, by human practical experience from time to time.

15. The plough is believed to have originated in the Mesopotamian region in the 4th century BC. The appearance of plough necessitated some system of land tenure and marked the development of a more diverse form of agriculture. Iron ploughshares made their appearance around 400 BC. The earlier horse driven plough gave rise to cross cultivation, resulting in a system of small squasish fields found throughout Europe during first four centuries AD. After some period, this tenurial system was replaced by the open field system of tenure which included the use of colter ploughs and strip cultivation. It was a cooperative system in which the land was worked in common with ploughs and land owned by individuals. In the middle ages, the land was owned by the king or his feudal lord or the church and the village community worked and lived under it and used to give 1/2 or 1/3 of its produce to the feudal lord.

16. For many centuries, agriculture held undisputed leadership among the world's industries, being surpassed only in very limited areas by such occupations as mining or commerce.

17. The industrial revolution of the 18th and the 19th centuries

(which resulted in the emergence of urban centres, the replacement of serf worker by the hired worker and consequently the increased demand for food) was followed by new changes in agricultural and population sectors.

18. In the agricultural domain, the open field tenure system was substituted by enclosed field tenure system, agriculture was turned into a commodity, linked to the market; and all vacant lands were brought under the plough. These changes led to more agricultural productivity, but, on the whole, the traditional farming remained predominant.

19. With more production and a less rigorous human labour, the human numbers grew at a rapid pace. Now, the traditional agriculture began to lag behind the growing food requirements of the swelling population. But the lag was made up by bringing more area under agriculture.

20. Historically, encroachment of forest and pasture land has provided a ready answer to the agricultural community in the past to increase food production. Over the last two hundred years, total cultivated land area has increased from 600 million hectare to 1,500 million hectare on a global basis. Even though estimates indicate that the cultivable land across the globe can be increased from the present 1,500 million hectare to about 2,100 million hectare through reclamation of degraded and wasteland, the possibility of addition to arable land in Asia including India is less than 10%.

It is however, interesting to note that on a global basis, only 8% increase in foodgrain production in the last 50 years, has been through expansion of cultivable area, the rest 92% coming from improved irrigation techniques and use of high yielding cultivars. Almost 46% of the global foodgrain production comes from irrigated area, which has increased from 80 million hectare in 1950 to 240 million hectare in 1993.

21. Obviously, the meagre chance of increasing food production by expanding farm acreage apprised everyone that future needs for agricultural production would have to be met out of the growth of science and technology than out of the expansion of land farming. Once again, human ingenuity and practical common sense enabled humankind to cross this hurdle. The customary farming was transformed into a new technological farming through high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers, toxic pesticides, increased irrigation facilities, etc. For 25 years, the green revolution brought about a period of uninterrupted growth but in 1990s, it has entered a period of stagnation.

Present-day Agriculture

22. Globally, the proportion of arable land was a little more than a quarter of the total land of the world. About 1/3rd of the arable land is devoted to crops. The remaining 2/3rd is used as pastures for livestock grazing. Crop yields vary from country to country.

23. The total world population today is estimated to be 6 billion of which less than 40% are engaged in agriculture. Nearly 99% of the human food supply comes from the land. This shows how important land and other natural resources—water, forests, bio-diversity, etc.—are for human existence.

24. The FAO-convened World Food Summit at Rome (November 1996) had committed to providing world food security and the right of all people to have access to safe and nutritious food. It had called for eradicating hunger the world over and reducing the number of hungry to half by the year 2015.

25. However, the "Food Outlook", released by the FAO in March 1998, has rung a warning bell on the declining world cereal stocks for the third consecutive year. It predicts unfavourable conditions in China, Pakistan and parts of Eastern Europe. It advocates that, while the overall conditions are satisfactory so far, they demand close monitoring. Because any deterioration in prospects. for 1998 crops could result in price rises, with serious consequences for food deficit countries.

26. Contrary to this, the Washington based World Watch Institute had cautioned that the FAO had been "overstating food production". It has contended that the global per capita grain production has actually been declining. According to it, the average annual global increase in food from 1950 to 1984 was 30 million tonnes which dropped to 12 million tonnes during 1984-1992. It has predicted that it would decline to 9 million tonnes between now and the year 2030 when the world population would rise to 8.9 billion.

27. Nearly one billion of the world population is too poor to procure food to sustain life. About 800 million people in the world go to bed hungry everyday. Starvation took a toll of half a million people in North Korea in 1997.

28. Thus, the problem of global hunger and under-nourishment has attained serious proportions. The number of malnourished persons in the world will, according to FAO, go up to 650 million which stood at 450 million in 1976.

State Of Indian Agriculture Today

I

Agriculture occupies an important place in Indian economy. It contributes 29.4% of India's G.D.P; makes food products available to the entire Indian population and provides livelihood for 65% of the Indian people (though many of those engaged in agricultural activities are not fully employed). It supplies raw materials, like cotton, jute, sugarcane, etc. for industrial use. Agro-industries, such as food and fruit processing are gaining, in importance, especially as export products. India's external trade also has a substantial agricultural component in the form of rice, cotton, textiles, tea, jute, cashew, tobacco, coffee, etc.

The traditional Indian agriculture had always striven for raising its productivity through area expansion. But the post-ecological crisis agriculture has shifted its direction to a three pronged objective—i.e., productivity, sustainability and equity.

II

India shares about 2.4% of the world's geographical area, but it has to support about 16% of the world's population and over 20% of the world's livestock. This shows that there is much disproportion in land and human/ animal ratio in India. But this is only one side of reality. The other side is that India has a very high percentage of arable land as compared to many bigger and developed countries.

For instance, the US, Canada, Australia and China are nearly three times the size of India and Russia is nearly six times larger, but they are behind India in the matter of arable land. China has about 100 million hectares (m ha) of arable land, Australia 46.3 m ha, Canada 45.8 m ha, Russia 130 m ha and the USA 180 m ha as against 166 m ha for India. India has a land size of only 329 m ha. Therefore, percent-wise, it has got the highest percentage of 50.5. India has got an edge in geographical location as well. With

so much sunlight year round, India can go in for double or even multiple cropping system.

III

Turning to the 50 year long agricultural process, one finds that the country has overcome the food shortages, witnessed in the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in the two serious food shortages in 1965-66 and 1966-67. It has enabled the country to increase its foodgrains production from 54.92 million tonnes in 1949 to about 194 million tonnes in 1997-98, with the per capita availability going up from 395 gram in 1951 to nearly 500 gram today. It has also ended the country's dependence on food imports. Apart from foodgrains, there has also been an increase in other food materials other than foodgrains—such as sugar, edible oils, milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, etc.

All this has been made possible by the Green Revolution (thanks to Noble Laureate Norman E Borlaug, the leading scientist in this revolution) whose new technologies enabled the farmers to remarkably increase their productivity in this country and the world. The quadrupling of India's agricultural production during the past 50 years (specifically between 1970 and 1997) shows the success story of the Green Revolution. The Indian Government's contribution was that it facilitated this process by providing irrigation facilities (increasing the irrigation capacity from 20 m ha in 1947. to 50 m ha; manufacturing and distribution of different kinds of agricultural inputs—like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural machinery, etc.; and ensuring minimum support prices for about 24 commodities.

But did this contribution (in providing irrigation facilities, inputs and minimum support prices) amount to an efficient and creative performance. A realistic view can be had by judging government's working on the basis of its three pronged objective, i.e., productivity, sustainability and equity.

IV

The issue of productivity in agriculture denotes the judicious management of its inputs, expressing itself in the growth of overall output as well an increase in every single product. Viewing the overall growth rate of the Indian agriculture, it can be seen that while India's agricultural process has grown by 2.1% between 1970-96, the corresponding figure for China had been 6%, for Malaysia 7%, for Thailand 4.6% and for Indonesia 3.7%.

India's rice yield per hectare, i.e., 2,576 Kg, has been the lowest in Asia, while the world average yield has been 3,581 Kg and China's 5,859 Kg. India's per hectare yield in maize stands at 1,474 Kg against the world average yield of 3,257 Kg per hectare. In sunflower, China's productivity is three times higher. While the per hectare yield of wheat in India is 2,420 Kg, it is 3,318 Kg in China. In cotton, the per hectare yield in India is 246 Kg, while in Australia, it is 1,510 Kg and in Israel 783 Kg.

In 1947-48, India's share in total world agricultural production was 11 percent but today it has declined to 9 percent.

Since 1990, a crisis is growing in agriculture. The agricultural growth rate has actually been falling behind the population growth. There had been 2% drop in this country's agricultural production in the year 1997-98. The foodgrains buffer stock has been declining year by year.

According to 1997 Economic Survey, the foodgrains production in the country in the 1990s grew at an average rate of 1.7% per annum less than the annual growth in population of 1.9%. It also noted similar stagnation in pulses and oil seeds.

According to figures released by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in 1997, the aggregate foodgrains production has increased by about 15 million tonnes during the 6 years since 1990-91, compared to 26 million tonnes in 5 years, prior to that. Moreover, while between 1980-81 and 1990-91, foodgrains production grew by 3.1% compound annually, the growth rate was even less than 1.4% between 1990-91 and 1996-97.

The Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) in its September 1998 forecast on the Indian Economy said the foodgrains production is likely to be around 193.95 million tonnes in 1998-99 compared to 194.09 million tonnes in 1997-98 and 199.32 million tonnes in 1996-97.

Looking, at the management process of the agricultural products, it can be seen that its mismanagement is causing a huge loss to the country.

The poor transport and storage facilities are resulting in a loss around 20% of foodgrains every year, amounting to Rs 50,000 crore. India today is world's largest producer of fruits and vegetables, yet its share in the Rs 28,000 crore global trade in processed food is no more then 1%, as about 40% of its produce worth Rs 23,000 crore is wasted away every year. Only 1.3% of the total fruits and vegetables produced in the country are processed as against 40% for some developing countries

and 70% in the developed countries.

In North-East India, there is ample production of pineapples which also offers an excellent opportunity for its processing but this becomes difficult because of the non-availability of effective transport system.

Further, the processed food industry in India has not yet been organised on modern scientific lines with integration from the production of raw materials to the marketing stage. Methods of production are by and large traditional and this affects the efficiency of production.

Market accessibility is also an equally important problem. Gaining of a competitive advantage demands on efficient processing chain, high quality demand led production and reduction in the number of market intermediaries.

A study done by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Mekinsey & Company shows how processing has reduced waste and improved yields through better farm practices in many countries. According to it, the experience of the rest of the world shows that food processing is one of the more profitable industries.

V

The question of sustainability refers to the conservation and the judicious management of natural resources, i.e., land, water, forests, bio-diversity, etc., essential-for crop and animal-human productivity.

As regards India's land resources, they spread over an area of 329 m ha, with a reporting area of 305 m ha. These are broadly classified into three uses.

(a) Agricultural sector, comprising net cultivated area, current fallows other {allows and cultivable wastes, forms about 180 m ha. In this sector, the net sown area of 143 m ha has remained constant for the last three decades.

(b) Ecological sector, consisting of forests, miscellaneous tree crops and groves, grazing and barren lands, equals about 102 m ha.

(c) Non-agricultural sector, including lands under non-agricultural pursuits, makes up 22 m ha.

Current estimates show that 60% of the cultivable land suffers from soil erosion, water-logging and salinity. Another 16 m ha is afflicted with ravines and rivulets. Such a massive land degradation shows the gravity of the problem.

Due to water and wind erosion, the country loses nearly 1,200

crore tonnes of top soil annually which has the capacity to produce about 50 million tonnes of foodgrains every year. Nearly 18 million hectares of land is water-logged and saline.

Compared with 60% of pasture lands in other parts of the world, India's 40% grazing lands have, with over 20% of the world's cattle, become overgrazed and barren. The population of 450 million heads of cattle, the largest anywhere in the world, far exceeds the carrying capacity of the country's natural resources. Also, there is no check on the diversion of prime farm land for non-farming uses. Wasteland and Watarshed development programmes designed to arrest soil degradation are yet to make widespread impact.

The problem of water is even more serious. From rainfall, India annually receives an equivalent of 400 m ha meters of water (one ha metres of water weighs approximately 100 tonnes). Of the 400 m ha meters of availability (or the average annual river flow) is 187 m ha metres. Of this, around 70 metres are available ground water. Thus barely 29% of the annual precipitation is utilisable, the rest running off to sea. Tapping just 20% of the annual precipitation in utilisable, the rest running off to sea. Tapping just 20% more of the rainfall will offer India 80 m ha metres of additional water.

Despite an estimated availability of 2,400 cubic meters of water per person per year, its procurement is uneven both among states and between seasons. There is acute shortage of water in certain states, like Rajasthan, Meghalaya, etc. Another disturbing feature is the massive shift of irrigation from surface water to ground water. The proportion of cultivated area irrigated by ground water has risen from about 1/3rd in 1965-66 to over 50% today. The water level is going down steadily. The most worrisome problem is that more and more water is getting polluted in many areas through the overuse of agricultural chemicals or the mixing up of effluents produced by the chemical factories.

The forests have been the worst sufferers during the past 50 years. Their size has been cut to half in this period. Still human and commercial pressures on them are growing. Although India is regarded as an area of rich bio-diversity, hot spots (containing valuable genes)—i.e., the Eastern Himalayan region and the Western Ghats—are present in our country.

Bio-diversity provides the basic feedstock for the bio-technology in 1994) necessitates the introduction of some form

of plant variety protection.

Thus it is by addressing to the problems of shrinking land, water, forests and plant genetic resources that India's agricultural policy can be made sustainable. The fact that the carrying capacity of our environmental factors is not unlimited should never be overlooked.

VI

The problem of equity in the agricultural sector implies the development of rural human resources on a fair basis. In general, it means the raising of the intellectual and the material living of the rural masses. In particular, it signifies the socio-economic development of the deprived and the weaker sections in the villages.

Over 12% of rural population is landless. Seventy-eight percent of the land holdings in India are below two hectares and about 2/3 rd of these are marginal holdings below one hectare. Over time, the proportion of such holdings and the area they operate are increasing. This means that more and more average and middle farms are becoming marginal. According to the distinguished agricultural economist, S.S. Johl, the family income on a marginal farm in Punjab is less than one month salary of a class IV employee in the state government service and that of a two hectare small farm is below the monthly salary of an assistant in the government service. Thus, the landless, marginal and small farmers constitute about 90% of the rural human resources. It is by addressing to the problems of this huge rural human resource that the Indian agriculture can be based on equity.

VII

We end our analysis of the "State of Indian Agriculture Today" by presenting the following two valuable opinions concerning Indian Agriculture.

(A)

One is the comment made by the eminent space scientist, U.R. Rao, in his 1996 Presidential Address to the 83rd Indian Science Congress, Patiala. It said: "Even though, thanks to the green revolution, the annual food production in India has increased from 55 million tons in 1947 to 180 million tons, the target reaching 220 million tons to meet the basic needs of over 1 billion people by the year 2000 is going to be formidable. Most

alarming is the fact that the foodgrain production seems to have almost reached a stagnant plateau...even though the population in the country continues to steadily increase, bringing back the spectre of millions dying out of naked starvation in the coming decades. While the dramatic increase in food production initiated by the Green Revolution was primarily large scale use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, high response, better cultivators and extensive irrigation, the negative repercussions of these very farming practices have resulted in rendering vast tracts of once fertile agricultural land into saline or alkaline deserts. Almost 40% of the highly fertile Indo-Gangetic plain, which was once the cradle of civilisation, suffers from intense salinity due to extensive water logging, large scale use of chemical fertilisers and inadequate drainage. Estimates indicate that about 100 million hectare of arable land out of a total of 160 million hectare in India has degraded, half of which is severely degraded and has become unproductive.

"Inspite of the Green Revolution, the agricultural productivity in India is one of the lowest at 1.6 tons/ hectare as against world's average of 2.6 tons/ hectare and over 5 tons/ hectare in the developed countries. The availability of meagre amount of land of 0.17 hectare per capita as against over one hectare in the developed countries, is being further fragmented with increasing population. In many parts of India, as is the case elsewhere in Africa and other Asian regions, shifting cultivation or Jhumming adopted in the ancient farming system, which was once considered as a farmer friendly practice has now become an ecological menace. The long fallow periods which were responsible for the restoration of soil fertility have got shortened from about 10 years to just about two years, due to the large pressure of population, resulting in degradation of over five million hectare of Zhum land beyond recuperation.

"...Management of water resources in India has been even more pathetic...Over exploitation of underground water without taking adequate care to recharge, has resulted in dipping into the static water table in most parts of our nation.

"...Intensive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides combined with poor management of watersheds has resulted in severe water stress, pesticide contamination of water and agricultural products in addition to unacceptable degradation over large areas. Water and soil erosion have affected almost 40% of our agriculturable lands.

"...About 40 million hectare or one-eighth of the country's geographical area come under the flood prone region, a fifth of which or 8 million by major floods every year, causing a loss of over 1,500 lives and damaging crops and property worth $300 million. In some years such as in 1988, the loss was estimated at $1,500 billion due to damage of over 10 million hectare of crop area which affected 60 million people and resulted in the loss of 6,000 lives. Recurrent droughts have added further to the misery of the vulnerable rural population in particular, typical example of which is the serious drought in 1987 which affected 285 million people in the country, damaging over almost 60 million hectare of crop area."

(B)

The eminent Indian agricultural scientist, M.S. Swaminathan, had made the following comments in "the Hindu survey of Indian Agriculture 1996".

"India's population is growing at a rate of 1.8% a year. If this trend continues, the population will double itself in less than 40 years...Besides population increase, improved purchasing power among the poor will enhance the demand for food, since under-nutrition and poverty go together.

"In contrast, per capita availability of arable land is shrinking. Water use efficiency is still, on the whole, low. In addition to the gradual decline in per capita availability of land and water, various forms of biotic and abiotic stresses are spreading.

"...foreign experts frequently refer to the setting in of a fatigue at the current rate of population growth and environmental degradation, coupled with an improvement in the consumption capacity of the poor, India will have to import annually 40 million tons of foodgrains by the year 2030. This is 4 times the quantity it imported in 1966, that is before the onset of the green revolution. India should examine this issue seriously and should not allow complacency overtake the farm sector.

"...the failure to achieve agricultural intensification and diversification in India will be socially disastrous. This is because agriculture... provides livelihoods to over 70% of the population... Thus what is needed now in an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable green revolution or what may be termed as ever-green revolution."

In the 1995 *Hindu Survey of Indian Agriculture*, M.S. Swaminathan had commented as below: "...there is no time to

relax on the food front...The population will soon exceed 100 crores. The per capita land and water availability is going down. The area under forests is dwindling, with a coincident loss of bio-diversity. The efficiency of on-farm water management is still low and in many areas the ground water is facing exploitation in an unsustainable manner. Biotic and a-biotic stresses are expanding and prime farm land is being diverted all the time for non-farm uses.

"...socio-economic compulsions make it clear that it is imperative to produce from the farm sector not only more food but also more income and livelihood opportunities...crop-livestock, crop-fish, agro-forestry and other forms of integrated farming systems can help to provide both additional channels of household income and opportunities for value addition. Intensive farming will help to optimise returns from the available land, water, labour and capital resources...This is why the accent should be on the intensive farming systems (IFS), rooted in the principles of ecology, equity and economics."

What Has Gone Wrong With Indian Agriculture

I

Given the 50 year long practice of Indian Agriculture and the facts of its present state of affairs, it can be seen that its productivity lags far behind the international and the developing countries averages. Even the below-average growth achieved by it has been at a tremendous cost, damaging the health of all our natural resources, including humankind. Computed in economic-cum-financial terms, this annual loss amounts to more than our total yearly food production. In terms of equity, it has furthered the gap between the rich and the poor. True, it has achieved food security in case of demand, yet lack of availability security still forces 40% of helpless people go to bed with half empty stomachs.

II

The underlying reasons for our below average and costly performance rest with our faulty basic agricultural assumptions and agricultural policy.

The first basic misconception was the theory, projected both by Marxism and Western Liberalism, that agriculture represented a backward or secondary pursuit, with industry occupying the top position.

Proceeding from the first flawed assumption, the second misconception was that agriculture was made as an adjunct to industry and thus accorded a low place in the order of priorities.

The third misconception consisted of two partial and one-sided views. Free Marketism held that rich farmer based technology was the only panacea for agriculture, while Marxism maintained that agriculture labour centred land reforms formed the be-all and end-all of agricultural progress.

The fourth misconception stated that agriculture cannot contribute much to raising incomes, hence the industry must be developed by imposing financial burdens on agriculture.

The fifth misconception was that the rural poor should move to urban areas to provide labour to growing industry.

The sixth misconception was that agriculture was inherently slow moving and does not respond much to incentives.

The seventh misconception was that small farmers were backward and un-enterprising.

In the policy domain, the major defect lay in the ambivalent attitude adopted by different post-1947 Indian regimes which, while proclaiming "Jai Kisan" slogans, did not adopt an approved national agricultural policy, having parliamentary sanction. One official agricultural policy draft was followed by another and sometimes even discussed in both houses of Parliament but the matter always remained inconclusive. Hence the agricultural agenda and its priorities generally remained confined to the fancies and whims of the changing Planning Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture. The basis of such an ambiguous policy resided in India's centralised system and its power hungry and corrupt politics.

Subsequent global and various national experiences showed that all the above assumptions were baseless, that agriculture can be a major source of growth and that in developing agriculture, both technology and farmers make their contribution hand in hand.

III

The short-term reasons for India's poor agricultural performance may be classified into three categories: constraints on productivity, constraints on sustainability and those on equity.

(A) Constraints On Productivity

A major constraint on agricultural productivity has been the growing unviability of the farming enterprise in India for some time. Sixty-three percent area in the country has been dryland area. Here, the returns from agriculture has not been an attractive option. In the remaining 37% of "green revolution" areas, 78% of operational holdings in 1991 were below two hectares of land. The shrinking share of land for agriculture, continuously increasing population pressure, declining per capita availability of arable land, farmer family divisions and the diminishing size of

land holdings are making majority of land holdings unprofitable. The unprofitability of small land holdings and the increasing spread of industries taking over fertile and cultivated tracts is driving some two million marginal farmers every year from subsistence farming to landlessness. The landless labour, forming 15% of the rural population, is already a pitiable lot.

Further, the fast growth in agriculture has been accompanied by an almost equal rate of increase in the expenditure on inputs. During 1975-76 and 1996-97, the expenditure on the cultivation of wheat has gone up by more than 6 times, on the cultivation of cotton by more than 7 times and on the cultivation of paddy more than 10 times. Now, the input expenditure is outpacing the income from farm output. This is leading to agricultural indebtedness. The debt burden coupled with excessive expenditure on conspicuous consumption has been resulting in suicides by farmers.

Relatively lack of skill and efficiency in resource and input use as expressed by India's low average yields of crops compared to international and the developing countries' averages also acts as a hindrance.

Poor infrastructural facilities, like power, transport, storage, cause perhaps the highest post-harvest losses in India the world over. Despite the setting up of the central and the state warehousing corporations, the warehousing facilities are quite insufficient in the rural areas.

Even the inadequate public and private investments in agriculture have been continuously going down since 1980s.

Inadequate credit facilities act as a roadblock to agricultural development. About 65% of loans come from the moneylenders at exorbitant, 30-50%, interest rates. Public service banks had a target to give 18% of their total lending money to the rural sector but allocated only 12 percent. The number of agricultural cooperative marketing societies is too insufficient to attend to this problem. Financial constraints prevent the small and marginal farmers from adopting modern methods of cultivation and increase production, on the one hand, and force the farmers, particularly the tenants, share-croppers and the marginal farmers, to sell their produce immediately after the crop harvesting at low prices instead of waiting for better times and prices, on the other.

Inadequate crop insurance services do not ensure any security against the uncertainties of agriculture as a gamble.

Declining share of agriculture and allied products in India's aggregate exports which accounted for 20.5% of the total Indian exports in 1996-97 fell to 18.83% in 1997-98 and is likely to fall in 1998-99.

Lack of effective research in Indian Agriculture—where only 0.3% of the total cost of the country's annual agricultural production is spent on it as compared to 2% in the developed countries—is a big lacking in increasing productivity.

Lack of information about modern farming techniques, new technological discoveries and market prices, despite electronic media's regular broadcasts in this respect, deprives the farmer of their beneficial use.

Certain defects of the agricultural marketing system (including both the regulated and the unregulated markets), despite many improvements due to the establishment of the Centre for Agricultural Marketing and a Market Planning and Design Centre, still continue to operate. These are (i) lack of grading and standardisation due to the selling in common lots of the heaps of all qualities of produce. Under this practice (known as dara sales), there is no incentive for those producing better varieties. The central quality control laboratory at Nagpur and the 8 regional subsidiary quality control laboratories analyse only the samples of produce sent to them, (ii) malpractices, like high interest rates, low prices, sub-standard weights and measures still remain operative, cheating the farmer, (iii) presence of a number of middlemen reduces the share of farmers and (iv) credit, transport and storage needs, as mentioned above, greatly hamper the agricultural process.

(B) Constraints On Sustainability

A major challenge to agricultural sustainability in the high yielding areas has come from the overuse of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides which have, while providing very high growth rate, caused a degree of land degradation and decrease in water availability by depleting the soil's organic matter. That is why the use of these inputs has doubled or in some cases trebled now as compared to their beginnings.

Next, the paddy-wheat rotation cropping system that forms the basis of centre's food security policy has since been causing a major sustainability crisis in the high yielding areas. It has already resulted in the over-stressing of the natural resources—land and water—of these areas and declined the productivity and

profitability of their farmers.

Acute degradation stress of land and water resources acts as a strong drag on agricultural productivity.

Inadequate irrigation facilities covering only 37% of the sown area and dependence of about 63% of the net sown area on rainfall is another constraint.

(C) Constraints On Equity

A big hurdle on the way to agricultural equity, i.e., the development of rural human resources on a fair basis, has been the prevalence of a discouraging rural atmosphere due to lack of education, poverty, ignorance, superstition, conservative and outmoded customs and institutions tying down the majority of farmers with the traditional agriculture and subsistence farming. Another has been the low agricultural productivity and growth rate. Then there had been an ineffective land reforms. A big obstacle is the continuous miserable condition of the agricultural labour, the most deprived lot in the country. The excessive pressure of population on land has resulted in low wages for agricultural labour. The latter on its part is unable to opt out in favour of something else due to lack of profitability in any other field. The lack of profitability of the marginal and small farmers' land units forces them, due to lack of institutional credit facilities, to go to the money lenders and become victims of usurious capital.

What Indian Agriculture Demands Today

I. General Perspective

The last few decades have brought forth new agricultural experience, both international and national. It shows that agriculture can not be run on the basis of two traditional assumptions, i.e., (a) considering natural resources as limitless objects meant for unending human exploitation, and (b) viewing the ordinary peasants as nobodies, a worthless lot.

These flawed assumptions need to be recast on a realistic basis. That is, firstly, both the natural resources and the human resources are, in terms of Nature, interlinked and inter-dependent and the one cannot develop without an interaction with the other. This interaction forms one aspect of human society. And secondly, the common masses, in terms of human society, are the basic producers of every social phenomenon which is then processed, fine-tuned and given finishing touches by various categories of experts and specialists. Both these social categories are interdependent and cannot develop without interaction with each other. This forms the other aspect of human society.

These two aspects of human society demand that, in order to carry forward its development process, the former needs to harmonise the interests of the aforementioned three forces, i.e., the natural resources, common masses and the expert and specialist groups. And the international community has now accepted that this purpose can be achieved by firmly striving for the fulfilment of a three-sided objective—i.e., productivity, sustainability and equity. While productivity serves the interests of the entire human community (including both the common masses as well as the specialists), sustainability protects the interests of both the natural resources and the human community

and equity harmonises the interests of the common masses and the specialists (thus establishing the basis of a fair human society). Naturally, this objective becomes our general perspective in responding to all the constraints on the Indian agricultural process and its restructuring.

II. For Enhancing Productivity

Productivity improvement needs three techniques—effective management of the agricultural process, expansion of cultivable area and technological development.

(A) Effective Management

This requires a proper response to all the constraints on productivity, i.e., (i) those on the agrarian structure, (ii) on the resource and input use, (iii) marketing and financial factors.

(i) Agrarian Structure

The first and the foremost constraint on the agrarian structure is the fragmentation of land holdings which have been becoming non-viable, both economically and financially. Given our above-said three-sided objective, it is necessary for us to solve it in a way that, on the one hand, makes our landholdings viable units (capable of using all modern means of production), and, on the other, safeguards the interests of the marginal and small farmers. This should, in our view, be achieved by preparing the marginal and small farmers (with units less than 4 acres) in different regions to restructure themselves into three broad types of agrarian sub-structures.

(a) Private farms with the productive capacity of 10 acres of irrigated, 2-crop land, varying according to the quality of land in different regions, may be formed by farmers having lands adjacent to one another; or even by one small or marginal farmer having his 10 acre unit formed by securing the land on contract or lease basis from the small and marginal farmers. Such farms be given special farm subsidies on inputs used and investments made and low interest loans against mortgage of land as collateral. These units should be knitted into genuine marketing cooperatives to reduce their marketing cost and increase marketing gains.

(b) Cooperative farms with the productive capacity of 100 acres of irrigated 2-crop land varying according to the quality of land in different regions may be formed by small and marginal

farmers with adjoining lands. Such farms should engage themselves both in the farming as well as marketing operations. It should be legally laid down that no farmer with a unit larger than 4-acre size would be allowed to become its member for enjoying institutional benefits. Experience shows that rich farmers often become dominant in these bodies and exploit them for their advantage. The labour will mainly be provided by the members on hired basis. Outside labour will be employed only in special cases. Cooperative farming should be based on a new law which makes it a peoples based movement and totally stops all sorts of bureaucratic interference.

(c) Contract cultivation should be promoted by the central and the state governments. By contract cultivation is meant cultivation of a specific crop by the small and marginal farmers under a contract with an industrialist (who needs a given raw material for his industry) or an exporter (who wants special quality agricultural commodities for exports) or an agro-industrial unit working in their vicinity (requiring particular agricultural products for processing). This arrangement, on the one hand, ensures the ownership and the control of small and marginal farmers over their lands, and, on the other, enables them to become nearly viable.

The underlying idea of contract cultivation is the integration of the factors of laboratory, factory, land and market. The objective is to arrange production of a given product in adequate quantities. Farmers are identified in compact blocks, assigned contracts for areas and quantities at an agreed price and served for crucial inputs, like seed or nursery. The contract cultivation suits most to the cooperative farms and the 10-acre, irrigated farms, formed by the small and marginal farmers. The contract cultivation can be operational in all crops, including medicinal plants, bio-diversity, agro-forestry and conservation. There are many areas where private and public sector industry can develop it. Already sugarcane and tobacco industries in India are engaged in contract cultivation. China, Thailand and many other countries have developed industry-agriculture linkages in many of their regions. New Delhi should also try to learn from this experience and avail of it according to our own conditions.

(d) As regards the rich and middle farm holdings, their owners should be allowed to continue with their farming operations in the usual manner.

(e) As regards the agricultural workers, their miserable conditions demand the taking of certain ameliorative measures

to improve their lot. These are:

Fixation of minimum wages and its strict implementation; Resettlement of those landless who had earlier got lands under land reforms, Bhoodan, Gramdan, etc., but not settled yet; Vacant lands not earmarked for any public purpose should be allotted to the remaining landless; Social security of drinking water, education and health services; Implementation of a rural house site-cum-house construction scheme; Each agricultural worker to be ensured for Rs 30,000, with equal contribution from the concerned State and the Centre; and Old age pension scheme for agricultural workers.

As for the four international experiences of agrarian restructuring—i.e., the former Soviet or the Communist countries' model of collectivisation, the government centred cooperative farming in certain countries, the US large-scale capitalist farming and the newly emerging corporate farming—they are not worth modelling. Because they are contradictory to the present three-sided global agricultural objective of productivity, sustainability and equity. Firstly, none of them stands for a sustainable agriculture. Secondly, while the Soviet model emphasises equity, it shuns productivity; the bureaucratic cooperative model is riddled with corruption; and the US and corporate farming only stress productivity without caring for equity.

(ii) Resource-Input Use

To prevent the deterioration in soil health and depletion of underground water—arising from the overuse of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides—by, as per the opinion of Indian agricultural experts, supplementing the inorganic inputs with 1/3rd of organic manure (green or farm-yard) or bio-fertilisers.

To stop the decreasing agricultural productivity, over stressing of land and overuse of water—an effect, according to specialist thinking, of paddy-wheat rotation cropping pattern—by adopting the method of diversification of crops. At least 30% of the area now under paddy-wheat rotation cropping should be replaced by other profitable alternative crops—fruits, vegetables, agro-forestry, etc.

To increase agricultural productivity by a better management of resource-input use. About 25% more value be added to our total annual agricultural income by stopping the post-harvest losses from the waste of foodgrains, fruits and vegetables through better management.

To treat agriculture at par with industry.

To complete the unfinished work of land reforms and remove its old shortcomings.

To set up statewide special service whose task will be to provide regular, timely and proper information to the farmers in each village about the appropriate use of new technologies, inputs and other relevant agricultural changes. Every agricultural input dealer should be legally bound to supply detailed written information about the use of these inputs.

To accelerate total factor productivity while conserving natural resources.

To spread productivity growth to coarse grains, pulses and seeds.

To effectively utilise all resources and factors of production.

To increase overall and crop wise productivity of per unit of land, water and livestock and bring them at par with the prevailing international standards.

To develop agriculture in dryland, rainfed areas.

To develop agro-forestry, i.e., growing crops in combination with forestry trees. This assures short as well as long term returns to the cultivator.

To diversify the cropping system for improving the soil's health, proper use of water and employment-cum-income growth.

To complete pending irrigation works within a 10 year deadline.

To recycle waste material under an effective waste management system.

To enact a law to protect farmers' traditional rights to save, use, exchange, share and sell the produce of protected varieties but not to sell branded seeds for commercial purposes.

(iii) Marketing And Financial Factors

To give industry status to agriculture.

To provide adequate fund for developing infrastructure by improving transport network and upgrading storage and handling facilities for foodgrains, fruits and vegetables within a prescribed time to minimise post-harvest losses.

To remove unnecessary control and regulations and ensure free movement of agricultural products within the country. To accord priority in investment and extend other assistance to agriculture and restructure the rural credit system to double the flow of credit to agriculture and agro-industries, especially the small and marginal farmers. To increase the bank credit and investment in

agriculture to 30% of their total credit and investment.

To ensure an effective, countrywide crop insurance scheme that is based on accurate estimates of risk for each crop. In case of high premiums, the small and middle farmers will not be able to afford these premiums.

To ensure a stabilised agricultural pricing policy.

To develop agro-processing industries for value addition to agricultural produce in and around villages. This would help ease the farmers' transport, storage, demand and employment problems and bring prosperity to the rural areas.

(B) Expansion Of Cultivable Area

There is very little possibility of the addition of any new arable land to the available area. But 166 m ha of waste and degraded land can be made cultivable if appropriate steps are taken in this regard. Increasing agricultural demands can be met by increased growth.

(C) Technological Development

To raise the allocation to R&D in agriculture from the 0.3% to one percent.

To make new research on conservation and management of eco-systems.

To develop eco-friendly, location specific, low input use, cost effective and individual level technologies.

To develop new technologies for dry lands.

To develop new hybrid varieties of foodgrains, fruits and vegetables.

To develop new processing technologies.

To develop new technologies for bio-fertilisers.

To connect India's research institutions to international networks.

To intensify agricultural research, especially in new plant varieties, by attracting public and private funding.

To produce manure from urban wastes through conversion plants.

To get low cost power from agricultural residues, e.g., paddy husk.

To use cloning technology to develop trees and forests.

III. For Attaining Sustainability

To make grey areas green by planting trees; increase forest cover.

To launch projects for the reclamation of the maximum of

waste and degraded land.

To develop scientific conjunctive use systems in the use of water, involving river, rain, ground, sewage and sea waters.

To exercise effective management of natural resources.

To put the thrust on the use of sustainable technologies.

To promote integrated technology with regard to water, pest and nutrient managements. This would help step up production with increased efficiency and save energy—thus lowering the cost of production.

To tap the maximum Indian irrigation potential (estimated to be 114 m ha), especially in dryland areas by harvesting rainwater.

To initiate measures for conservation of top soil, water, forest and other natural resources for improved agricultural productivity, environmental protection and preservation of biodiversity.

To introduce and pursue in every district of the country sustained land-use system, based on the following points:

(a) Sustainable intensification: prime lands can be subjected to intensive farming (at present 136 for the country as a whole) provided there is proper attention to the soil's health.

(b) Restoration areas: degraded lands can be restored to good health through appropriate waste-land development enterprises.

(c) Conservation areas: forest or other areas rich in biodiversity should be maintained for their pristine purity.

To adopt sustainable land and water use policies and procedures as one of the principal goals of the grassroots level organisations in villages and towns.

To organise an effective, accessible agricultural District Research Information Centre linked to all villages.

To spread and disseminate knowledge of new technologies and inputs in the relatively backward regions of the country.

To initiate sustainable integrated development strategies at the micro-level of watersheds.

IV. For Ensuring Equity

To develop agriculture on a productive, sustainable and equitable basis, the most important task is to develop the rural human resources. Because, it is people, and people alone, who, by using the factors and inputs of agricultural production, carry its process forward. Once the people are awakened and involved in any process, miraculous results can be achieved. To develop the rural human resources, it is necessary to fulfil the following tasks.

(i) To improve the quality of education, health services and

infrastructure in rural areas.

(ii) To develop the knowledge and skill of the rural masses.

(iii) To better the living conditions of the agricultural workers and the marginal farmers.

(iv) To provide subsidised inputs and cheap credit to the small farmers.

(v) To ensure a stable price policy, free national market, long-term credit, export facilities, etc., to the middle and rich farmers.

(vi) To authorise the village elected committees to supervise the proper utilisation of funds earmarked and spent on their village development under various schemes—IRDP, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Indira Awas Yojana, etc.

(vii) To fully democratise the cooperative movement by amending its bureaucratic law and changing the department's bureaucratic policy.

(viii) To make women co-owners of their husband's belongings, including land, and give them 50% reservation in all elective bodies.

(ix) To make every Panchayat (i.e., all of its members) accountable to its electors by placing a legal obligation on it to visit each one of its constituencies after every 6 months (i.e., twice a year) and present its 6 monthly record before the electors general meeting for the latter's discussion and remarks.

India's 'Green Revolution' Agriculture In A Bind; Punjab Faces A Serious Agricultural Crisis

I

As of today, the state of Punjab covers 0.0003% of the geographical area of the world, but has a global share of 2.27% of wheat, 2.04% of rice and 2.05% of cotton. At the national level, it comprises merely 1.5% of the country's total geographical area, but is contributing nearly 9% of the total national agricultural production, producing 21% of wheat, 9% of rice and 15% of cotton of total produce under these crops in the country. It has been contributing 50% of rice and 70% of wheat to central pool for the last two decades.

On its own, Punjab occupies an area of 5.03 million hectare (m ha). Of this, 4.21 m ha are under crops. Thus over 84% of the area is cropped. Intensity of cropping has increased from 117 in 1947- 48 to 183 percent today. Some 94% of the cultivated area is irrigated against 53% in 1950-51. Thus, extensive crop cultivation mainly with paddy-wheat in rotation, widespread irrigation and intensive use of chemical inputs (insecticides, pesticides, fertilisers, etc.) characterises the Punjab agriculture.

During the past 50 years, the foodgrains production in Punjab has increased from 2 million tonnes (m t) to 21.8 m t (1996-97)—i.e., an eleven-fold increase. Agriculture contributes 44% to the GDP of the Punjab state.

The number of cultivators had gone up from 1,602,000 in 1960-61 to 1,992,000 in 1995-96. The number of agricultural labourers had shot up by about 5 times during this period. The total number of persons engaged in Punjab agriculture was almost doubled in 1995-96 (*Tribune*, 26.11.1997, P3).

The major breakthrough in agricultural production was achieved

in the year 1965-66 when high-yielding Mexican varieties of wheat were for the first time introduced in the state. Another big advance came in mid-1970s when, with the introduction of dwarf varieties of paddy, the production of rice increased manifold.

II

After an exemplary rise in production, Punjab agriculture today is confronted with some very very serious problems. Its productivity of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, maize, etc., is declining. Its environmental factors of production—soil, water, forests, bio-diversity, etc.—are getting overstrained. Its rural economy is becoming more and more inequitable. There is no scope for expansion of the area under cultivation. Most of the crop land has come under plough. The cropping intensity has risen to a very high level. The consumption of the major agricultural inputs is much above the national level—165 Kg. In view of the growing population, the fragmentation of land holdings has made agriculture uneconomic for the marginal and small farmers. The increase in the price of inputs and labour wages has pushed the cost of production up. Data available from 1975-76 to 1996-97 shows that the cost of cultivation of wheat is up 6 times, cotton 7 times and paddy as much as 10 times (*Tribune*, 6.8.1998, P9). The growing cost of farming has led to increased indebtedness among the agricultural community. The total agricultural debt calculated for Punjab stands at Rs 5,700 crore. The annual interest burden of debt has been worked out at Rs 1,103 crore, i.e., about 11% of the net value of crop production. The developing unviability of the Punjab agriculture has resulted in a number of farmer suicides. All this is obvious to a keen observer of Punjab agricultural scene.

III

To understand the gravity of the problem, three recently published specialist reports, highlighting the actual state of Punjab agriculture, are worth mentioning. One is the report authored, after interaction with the concerned scientists, politicians and bureaucrats, by a three member central team appointed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture to make an indepth analysis of the problems and their remedies of Punjab and Haryana agriculture. The second is a study of Punjab agriculture made by two professors of Punjab Agricultural University. The third report is an analysis of the state of Punjab finances brought out by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi.

A

The first Report (1998) brought out by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has expressed concern over declining production and productivity, equity, environmental degradation, sustainability of natural resources, etc. It calls it a matter of national anxiety because any decline in Punjab and Haryana agriculture—both of which contribute 85% wheat and 60% rice to the central foodgrains buffer stock and which enjoy a highly favourable climate, network of canal system, abundant ground water, marketing infrastructure, human spirit, adventure and hard work—means a 'threat' to the national economy and food security. It is Punjab and Haryana agriculture which has kept the national public distribution system functional. The process still goes on, but it has suffered both qualitatively and quantitatively.

After examining trends of major crops, i.e., production, per unit productivity, irrigation, plant protection, etc, the Committee has concluded that much of the problems arise due to mono-culture, wheat-paddy rotation and poor soil health. Expressing a guarded optimism, the Report has suggested the preparation of a perspective plan, called "Haryana and Puniab Vision, 2020".

The Committee has suggested a comprehensive "environment protection programme," based on the integration of research with farmers' needs. There has to be a "single window" for quality supply of requisite farm inputs at the block or the primary level. An incentive package on checking environmental degradation should also be prepared.

The deteriorating soil health is considered a major factor in decline in production in Punjab and Haryana.

It stresses the need to breed high yielding varieties and to raise per unit productivity to increasing foodgrain production, as well as fruit, vegetable, poultry and dairy production to sustain rising population, decreasing agricultural land and urbanisation. It adds an element of commercialisation to agriculture by shifting to agro-industry and value addition.

B

The other study (1998) mentions three points concerning the decline in Punjab agriculture, (a) slowing down of the per capita real income growth rate, (b) decline in the agricultural growth rate and (c) going down of the per acre real income from the paddy, wheat and sugarcane products. Specifying its above points, it says that, during 1993-94, the per capita real income was

Rs 4,022 per annum which rose to Rs 4,371 in 1996-97, showing a growth of 8.66% against a comparative figure of 17.64% for the country as a whole. The average annual growth rate in agriculture, including livestock, has declined from 5.44% in the 6th plan to 3% in the 8th plan which is projected to fall further to 2.38% in the 9th plan. The per acre real income base 1981-82 from paddy-wheat rotation has, at the recommended level of technology, gone down from Rs 3,410 in 1981-82 to Rs 3,186 in 1997-98. The comparative figures in case of sugarcane have shown a decline from Rs 4,150 to Rs 2,199.

The study notes that as a consequence of decline in profitability in agriculture, the rental value of land has gone down, causing further decline in income. With decrease in incomes and growing inflation, the farmers have to either dispose their assets or take on debts. Due to the inadequacy of the institutional credit, the farmers have to negotiate debts with the commission agents at high interest rates.

Listing the reasons for the deterioration in agriculture, the study remarks that, despite the increase in the prices of agricultural products, the input prices are also going up at the same speed. Crop productivity, on the other hand, has stabilised, resulting in slower increase in returns.

The over-investment in fixed capital, particularly farm machinery (the number of tractors going up from1,25,000 in 1980-81 to 3,50,000 in 1995-96), has escalated the cost of production. It also lists the low literacy rate in the rural areas and the decline in the size of operational holdings in Punjab (with nearly 45% of farms having less than 2 acres) as the causes of poor economic conditions. Uncertain weather, declining water table and water logging in the cotton belt has aggravated the situation.

Suggesting remedies, the study recommends more subsidies on farm implements (like sprayers, seed drills, matching implements of tractor, fertilisers and pesticides), supports free supply of electric power and demands quality inputs in time. it advocates the increasing of farm size through various measures. One such measure is the liberalising of the land-lease market in which the small farmers could, under a law, lease out their land without any risk of losing it forever and seek alternative employment opportunities. It also recommends the creation of non-farm employment through rural industries, allowing Punjab farmers to move to other states and purchase marginal land for improvement, regularisation of labour from other states, better

coordination between farmers and credit institutions. It urges the govt to seek royalty on wheat and rice supplied by Punjab to the national pool in lieu of high drain on natural resources, like underground water, soil fertility, etc.

C

The third Report (1998), brought out by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, says, that, notwithstanding all tall claims, Punjab today faces an economic threat.

The main aspects of this threat, according to the Report, are: slowdown in the infrastructural investment, reliance on capital outlay to carry the overwhelming burden of fiscal adjustment, increasing inefficiency in water-use and an unviable power sector, degrading soil, high dropout rates at all levels of primary education, etc. The issues are serious enough to cause concern, despite Punjab being the third most prosperous state with a per capita income of Rs 14,188 at 1994-95 prices, about the future growth and development prospects in this state.

The most worrying issue of the state economy is a drop, in growth to below the national rates starting in the mid 1980s and the rash of populist fiscal measures introduced by an outgoing government, which were not reversed, but, on the contrary, reinforced by the successor government. The Report warns that unless bold initiative is taken to introduce reforms—institutional and sectoral—and financial policies tailored to generate resources, the state economy will continue to nosedive.

IV

From the foregoing account, it can be seen that Punjab is facing a serious agricultural crisis. The central feature of this crisis is that agriculture is no longer a remunerative profession in the state. The other notable productive features of this crisis are: the agricultural productivity is falling, while the cost of inputs is constantly rising; the overall and the per capita agricultural growth rates are far less than the national averages; there is a declining trend in cotton, sugarcane and maize, while wheat and rice are stagnating; per acre real income (base 1981-82) from paddy-wheat rotation cropping has gone down; Punjab rice has lost its earlier attraction in the country, due mainly to lack of quality norms of the procured paddy; Punjab farmer remains entangled in the paddy-wheat rotation because he sees no way out; indebtedness is fastly growing, leading to suicides.

The environmental dimension of the crisis is equally serious due to the decaying of natural resources. Soil is sick; water resources are declining, salinity and water-logging are on the rise; water, both surface and underground, is getting polluted due to industrial effluents, such as nitrates, sulphates and chlorides, becoming unfit for human consumption. The forest cover (mainly concentrated in Shivalik Hills) is shrinking. It forms only over 3% of the state's geographical area although it should at least be 20% of its land size. Even 10% tree cover constitutes an unhealthy environment.

The agrarian extent of the crisis is also visible. The rental value of land has, due to fall in agricultural profitability, gone down. The increasing size of the family is getting the landholdings divided.

The human related aspect of the crisis is no less serious. Human numbers are growing; poverty is increasing; unemployment is on the rise: education (especially at the primary level), health-care and infrastructure are in a bad shape; a discouraging atmosphere prevails in rural areas due to lack of education, poverty, unemployment, ignorance, superstition, etc.; the condition of the agricultural workers and the marginal and small farmers is getting worse.

The overall economic reflection of the crisis is very alarming. The general development of the state has slowed down; there is decline in average annual growth rate; the state economy is imbalanced, with agriculture dominating its GDP, without adding anything to its kitty; no big central project worth-citing exists in Punjab in comparison to other states; centre's assistance to Punjab is the lowest in the country; no major private investment has come to Punjab from any part of India; much of the industrial backwardness may be attributed to under-finance, sickness in SSI units is also spreading due to exorbitant bank interest rates; sugar industry (with 20 working mills) is in a mess.

V

How come the same green revolution—which some two decades ago made Punjab the grain house of India and brought prosperity to its people with the highest per capita income in the country—is today showing signs of decay? The main reason seems to be the worsening health of the soil followed by the diminishing size of the land holdings; the overuse of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides; paddy-wheat rotation cropping system; the increasing expenditure on inputs; lack of skill and efficiency in resource and input-use; poor infrastructural

facilities (like power, transport, storage, etc.); inadequate credit facilities; high interest rates by money lenders; inadequate crop insurance services; negligible share in India's aggregate exports; lack of farmer needed research; lack of information about modern farming techniques and new technological discoveries and market prices to the farmers; shortcomings in the agricultural marketing system; lack of education, poverty, unemployment, outmoded customs and traditions in the rural areas; etc.

However, a major responsibility for Punjab agricultural crisis also rests with the central and the state governments. The centre's responsibility consists in the fact that, having been a miserable failure to increase the national growth rate at agricultural production, it sought the shortcut of meeting its toed butter stock needs by placing excessive burden on Punjab and Haryana agricultures through various price and market inducements. Although it was from the early 1980s, becoming clear that a grave agricultural crisis has been erupting in Punjab and that it had, according to government's own agricultural experts, been an effect of the paddy-wheat rotation cropping system, the centre covered up this emerging serious threat from the public in Punjab and continued to exploit Punjab agriculture for its partisan exigencies. Even today it remains on the same track and does not persuade the Punjabis to replace the paddy-wheat rotation cropping method by a more profitable and appropriate way of crop diversification. The state government is responsible in the manner that it did neither inform the Punjabis about the seriousness of the danger nor prepared any action plan to combat this challenge and nor asked the centre to undertake timely and appropriate measures to save Punjab agriculture and its farmers from this catastrophe.

VI

Now, the question facing the Indian people in general and the Punjabis in particular is how the things be set right. In its broader context, the same problem has, in varying degrees, been facing the people of the entire "green revolution" areas, mainly comprising Haryana, Western UP and Ganganagar district in Rajasthan. The world experience as well as our own teaches that, while responding to the reasons underlying this crisis, Punjab should restructure its agriculture on a sustainable, productive and equitable basis, with relevant economic changes, transforming its imbalanced, un-maintainable and inequitable economy into a balanced, maintainable and equitable economy.

(A) For Restoring Soil Health & Water Safety

For Attaining Sustainability

To prevent the deterioration in soil's health and depletion of underground water—arising from the overuse of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides—by, as per the opinion of Indian agricultural experts, substituting 1/3rd of the inorganic inputs by the organic manure (green or farm yard) or bio-fertilisers. This is the strategic task in developing Punjab agriculture.

To stop the over-stressing of land and overuse of water—an effect, according to specialist thinking, of paddy-wheat rotation cropping pattern by adopting the method of diversification of crops. At least 30% of the area now under paddy-wheat rotation cropping, should be replaced by other profitable alternative .crops, fruits, vegetables, etc. This is the immediate principal task in developing Punjab agriculture.

To develop agro-forestry, i.e., growing crops in combination with forestry trees-ensuring both short as well as long-term returns and benefitting soil and moisture.

To increase forest cover, plant trees in every vacant place and make grey areas green.

To integrate and pursue in every block a sustained land-use system, based on the following points:

(a) Sustainable intensification: prime lands can be subjected to intensive farming only if the health of the soil permits or if proper attention is paid to the soil's health.

(b) Restoration areas: degraded lands can be restored to good health through appropriate wasteland development schemes.

(c) Conservation areas: forest or other areas rich in bio-diversity should be maintained for their pristine purity.

To initiate sustainable integrated development strategies at the micro level of watersheds.

To develop scientific conjunctive-use systems in the use of water, involving river, rain, ground and sewage waters.

To launch statewide or district-level projects for the reclamation of the maximum of waste and degraded land.

To put the thrust on the use of sustainable technologies and spread and disseminate knowledge of new technologies and inputs in rural areas, particularly in backward ones.

To initiate integrated measures for the conservation of top soil, water, forests and other natural resources to improve agricultural productivity, environmental protection, water conservation and

bio-diversity.

To adopt land, water, forests and other natural resources use policies as one of the principal goals of the grassroots level organisations and the people in the villages.

To promote integrated technology with regard to water, pest and nutrient managements. This would step up production, increase efficiency and decrease the cost of production.

To set up blockwise special information service whose task will be to provide regular, timely & proper information to the farmers in each village about the appropriate use of new technologies, inputs, new government schemes, finance, market and other relevant agricultural issues. Every dealer concerned with agricultural technologies, machinery, inputs, etc., should be legally bound to supply authentic information required about these commodities.

(B) For Enhancing Productivity

To develop agro-processing industries (big, medium and small) for value addition to agricultural produce in and around villages. This is the most crucial matter for adopting the method of diversification of crops in place of paddy-wheat rotation pattern in Punjab agriculture, the restoration and further development of Punjab agriculture and also for building a balanced. and viable economy of Punjab.

Punjab, with its foodgrains surplus, is quite fit for food processing industries of various types. It is also suited for growing most of the horticultural crops, which, apart from their raw value, can be processed into various varieties of juices. This involves the creation of an adequate infrastructure for the export of processed foodstuffs and fruit juices, including the availability of adequate power, setting up of cold storages, starting of processing facilities, like packaging, caning and bottling, freezing and dehydration to attain value addition for the food articles as well as fruits.

Fresh vegetables and fruits can be supplied even in various parts of the county provided there is satisfactory arrangement of transport. They can also be sent to Europe through chartered flights. All this requires the dissemination of timely and proper information among the farmers. They would have to be informed about the prices of various types of fruits and vegetables prevailing in different markets in the country to enable them to choose the right selling point. Likewise, they would have to be supplied with the information about the prices of various outside markets in Europe through fax or phone. Here, the state

government is required to play the desired role.

To give industry status to agriculture.

To provide adequate funds for developing infrastructure by improving transport network and upgrading storage (including cold ones) and handling facilities for foodgrains, fruits and vegetables within a prescribed time to minimise post-harvest losses.

To accord priority in investment and extend other assistance to agriculture.

To restructure the rural credit system to double the flow of credit to agriculture and agro-industry, and especially to the small and marginal farmers. To ask the centre for increasing the bank credit and investment in agriculture to 30% of their total credit and investment.

To ensure an effective state-wide crop insurance scheme that is based on accurate estimates of risk for each crop. If the premiums are high, the small and middle farmers will not be able to afford them.

To ensure a stable agricultural pricing policy for all main state crops.

To increase overall and crop-wise productivity of per unit of land, water and livestock through an effective resource and input-use.

To spread productivity growth to coarse grains, pulses and seeds.

To accelerate total factor productivity while conserving natural resources.

To increase agricultural productivity through a better management of the agricultural process, For instance, a lot of value be added to state's annual agricultural income by stopping the post-harvest losses to fruits and vegetables by providing transport, cold storage, market and processing units.

To complete the unfinished work of land reforms.

(C) For Ensuring Equity

To develop agriculture on a productive, sustainable and equitable basis, the most important task is to develop the rural human resources. Because, it is the people involved in agriculture, and they alone, who, by using natural resources and inputs of agricultural production, carry its process forward. Once the people involved in any process are awakened and motivated, any possible task can be realised. To develop the rural human resources, it is necessary to fulfil the following tasks.

For Changing Agrarian Structure

A major constraint on agricultural equity (and also productivity) in Punjab is the continuously diminishing size of the land holdings. This makes them incapable of producing an income to meet the average needs of an ordinary family—thus turning them non-viable. At present, the total number of such holdings (with an area less than 4 acres) in the state is about 2/3rd of the total land holdings, that is, 2/3rd of farmers in the state are marginal and small farmers, living on subsistence level. If agricultural workers (mostly living below the poverty line) are added to them, they all make up over 80% of the rural population in Punjab.

Given our three-sided general perspective, it is necessary to remove this constraint in a way that, on the one hand, makes our land holdings viable units (capable of using all modern means of production), and, on the other, safeguards the interests of the marginal and small farmers. This should, in our view, be achieved by preparing the marginal and small farmers (with units less than 4 acres) in different regions to restructure themselves into three broad types of agrarian sub-structures.

(a) Private farms, with the productive capacity of 10 acres of irrigated, 2-crop land, varying according to the quality of land in different areas, may be formed by farmers having lands adjacent to one another; or even by one small or marginal farmer having his 10 acre unit formed by securing the land on contract or lease basis from the small and marginal farmers. Such farms be given special farm subsidies on inputs used and investments made and low interest loans against mortgage of land as collateral. These units should be knitted into genuine marketing cooperatives to reduce their marketing cost and increase marketing gains.

(b) Co-operative farms, with the productive capacity of 100 acres of irrigated, 2-crop land, varying according to the quality of land in different areas may be formed by small and marginal farmers with adjoining lands. Such farms should engage themselves both in the farming as well as marketing operations. It should be legally laid down that no farmer with a unit larger than 4-acre size would be allowed to become its member for enjoying institutional benefits. Experience shows that rich famers often become dominant in these bodies and exploit them for their advantage. The labour will mainly be provided by the members on hired basis. Outside labour will be employed only in special cases. Cooperative farming should be based on a new

law which makes it a peoples based movement and totally stops all sorts of bureaucratic interference.

(c) Contract cultivation should be promoted by the central and the state governments. By contract cultivation is meant cultivation of a specific crop by the small and marginal farmers under a contract with an industrialist (who needs a given raw material for his industry) or an exporter (who wants special quality agricultural commodities for exports) or an agro-industrial unit working in their vicinity (requiring particular agricultural products for processing). This arrangement, on the one hand, ensures the ownership and the control of small and marginal farmers over their lands, and, on the other, enables them to become nearly viable.

The underlying idea of contract cultivation is the integration of the factors of laboratory, factory, land and market. The objective is to arrange production of a given product in adequate quantities. Farmers are identified in compact blocks, assigned contracts for areas and quantities at an agreed price and served for crucial inputs, like seed or nursery. The contract cultivation suits most to the cooperative farms and the 10-acre, irrigated farms, formed by the small and marginal farmers. The contract cultivation can be operational in all crops, including medicinal plants, bio-diversity, agro-forestry and conservation. There are many areas where private and public sector industry can develop it. Already sugarcane and tobacco industries in India are engaged in contract cultivation. China, Thailand and many other countries have developed industry-agriculture linkages in many of their regions. New Delhi should also try to learn from this experience and avail of it according to our own conditions.

(d) As regards the rich and middle farm holdings, their owners should be allowed to continue with their farming operations in the usual manner.

(e) As regards the agricultural workers, their miserable conditions demand the taking of certain ameliorative measures to improve their lot. These are:

Fixation of minimum wages and its strict implementation; Resettlement of those landless who had earlier got lands under land refoms, Bhoodan, Gramdan, etc., but not settled yet; Vacant lands not earmarked for any public purpose should be allotted to the remaining landless; Social security of drinking water, education and health services; Implementation of a rural house site-cum-house construction scheme; Each agricultural worker to be ensured for Rs 30,000, with equal contribution from the

concerned State and the Centre; and Old age pension scheme for agricultural workers.

The restructuring of the agrarian structure on the above lines will make the agricultural process more productive and equitable.

For Democratising Rural Structure

(i) To improve the quality of education, health services and infrastructure in rural areas.

(ii) To develop the knowledge and skill of the rural masses.

(iii) To better the living conditions of the agricultural workers and the marginal farmers.

(iv) To provide subsidised inputs and cheap credit to the small farmers.

(v) To ensure a stable price policy, free national market, long-term credit, export facilities, etc., to the middle and rich farmers.

(vi) To authorise the village elected committees to supervise the proper utilisation of funds earmarked and spent on their village development under various schemes—IRDP, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Indira Awas Yojana, etc.

(vii) To fully democratise the cooperative movement by amending its bureaucratic law and changing the department's bureaucratic policy.

(viii) To make women co-owners of their husband's belongings, including land, and give them 50% reservation in all elective bodies.

(ix) To make every Panchayat (i.e., all of its members) accountable to its electors by placing a legal obligation on it to visit' each one of its constituencies after every 6 months (i.e., twice a year) and present its 6 monthly record before the electors general meeting for the latter's discussion and remarks.

Lastly, the Punjab farming community should call upon the state government to demand of the Centre the costs for damaging Punjab's natural resources.

Challenges of India's Dryland Farming

Dryland Problem

Drylands are impoverished areas which are deficient in essential plant nutrients, especially Nitrogen and Phosphorus. According to experts, drylands constitute about 40% of the earth's surface.

Dryland farming in India is practised on about 97 million hectares or about 70% of the total arable land of 143.8 million hectares. Even after the entire irrigation potential of India is developed by about 2010 AD, some 50% of the arable land will remain rain fed. And further, many of the rain fed areas are subject to uncertain rains.

India's dryland farming supports 40% of the human population and some 60% of cattle. It contributes about 40% of India's total food production.

Dryland holdings are very small. About 76% of dryland farmers own less than two hectares which may be scattered and fragmented. Even limited mechanisation becomes difficult under such conditions.

Soils of dryland are extremely damaged. Extended periods of aridity and uncontrolled grazing destroy the vegetative cover. Naked soil is exposed to the vagaries of nature, like the running water and blowing winds.

Removal of humus rich top soil leaves behind subsoil impoverished of vital plant nutrients. On an average, soil loss due to erosion in the country is 16.4 tons a hectare per year. This explains rampant infertility typical of dryland soils.

Soil erosion has been and will continue to be the most serious problem on the productivity front. About 175 million hectare of India's total geographical area of 329 million hectare suffer from various processes of land degradation.

Animal husbandry is widely prevalent in dryland areas. So

creating fodder is as important as food security for human and animal survival.

Water Harvesting

By now, it has been well established that there is enough scope to harvest rainwater even from areas with low rainfall. Rain annually delivers 400 million hectare metres water equivalent on Indian soil. Due to topographical limitations around 40% of the available surface flows can be diverted to big reservoirs (reports of the Irrigation Commission).

A significant quantum of rainwater is thus available for harvesting through small scale interventions, like watersheds (a watershed is a land area that drains surface water through a single outlet. An area drained by a river is thus the largest watershed, while medium watersheds are those that are drained by rivulets or streams). The intercepted water can effectively counter the drought related crop failures. The National Commission on Agriculture has suggested rainwater harvesting through watersheds.

Further, every effort should be made to conserve the runoff water in small and medium reservoirs (i.e., tanks, wells, ponds, etc.) to augment drinking water supplies to meet the needs of the livestock and provide for crop saving irrigation.

Apart from raising productivity and imparting stability to dryland agriculture, the check on runoff water will eliminate erosion, improve the hydrology of the catchment area, provide much needed water during periods of crisis and reduce siltation.

Land Use System

Not all drylands are suitable for crops; some may be suitable for pasture development and others for tree farming, dryland horticulture and agro-forestry systems. Alternative land use systems are less risky, more productive and remunerative, particularity on marginal lands.

Dryland farming technology is highly soil-specific and thus varies from region to region, depending on the type of soil and rainfall pattern in the area.

Selection of land use farm will depend on land capability, environmental conditions and market acceptability and demand.

Choice of improved crop varieties, fertiliser use and timeliness in agricultural operations are key elements of improved crop technology. Crop diversification is a compulsory component of

any land use system. Tree or pasture-based crops are harmonised with agriculture on a catchment basis.

Dryland And Poverty

Dryland farming is closely related to the perpetuation of poverty in India. Seventy percent of our arable land providing subsistence living to 50% of population speaks for itself. Logically, its solution will, on the one band, help the conservation of our environment, and, on the other, benefit the large number of the masses of our people and the national economy.

Obviously, it is a stupendous task which cannot be solved by traditional bureaucratic methods. It calls for a basic change in attitudes and behaviours. First of all, involvement of the people is a pre-condition for arresting further land degradation and its regeneration. This is essential not only because of the vastness in area but also due to its tendency to expand if left unattended. Next, the existence of a large number of landless adds another dimension to the problem. The third complication comes from the ownership of a major proportion of barren lands by the state alongside a large number of individuals. Another issue is the implementation of watershed programmes involving the lands of various owners.

To overcome the above constraints and resolve the problem in a proper manner, it is necessary to take the following steps.

(a) To propagate the sociology of dryland farming and its beneficial effects for the villagers, regions and the country by opening information centres at various selected places in rural areas.

(b) To provide various incentives to various categories of farmers. That is, the allotment of cultivable waste lands (excluding the forest and the common lands) and the illegally occupied forest, government or pasture lands to the landless (through the land distribution committees having 50% reservation of the landless) alongwith the requisite financial aid to meet the needs of cattle, implements and other inputs; reduction in the debt burdens of dryland farmers; credit facilities to the necessary extent, etc.

(c) To organise the concerned persons into cooperatives and form village-wise associations (Gram Vikas Mandals) for attending to the problems of dryland farming in each village.

(d) To inculcate in the village community the responsibility for all the dryland farming operations in the village regardless of the

different positions of ownership.

(e) To involve the women in organising the movement for dryland farming by making them co-owners of the lands alongwith their husbands.

(f) To work out the modalities and enact necessary legislation promoting cooperativisation of the watershed based dryland farming, considering soil and rainwater as national assets. Welded into a cooperative, a village community can play a crucial role in watershed-based resource development, its conservation and efficient use, namely, water resource development, waste-land development, soil and water conservation, agricultural extension, bio-gas plants, agro-forestry and savings/credit schemes.

Indian Forests Demand A Joint Management Of Forest Dwellers And Officials

I

1. A forest denotes a community of living organisms, of which the tree is the principal actor.

2. Forests, containing large areas of trees and undergrowth, are in fact progenitors of all human and animal life. This is evident from the scientific fact that plants breath in carbon dioxide and breath out oxygen, while humans and animals inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. This mutual exchange makes them interdependent who cannot exist without each other. One hectare of dense forest produces 30 tonnes of oxygen through the process of photosynthesis and sucks in an equal amount of carbon dioxide. The same area of pine forest and beech forest act as gigantic vacuum cleaners extracting from the air 36 tonnes and 68 tonnes of dust respectively. Or that the aromatic substances in the forest air called phytoncides kill disease producing bacteria, harmful to human and animal life.

3. The forests not only cleanse the air, but also purify water and prevent soil erosion. In fact, forests, water and land are interrelated and the problem of one cannot be solved in isolation from the other two.

4. Obviously, forests have been a key factor in the development of a human and animal-friendly environment on our earth and without them no life on our planet could have been possible.

5. Humans came to understand the importance of trees in their early days. They viewed trees as an inexhaustible and free gift of nature. They handled them as useful resources to meet their personal and social needs—i.e., food, fibre, fodder, fuel, medicines, etc. However, they were not fully aware of the fact that forests formed the conservatory (greenhouse) of our environment. And that it took nature millions of years to build this

greenhouse. Even three decades ago, people lacked the consciousness that forests constitute a limited natural phenomenon which can be destroyed by wreckful human uses in a few centuries.

6. As long as forests were conceived as an indefinite natural bounty, they remained free of any private or social control everywhere. But, with the onset of the industrial revolution, the forests began to be looked upon as a source of commercial wealth. Thereafter, various nation-states established their respective control over them—thus turning them into state property.

II

7. In India, it was the British colonial rule that for the first time took forests under its control and set up the forest department in 1864 to manage this sector. The British started the commercial exploitation of forests and continued it till the end of their rule. The trend, instead of being halted and reversed, has been accelerated in the post-British five decades.

8. "In 1864, the year of the first forest policy (under the British), 40% of the country's land mass had a tree cover. By 1952, it is said to have come down to 22% and, in 1980, the forest area with a dense tree cover had gone down to 12%, although scientifically it should have been 33% of our total land. According to the Forest Survey of India, about 400 sq km of prime forests were between 1987 and 1989 lost in the Koraput district of Orissa alone and between 1991 and 1993, 783 sq km of forest and non-forest cover had disappeared in the North-East." (*The Hindustan Times*, 17-11-1997, P 13)

9. "The finding of the state of the forests report released by the Forest Survey of India for 1997 shows that the area under forests has shrunk by 5,500 sq km in only two years, 1996 and 1997." (*The Hindu*, 10-03-1998, P 14)

10. "As against this rapid deforestation, the rate of afforestation is quite low. Morever, whatever little afforestion is taking place is in the form of mono-culture plantation which is largely devoid of rich ground vegetation. Thus a considerable portion of the 12% forest cover is composed of this type of mono-culture plantation which does not have a positive impact on bio-diversity and soil conservation. In other words, only a small part of India's land today retains solid natural forest." (*The Hindustan Times*, 17-11-1997, P 13).

11. The continuously increasing forest exploitation has

inevitably placed more curbs on the local use. This has hit the interests of 60 million forest dwellers living within or in the vicinity of forests for whom the latter have been an important source of livelihood and means of survival. As a consequence, there was local peoples resistance in certain areas on the question of their access to forests. This deforestation policy finally led to the decimation of biological diversity and an increase in soil erosion and floods.

12. The understanding about the unique ecological importance of forests came only in 1970s when the satellite imagery revealed that country was having a total forest cover of 19.49% of the geographical area, with only 11.73% marked by a dense forest with a crown density of 40% and above. It also indicated that the country was losing on an average 1.3 million hectares of forest per year, that the quantity of our top soil loss due to the degradation and destruction of forests was equivalent to 30 to 50 million tons of foodgrains a year, that the dams were silting at a much faster rate due to the run-off water from the deforested hillsides, etc.

13. For the first time, the Indian government became aware of this threat. But, oriented by power and money politics, it half-heartedly began to bring some changes in its forest policy. It accepted, without clarifying its policy concerning ecology, development and local people, the rights of forest dwellers to forests and prepared its social forestry action plan to stem the rot. The 1988 Forest Act stipulated the joint forest management (JFM) in which the local community and the forest officials were to manage the forests. But, in practice, it continued its state-dominated forestry style which perceives the forest dwellers, and not its defective forest policy, as responsible for deforestation, believes in the power of the stick and pursues centralised and bureaucratic ways—thus alienating the people.

14. Administratively, the government classified the forests into three categories: (a) Dense forests with more than 40% crown cover, (b) Open forests with 10 to 40% crown cover, and (c) Barren (i.e., unclassed) forests with stunted trees, thorny plants and shrubs. Based on the LAND-SAT imagery 1993, of the 77.008 million hectares of recorded forests, there are 41.492 million hectares of reserved forests, 23.308 million hectares of protected forests, 12.208 million hectares of barren forests and 0.4256 million hectares of mangrove vegetation.

15. Though it was officially announced in January 1985 to

bring 5 million hectares of land under green cover every year, not even 50% of the target has been achieved so far. If the process of deforestation is not effectively halted and reversed, India may soon be converted into one of the largest deserts in the world.

16. Compared to the stark failure of the official forest policy, there was some degree of success in a few areas where certain devoted voluntary agencies succeeded in involving the people in the implementation and decision making of the social forestry process.

III

17. After learning from the national and the international experiences, it should be now possible for the government to attempt at framing a sustainable, productive and equitable forest policy which should be based on a two sided fundamental objective of environmental conservation, on the one hand, and ensuring the needs of the local people, on the other. It should be thoroughly discussed all over the country. Besides other points, the experience highlights the following essentials.

18. Perceptually, the people should be seen as the friends of forests and not their enemies. Therefore the government should uphold a pro-environment and pro-people approach, harmonising the interests of environment as well as the people.

19. As a paradigm, the pattern of forest management should be changed from the state monopoly to the joint partnership between the forest people and the forest officials. The joint partnership form of forest management should also be enshrined in the law.

20. Worldwide, the forest management experience shows that forest fires do not occur where the local people have some stake. When they have no concern or interest, the social context for forest protection disappears. Forest fires have been prevented where local people have rights and responsibilities. Where rights exist without responsibility (i.e., forest official agencies) and responsibility exists without rights (i.e., local people), natural resources become objects of carelessness and abuse. One-sidedness everywhere creates disharmony and imbalance.

21. Ecologically, all efforts should be made to develop bio-genetic diversity and to promote social and water conditions.

22. India had 521 protected areas in 1996, with 80 national parks and 441 wildlife sanctuaries, covering about 15.3 million hectares or 4.5% of India's total area. But much of this area is under the use or control of vested interests.

23. For an effective management of wildlife, it is necessary to develop a cooperative relationship between the forest dwellers and the officials by involving the former in the management of parks and sanctuaries, assuring them employment and a share of tourist revenues and properly compensating them for crop damage and manslaughter by wild animals.

24. Socially, the forest dwellers should be entitled to obtain fodder and other materials for their personal use subject to the carrying capacity of forests. The requirements of the forest dwellers should be met through a network of community forest and pasture lands which should be developed in revenue and protected lands. These areas should be devoted to the maintenance of many species of plants to meet the diverse biomass local needs and managed jointly by the forest dwellers and the forest officials. Wherever necessary, even reserved forest lands may also be used to meet genuine local needs.

25. Developmentally, the emphasis should be changed from commercial production to a sustainable growth which harmonises the ecological needs with peoples requirements. Commercial tree felling should be totally stopped and needs of wood should be met from private forestry. Minor forest products, i.e., tendu leaves, sal seeds, pine, resin, etc.) should be developed in the interests of local and national economy.

26. Apart from the protected areas (about 15 million hectare) and the community land network (which might include 30 million hectare of degraded reserved forests), the remaining forest land (approximately 30 million hectare) maybe devoted to the dual formation of watershed conservation and the production of minor forest product. The minor forest product can generate great economic activity which can be channelled through the formation of forest labour cooperatives.

IV

27. The Geneva-based World Conservation Union, an organisation of governments and environmental groups, in its first status report on the world's trees says that, of the 80,000 to 1,00,000 species of trees once on the planet, nearly 100 have become extinct and more than 8,600 are headed that way.

28. It notes that trees provide a lot of eco-system services that are very beneficial to everyone. These purify water, prevent soil erosion and cleanse the air.

29. It quotes that forests provide $5 trillion in benefits to

humans annually from timber to nuts to absorbing carbon dioxide that otherwise would contribute to global warming. In Malaysia and Indonesia, trees are cut down for timber and to make room for palm plantations. In Brazil and Africa, the jungle is cut back to make room for living and farming space for humans.

30. Forests, as per the report, cover about 13 million square miles of the Earth, an area larger than North America. But the forests are diminished by roughly one percent a year.

31. Most of the trees, the report lists as threatened, are tropical and trees in tropical forests are being cut at a higher rate than others. They also have a higher degree of diversity.

32. The Washington-based World Watch Institute, a non-governmental organisation, in a recent report, notes that almost half of the world's forest cover has disappeared due to a flourishing illegal timber trade in several countries, including India, where unscrupulous officials often connive with racketeers to siphon off valuable afforestation funds.

33. According to this report, corruption has further aggravated the problem. It cites the example of Indonesia where the political leadership is alleged to have diverted funds earmarked for afforestation projects for personal ends.

34. It says that, in the last two decades, legal timber trade has gone up to 142 billion dollars but this is just the tip of the iceberg with substantial volumes of illegal trade going unreported, turning a Nelson's eye to the loss of non-wood forest products which such unrestricted logging leads to such minor products, as per the report, account for three-fourths of India's export earnings and provide over half of the formal employment in the forest sector.

35. One such product, *Rattan*, a vine which grows naturally in tropical forests is widely used to make furniture and its global trade generates 2.7 billion dollars in exports annually, it reveals, adding, in Asia alone, it employs half a million people.

36. The report calls upon governments to pass tougher laws to check illegal timber trade, go in for afforestation programmes and recycle wood products to check the world's declining forest cover.

V

37. The 26 member World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development has, in its final report, entitled "Our

Forests—Our Future" (adopted at Chennai, September 1998), recommended the setting up of a 15 nation Forest Security Council (including India). Its purpose will to put the search for solutions to the forest crisis on a fast track. Work towards solutions to the forest crisis should by no means be confined to governments alone. It should proceed across several streams of society concurrently involving interlocking the efforts of academia and research institutions, NGOs, scientists, forest communities and forest industry organisations.

38. The Commission has also proposed the development of a Forest Capital Index to provide a uniform numerical indicator of a country's forest resources. This would facilitate a global framework for proper valuation of forest eco-system services which constitute a capital asset that sustains the bio-life.

39. Historical experience shows that the change of human mindsets and policies do not occur overnight. The old attitudes and behaviours, upholding status quo positions, always resist new transformations. The force of reality, however, compels everyone to come to terms with it, sooner or later.

(The following three articles—Asia In A Multi-Polar World; New Economic & Political Situation In Asia, Its Tendencies And Prospects Of Development Concerning Bilateral And Multi-Sected Cooperation; and, Role Of NGOs In Strengthening Mutual Understanding, Security And Cooperation In Asia—were presented in a Seminar, sponsored by the Russian Centre for Scientific and Cultural Studies, New Delhi, from 27th to 29th November, 1998)

Asia In A Multi-Polar World

I

1. As is obvious from its text, the above title puts forth the perspective of our three part agenda. It emphasises a global notion that contains its own logic to view the world as well as Asia. Proceeding from this view, part two of the agenda demands an appraisal of the tendencies and prospects of development in Asia concerning bilateral and multi-sected regional cooperation. Following this analysis, part three requires an assessment of the role of public and non-governmental organisations that have relevance to Asian regional cooperation. Thus, it can be seen how the first piece of our agenda sets the logical tone and its framework for the discussion of the subsequent two parts.

2. The above-mentioned premise naturally calls for an explanation of the question whether the concept of a multi-polar world, as upheld by part one of the agenda, provides a realistic global perspective to discuss the prospects of a bilateral and multi-sected regional cooperation in the present-day world.

Our view is that the perspective of a multi-polar world (though reflecting one of the dimensions of the existing world) does not reflect the fundamental global reality. And without the perspective of the fundamental global reality, the questions of bilateral and multi-sected regional cooperation in Asia and the role of public and non-governmental organisations in strengthening security and cooperation in Asia cannot be discussed properly.

II

3. According to the theory and practice of contemporary international politics, a pole is defined as a great power and the criterion of determining such a status is generally armed might. Polarism refers to the number of centres of military power (whether individual states or their alliances) which are capable of affecting the balance of power in an extensive area of the world. Thus, multi-polar world implies a world with many centres of power.

4. In multi-polarity (involving a complex and flexible power structure), no single actor receives unduly great consideration, because the number of heroes is quite large. Each power centre views all other actors as potential adversaries or/and potential allies. Each tries to consolidate its position in relation to other centres. The degree of animosity among rivals is comparatively less than the period of bi-polarity (or two superpowerism). The hostilities are not allowed to become very intense.

5. Of the four existing armed power centres in the world today, i.e., the US, EC (or NATO) China and Russia, neither one nor even their collective is in a position to determine the course of global development. However, they have, quite in accord with their respective power centred understandings of the existing global reality and their parochial national responses, forged an underhand deal to retain their respective veto rights in the Security Council and ensure their nuclear weapon monopoly. Both these privileges today constitute the biggest hurdles in the democratisation of the UN (the present centre of world management) and in getting rid of the anti-human N-weapons. Not only in regard to the monopolisation of UN power and control over N-weapons but also in respect of other human imperatives, their roles are socially objectionable. For instance, they are the biggest polluters of our Earth's environment (thus endangering the entire bio-life on our planet) and the largest appropriators of the world resources (taking away 80% of these valuables for 20% of their population, while leaving 20% for 80% of other world people). Obviously, they can, until they change their domineering approach and style, not be considered as "engines of global growth."

6. Historically, the system of multi-polarity arose towards the end of 1991 when, with the collapse of the USSR, the disintegration of the Socialist Bloc, the demolition of the Berlin wall, etc., the epoch of cold war and the post-1945 power

system of bi-polarity (weakening since 1987) came to a final close, thus creating a situation of US centred uni-polarity for a while in the world. But soon this uni-polarity was displaced by the existing multi-polarity.

III

7. What was the reason behind the collapse of the USSR, the disintegration of the Socialist Bloc, the ending of the cold war and bi-polarity, the subsequent weakening of US uni-polarity and the rise of multi-polarity? Obviously, it was neither the US armed might nor the military strength of the other three power centres. Even after disintegration, the present-day Russia is militarily not less powerful than the US and has an edge over the combined military strength of the rest of the three military poles.

8. Retrospectively, the military force in history has hardly worked in bringing about a fundamental social change or save any outdated system. For example, the strongest military power of the recent times, the Great Britain, could not maintain its colonial system. Prior to that, the god ordained monarchs failed to preserve the feudal arrangement and had to embrace the democratic order. The clans and tribes had to give in to the then emerging agricultural way of life.

9. Similar is the case with other fundamentalist theories of social change (like economy, politics, culture or religion as the motive force in society respectively). Marxian concept of economy as the basis (i.e., the productive forces bringing a change in the productive relations) and class struggle as the law of social change has worked nowhere at any time. Similarity of Slav culture and Christian religion failed to keep Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia together, with Ukraine taking the lead in declaring itself independent from the former Soviet Union. Likewise, Arab culture and the Islamic faith had not succeeded in unifying the 21 Arab states even within one confederation. Pakistan could not maintain its unity on the basis of religion. Same religion (Hinduism) had not been able to unify India and Nepal.

IV

10. Historical experience proves that the social changes—whether short-term or long-term—occur due to continuous changes in the social division of labour (SDOL). SDOL is a broad concept which denotes different categories of human activity or social work—i.e., political, economic, cultural, environmental,

demographic, etc. Every type of work is characterised by a specific concept, style and organisation. SDOL itself arises from two basic interactions in society, i.e., (a) between nature and humankind, and (b) within human community itself.

11. The interaction between nature and humankind brings forth scientific-technological knowledge. For instance, the use of the knowledge of atom demands the observance of the atomic laws in human theory, practice and organisation and the discarding of the traditional mechanical understanding of the structure of matter. Similarly, every addition in our social knowledge enables us to develop the human resources in accordance with the needs of the given SDOL. Both types of knowledge help each other and serve human society by perpetuating the new SDOL in contrast to the old one.

12. Since the beginning of human society, the afore-mentioned two basic interactions have been bringing in continuous changes in our SDOL, thus resulting in both short-term and long-term (i.e., systemic) changes.

13. Corresponding to the uninterrupted changes in the SDOL, human interdependence-cum-interaction has gone on increasing—passing from one phase to another. Starting from clan level and passing through various stages, today human interdependence-cum-interaction has become global. Conditioned by five main branches of scientific-technological knowledge (i.e., space, information, energy, biology and materials), the human mental interdependence-cum-interaction operates at the speed of radio waves, while that concerning physical contact works at the supersonic swiftness. The globalisation of SDOL means that all human issues—political, economic, cultural, demographic and environmental—have become global.

14. The globalisation of human issues necessitated that all countries take essential initiatives in all spheres of social activity (particularly the economy) among themselves. But the Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc, upholding the Stalinist dogma of the "victory of socialism in one country", had since long restrained all interactions with the world in general and the developed countries in particular. Further, they had in pursuance of the Marxist postulate, rejected even the use of market mechanism and instead adopted the primitive barter mode. Thus, contrary to the global imperative of greater mutual dealings among various states, the Soviet Union-led Socialist Bloc's general disregard of intercourse with the rest of the world, coupled with one party

dominated authoritarian political structure, over-emphasis on militarisation and neglect of economic efficiency-cum-productivity, led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the disintegration of the Socialist Bloc and the ending of cold war.

V

15. The understanding of a globular world (i.e., human community) demands that all basic human problems be solved with an international perspective, according to which all questions are and, need to be, solved in cooperation and collaboration by different countries. Contrary to this, the perception of a multi-polar world requires the adoption of a multi-polar perspective which views human issues in a polarised way and seeks their solutions in contention between different poles.

16. Obviously, the implications of the two approaches for Asia are at variance with each other.

17. The perspective of a globular world calls for the social restructuring of the Asian continent in the light of an emerging global human society whose immediate phase may comprise the rise of regional communities in various areas (like the EC, NAFTA, Mercousur, Common Wealth of States (some of the former Soviet Republics), SAARC, Gulf Cooperation Council, ASEAN, etc.). The other global oriented essentials concerning social restructuring may include: the general approach of scientific realism, the social approach of rational humanism, genuine peace based on friendship and cooperation with all countries as the main task of foreign-cum-defence affairs; democratic set-up depending on the rule of law with peoples empowerment and involvement in decision making as its most important component, sustainable development oriented to productivity, equity and sustainability; value rooted culture promoting rational thinking and humane and modest conduct; reform of the UN and all international institutions (even now resting on the 1945 reality of a bi-polar world) on democratic principles corresponding to the nature of the present interdependent world. Obviously, the perspective of a globular world leads towards the establishment of a prosperous, just, equalitarian and sustainable global order.

18. In contrast to the perspective of a globular world, the perspective of a multi-polar world, just like its preceding polar varieties, logically opts for contention, rivalry, militarisation, superpowerism and hegemony. The overlordship logic, as a matter of course leads, as demonstrated by experience, to

authoritarianism, inequality and unsustainability—constituting the main hurdle on the way to globalisation (or global human integration) today.

19. The present US way of dealing with global problems—i.e., firing of cruise missiles inside Afghanistan to punish the "terrorist" leader, Bin Laden, imposing unilateral sanctions on economic issues against every dissenting country, consolidating the NATO military machine despite the end of cold war, adopting an imposing attitude in every international organisation, threatening every country that differs with the US policy—is a clear manifestation of a power entrenched mindset. The EC, another power centre, generally endorses the US line except when it hits the former's own interests. Though to a lesser degree, the Chinese style in relation to Taiwan, Tibet, Sinkiang, Spratlys Islands, Indo-Pak dispute over Jammu-Kashmir, N-weapon monopoly and the Security Council veto also displays power drenched symptoms.

Obviously, the prognosis of a multi-polar world, contravening the reality of a globular world, is likely to create obstructions in the process of world development. To adopt it as a perspective for studying the ongoing political-economic situation in Asia will necessarily constrain a possibly realistic analysis. One cannot properly examine any social question today or define one's response to it till the global reality is adequately apprehended.

VI

20. The seed of every brand of superpowerism is grounded in fundamentalism. Today, national fundamentalism (and not religious, cultural or ethnic—which are old-fashioned in contrast to nationalism) presents the main challenge to the process of emerging global human community. And the two chief forms of this fundamentalism, i.e., the Western Liberal and the Marxian, are—with their modified one sided versions of "free marketism" and "state centralism" respectively—constricting the human advance everywhere. Such a challenge should, and can, be met by a realistic appreciation of reality (at all levels and in every sphere) and its relevant response. 23-11-1998

New Economic & Political Situation In Asia—Its Tendencies And Prospects Of Development Concerning Bilateral And Multi-Sected Cooperation

(A) Asia's Geographical Setting

Asia is the biggest continent of the world, with 1/3rd of the total land area of the globe. From North to South, it extends more than 5,000 miles, from well above the Arctic Circle to below the Equator. From East to West, it extends far more than 5,500 miles. Its coast line is some 35,000 miles in length. On the one hand, it includes Himalayas (the highest mountain on Earth), and on the other, it also has an area of vast desert and wasteland. Almost every variety of climate occurs in Asia. In population, Asia comprises about 3/5th of the world. It is a home of most of the world's ancient civilisations. The earliest world civilisations were those in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Indus Valley and the North-Eastern China. China and India are the world's oldest continuous civilisations.

(B) Rise Of Modern Asia

The rise of modern Asia on the global arena has, after having lived under the colonial yoke for about three centuries, been a phenomenal development in the post-second world war era. The way was, firstly, paved by the weakened position of the European imperial countries, resulting from their very heavy losses in the second world war and, secondly, by the strength gained by the freedom movements in the first half of the 20th century.

During the past five decades, an awakened Asia has played a key role in world affairs. It has come to be, in many ways, a centre of global interactions. Most of its regions (e.g., the Middle

East or West Asia, East Asia or Far East, South-East Asia, and South Asia) and countries (like China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.) have been in the midst of international events in one way or the other.

(C) Asia In World Politics

Asia involves countries which have several similarities as well as many diversities. In the context of world geo-politics, Asia may be divided into five major areas. That is Far East/East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, West Asia/Middle East, and Central Asia (former Soviet Republics).

In the post-cold war scenario, Asia has come to be a major centre of international diplomacy. The settlement of the Cambodian problem and the emergence of peace process in West Asia have been welcome developments. Yet the Iraq-Kuwait dispute and the UN action against Iraq; the ethnic conflicts in several Asian countries such as (Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Bangladesh, India, etc.); the Indo-Pak dispute on Jammu-Kashmir; the strained relations between China and Taiwan, East Timor-Indonesia confrontation; the conflict on the Spratlys islands between China and some of the ASEAN countries; North Korea-South Korea confrontation; the US-Japan defence pact; recent upheaval against Suharto in Indonesia; the confrontation between Mahathir and Ibrahim in Malaysia; the struggle between reformists and the fundamentalists in some Middle Eastern countries; the discontent in Tibet; the conflict between Japan and Russia over the Kuriel islands; the rise of fundamentalism in some countries; and the collapse of the Soviet Union—have worked, and continue to act, as limitations on the role of Asia in world affairs.

(D) Asia In World Economy
And Ongoing Economic Crisis

Asia has made great strides in the economic sphere during the past five decades. Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the ASEAN countries have blazed a new trail in the world economy. Japan has become a super economic power. China is fastly moving to gain a highly distinguished position of being the number one economic power in the world. ASEAN countries too have been able to set up a new economic record. Sixteen months ago, the entire world was of the unanimous view that the East and the South-East Asia is soon going to be the future of

world economic growth. But, since July 1997, these countries are facing a severe financial-cum-economic crisis.

Starting from the Asian countries—Thailand and Indonesia—it then spread to Korea and later affected the whole range of countries in the Eastern and the South-Eastern region. In the latter part of 1997, it spread to Russia and then in 1998 affected more or less all the countries—thus turning into a global financial crisis.

Many reasons have been advanced for this crisis. But the two stand out markedly. That is, the one propounded by the IMF, World Bank, the US and the like, and the other promoted by the Leftists.

IMF says, it is not free markets that are to blame for today's woes but the concerned countries failure to breakup monopolies, curb corruption and exchange rates and bank lending for speculation.

The Leftists argue that it is the opening up of the economy to the capital or the free play of the market that has led to the crisis.

However, a close look at the present-day world economy and its historical experience shows that the short-term cause of the crisis rests with the speculator controlled unregulated currency and stock markets where gambling and trickery rule the roost. This anarchism distorts the balance between supply and demand of various financial factors—i.e., currency and share prices versus the psychological mood of the buyers and sellers. The long-term cause lies in the rising world inequality (where 4/5th of the world resources go to 1/5th of the world population and 1/5th to 4/5th of the world's dispossessed ones). This imposes a constraint on the purchasing power of the overwhelming number of people—thus bringing forth the fundamental market distortion between supply and demand and resulting in recession.

The experts say that the crisis is not going to end soon. They have forecast a sharp fall in the global economy for the next year. But the ASEAN reports suggest that its members are on the way to recovery.

Whatever happens to the global economy or any of its national contingents, it is necessary that the world takes a serious view of the anarchic working of the financial markets and the sub-human level of social inequality. Urgent steps are needed to regulate the disorderly currency and stock markets through an internationally agreed, democratic, open and transparent law and mechanism, while just reforms are needed to establish a fair economic and

social equality in the world. Asia would not be found wanting in this endeavour.

(E) Future Of Asia

Today Asia stands awakened. The Asian states are fully aware of the risks involved in the continuation of mutual tensions and conflicts. They fully realise the benefits that can be secured through mutual cooperation and collaboration. The growing popularity of the concept of regional cooperation for development is indeed a healthy trend. The progress of the ASEAN, growth of SAARC, emergence of ECO, the developed economic-technological power of Japan, the growing economic position of China, the developing Sino-Japanese ties, the emergence of Sino-Vietnamese detente, the Sino-Taiwanese agreements, the increasing public awareness for peace and the desire to keep Asia free from power rivalry—are definitely the factors which point towards an increasing role of Asia in the future course of world development. However, there is an urgent need demanding of Asian states to overcome their differences and settle their disputes through peaceful means, to actively develop more meaningful cooperation among themselves, and join hands to press the demand for the democratisation of UN and other international institutions.

The question of bilateral and multi-sected economic cooperation among the countries of different regions in Asia has a great potential for development. This is apparent from an informal look at Asia's five major regions.

For instance, the West Asian region, with its rich oil deposits and similar geographical features, common culture and shared past, etc., is quite eligible for regional economic cooperation. But five main constraints to economic cooperation and political stability—i.e., Iraq/US-British confrontation; Israeli/Palestinian peace process; Israeli/Syrian conflict over Golan heights; Israeli armed forces in Southern Lebanon; and Gulf Arab countries/Iran dispute over three islands—stand as roadblocks. Until they are cleared, it is difficult to initiate the process of regional economic cooperation.

Similarly, the Central Asian region, with its vast oil and gas deposits and common physiography, culture and history also constitutes a possibly flourishing economic area. But various global economic pulls, involving the US, Russia, EC, China, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, are hindering this development.

Likewise, South Asian region, with its large human and material resources and similar geo-physical, cultural and historical characteristics is fully qualified to be a major economic power, provided it satisfactorily resolves the Jammu-Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, the two big South Asian players.

The South-East Asian region has already set an example of economic cooperation in Asia since its inception in 1967. It has many economic achievements to its credit, like emphasis on human resources development, prudent public finance characterised by low fiscal deficit, promotion of agricultural development, high savings rate and successful infrastructural development. Its main failings have been the existence of authoritarian regimes, lack of democratic rights, neglect of natural resources protection, flourishing corruption, bad management of external debt (particularly short-term loans) and capital account convertibility. By drawing correct lessons from its positive and negative past performance, there is every likelihood of ASEAN resurgence.

The East Asian region, including high economic performers, like Japan, China (Hong Kong), South Korea and Taiwan, is economically the most advanced region in Asia. If the countries of this region manage to constitute a common market, it may perhaps develop into the most prosperous economic zone in the world. The main hurdles are: North Korea/South Korea divide, China/Taiwan conflict, Japan-US Security Pact and Japan's closeness to the US, Japanese-North Korean misgivings, Sino-Japanese differences, etc.

As the biggest continent of the world, Asia should come forward to play its due role in the global management and development. But this is only possible if it strengthens the political unity and the economic development of the Asian countries. Resurgence of Asia does not mean any sort of hegemony over other countries. It simply implies the constructive channelisation of all its resources, both natural and human, to the strengthening of the global process of peace and security, empowerment of the people, productive, equitable and sustainable development and a humane culture. 24-11-1998

Role Of NGOs In Strengthening Mutual Understanding, Security And Cooperation In Asia

I

1. Today, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have come to hold a prominent position in the world as well as in each country. In the post-second world war period, there has been a phenomenal increase in their size. According to an unofficial estimate, they now number over one million all over the world.

2. Simply defined, NGOs are associations which deal with public issues, sometimes neglected and sometimes mismanaged by the respective governments. The issues comprise a wide range of matters, such as environment, population, literacy, education, health-care, poverty, unemployment, welfare schemes, development projects, human rights, women's empowerment, children's well-being, information technology, promoting cooperation among people of different countries, etc.

3. Two main varieties of NGOs operate in the world. Some work within the confines of a single state and some are transnational. They have no source of their own finance. They generally meet their financial needs from various sources. Some get grants from their respective governments, while a large number of them is funded by various charitable agencies (working in various countries) and above all by MNCs.

4. Historically, public service or voluntarism is as old as humanitarianism. The ideas of charity, compassion, benevolence, generosity, goodwill and philanthropy have existed and worked since humankind became social. Voluntarism means free or unpaid service and it has generally remained so in all ages. But now it too has become a marketable commodity, with a given value.

5. A look at NGOs agendas and activities shows that majority of them had no clear-cut, precise social goals. They generally get

their action plans from their funding agencies, thus acting only as implementation bureaus. A few who are guided by their own programmes have to face great difficulties in securing their needed money resources.

6. The causes advocated by NGOs have varied at different times. In the late 1940s, they were associated with the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation. The 1950s were marked by questions of cold war and N-weapons threat. The 1960s saw their expansion in developmental activities. In the 1970s, environment, technology and development dominated their agenda. The eighties were governed by the human rights business. Poverty, population, women's empowerment, etc., remain the main concerns in the 1990s.

II

7. The spectacular rise of the NGOs was not without a reason.

Firstly, they were a product of the given period marked by the human movement towards increasing national inter-dependence—a change (corresponding to the newly emerged social division of labour) which demanded peoples active involvement in the conduct of public affairs (in which the bureaucracy alone had proved inadequate to the task).

Secondly, they ventured into sectors which were neglected in the development programmes of the state. The tribals, women in the unorganised sector, children, destitutes, blind, invalids and other similarly deprived sections became their special areas of attention.

Thirdly, they adopted the method of mixing up with the concerned people and thus were able to unify and motivate them to participate in the development process.

Fourthly, they were financially supported by the big business which, having been interested in lowering social tensions and national conflicts for the unhindered flow of trade, wanted to implement its own market-led solutions to the social problems.

And fifthly, they were championed by the developed countries which wanted to counter the then popular communist theories of economic equality and social justice and attract the poor and deprived to their side.

8. Concerning the country specific programmes, the work of the NGOs has inspired the state to formulate policies for the benefit of the marginalised and deprived—thus rendering a positive service to the people in general and the impoverished in particular.

9. On transnational issues, they held various conferences and thus tried to forge a transnational consensus.

III

10. The recent trends, however, indicate that, barring a few, NGOs in general seem to be losing the position they have been able to acquire over the past few decades. A number of factors have gone into the making of this situation.

Firstly, despite lofty schemes, pompous style and grandiose promises of the NGOs to bring happiness to the hungry, naked and the shelterless millions, the matters remain as they had stood before.

About 1.4 billion people continue to be absolutely poor the world over. Hunger or hunger-related diseases take an annual toll of 18 million people. Malnutrition kills about 13 million children under the age of five every year. About 6,00,000 women die each year in pregnancy and child birth, and 30 times that number suffer injuries which are usually untreated and unspoken of (according to the UNICEF). About 1.7 billion people go without pure water supply and 3 billion have no access to sanitary facilities. In cities alone, about 600 million people are either homeless or living in "life and health threatening environment" (as per UN Centre for Human Settlements). Out of the current global work force of 2.6 billion, 120 million are totally unemployed and 680 million are under-employed, unable to make both ends meet, while more and more people are entering adulthood and seeking productive employment. Crime has increased manifold. In the US alone, about 15 million criminal cases are, on an average, reported to the police annually. About 3 million children are abused every year and about 7,000 children suffer gunshot wounds. The annual expenditure on narcotics alone exceeded the combined GDP of 80 developing countries.

According to the 1998 UNDP Human Development Report: "86% of expenditure for personal consumption is made by just 20% of the world's people.

"Global consumption at $24 trillion this year is 6 times the figure tor 1975. But 3/5th of the 4.4 billion people in developing countries are living in communities without basic sanitation. Almost 1/3rd are without safe drinking water, 1/4th lack adequate housing, 1/5th live beyond the reach of modern health services, 1/5th of the children do not get as far as grade five school". The report further reveals: "$1.1 billion worth of ice cream is

consumed in Europe while the spending on pet foods in Europe and the USA is in the region of $17 billion. Another $12 billion is spent on perfumes in the US and Europe while Japan spends $35 billion on business entertainment." The report further discloses: "Just three of the world's richest people have the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries. The world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over $1 trillion, which is also the total income of 47% of the poor, who number 2.5 billion. The wealth of 32 of the world's richest persons exceeds the GDP of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives) plus Iran and Afghanistan. In 1965, average per capita income in the world's 7 richest nations was 20 times that of the poorest seven. By 1995, it had soared to 39 times as much. In Africa, average per capita income was now only 7% of the level of developed countries. In Latin America, it had fallen from 1/3rd that of industrialised countries in the late 1970 to 114 today."

Secondly, the NGO leaders, as often reported and heard, are becoming ostentatious not only in their lifestyle but also in their attitude to work. The standards of public service, i.e., austerity, modesty and simplicity, are going down.

Thirdly, the issue of foreign funds has become scandalous. The NGOs are now being referred more and more in the context of these funds and their utilisation. The volume of these funds is really staggering.

According to a Washington despatch (9th November 1998) of the Associated Press: "They (i.e., NGOs) can be more powerful than governments. They distribute more aid than the World Bank or any country. Some have bigger budgets than large corporations. A few readily put themselves at higher risk than the world's greatest armies. In dealing with global crises, big business and big governments are often left in the dust by big non-profit, which now spends more than one trillion billion dollars a year. The movement, if viewed as a nation, would rank eighth in economic power, according to a study released yesterday. Named for what they are not business and not part of any government, thousands of non-profit, non-government organisations or NGOs are booming around the globe."

In India, the foreign contribution to NGOs in 1984 stood at Rs 2,540 million and it touched Rs 3,500 million within the next two years. It is estimated that over Rs 20 billion are flown from foreign donors to NGOs for rural development alone. There are

organisations which have annual budgets ranging from Rs 30 million to Rs 500 million.

According to official reports, 50% of the NGOs registered in India are either non-existent or involved in the embezzlement of funds.

The belief is widespread that NGOs work to harness funds and not for the people.

Fourthly, as regards structure, leadership and functioning of NGOs, the trends are highly disturbing. Structurally, the NGOs are becoming increasingly bureaucratised. Posh buildings, staff, red-tape, funds, etc., have become the pre-requisites of voluntary action. The leadership in NGOs is getting monopolised. Most NGOs are started by one person or a few individuals who retain full control over the organisation. By and large, they are one-man organisations. The process of decision making has become a farce as the leader himself makes the decision for the organisation. Naturally, the participation of the people in the NGO programmes has diminished.

Fifthly, the programmes are often conceived to serve the interests of the NGOs rather than the people. Implementing tailor-made schemes by the donors has now become their salient feature. For launching new ventures on their own, they generally search for areas where financial assistance is easy to get. Money, remuneration, perks and prerogatives are now their only consideration.

IV

11. The reason for the declining influence of the NGO movement, firstly, rests with the market-led growing inequality in the world—resulting in poverty, unemployment, houselessness, disease, illiteracy and other social ills. The MNC-directed NGO solution serves only as a patch work to soothe the sufferers.

Secondly, it lies in consumerist voluntarism which tends towards careerism.

Thirdly, it is located in the unregulated NGO sector which, with its irregular and unsystematic way, centres all authority in an individual or coterie which misuses the public related resources with impunity.

V

12. The long-term solution rests with the restructuring of the world system on a rational, democratic, sustainable and

equalitarian basis which, with its rule of law based system, empowers the people in all social processes, integrates the developmental process with the principles of productivity, equity and sustainability, promotes a humanitarian culture and adopts genuine world peace as its foundation and rational humanism as its guide.

13. The short-term solution lies in overhauling the NGO movement on a democratic, transparent, just and maintainable premise. This requires the working out of a clear policy for the regulation of NGO sector, both at the international and national levels. All NGOs should be governed by a law, prescribing democratic norms for their funding, working, spending, auditing, etc., under the supervision of a committee, consisting half of the NGO representatives and half of the concerned people (i.e., the project targeted group). The transnationals should be administered by a UN framed law, while each country should enact its own decree to systematise its NGOs.

VI

14. In the present situation, the genuine NGOs, both transnational and national, and their donors can play a positive role in strengthening mutual understanding, security and cooperation in Asia, provided they proceed from Asian realities and properly respond to them.

The first reality is the widespread impression in most of the Asian countries that the NGOs, having been dependent on Western funds, do not represent the interests of Asian countries.

The second reality is that any transnational NGO has rarely taken up the highly acute poverty problem of the Asian and other developing countries. While rightly raising strong protests against the human rights violations all over the world, they have hardly ever referred to the worst human rights violations of 1.4 billion people subsisting on a sub-human level, mostly in Asia. If some reputable NGOs jointly persuade the World Bank, UNDP and other concerned international institutions to hold a Conference on this issue in any Asian town, with participation from its various regions, which chalks out a concrete poverty elimination action plan, this would help in creating a congenial atmosphere among the people of this continent.

The third reality is that there exist a number of bilateral irritants between different Asian countries. The NGOs and also other public bodies can arrange get-togethers bringing the enlightened

people from the two sides in company.

The fourth reality is that there are a number of issues—such as population control, women's empowerment, children welfare, environment, social justice, human rights, nuclear disarmament, blending of nationalism and internationalism, conflict resolution among states, role of force, relevance of nation-state system with increasing interdependence, issues of aid, loan and trade, etc.—in which the people of various Asian countries are interested. If rational people from various regions of Asia can be brought together for a discussion on any of these topics and its follow-up action, this will help a lot in strengthening mutual understanding in Asia.

The fifth reality is that there exists a cultural affinity between the people of various Asian regions. If the well-informed among them are persuaded to attend a conference on the historical evolution of that civilisation and its linkages with other regional cultures, this will contribute much in creating bonds of friendship and cooperation among them.

The sixth reality is that the country-specific problems—like poverty, social backwardness, illiteracy, etc.—can, as shown by experience, be better tacked if the concerned people themselves are mobilised and allowed to choose suitable ways to deal with their difficulties. By following this experience, the NGOs can enthuse and inspire the given people.

The seventh reality is that the Asian people, like the people of other developing countries, are concerned about the ever-widening inequality between the developed and the developing countries and the rich and poor. The NGOs have not yet taken up this issue. If they make it a discussion point of any Asian regional or continental conference, this would greatly contribute to the cause of Asian solidarity. 25-11-1998

(The following five documents—Present State of Human Interdependence And Its Priorities; State Of Affairs In South Asia And Its Needs; Present Indian Realities And Their Demands; Signals From November 1998 Assembly Elections; and On Jammu-Kashmir—were adopted by the 12th Party Congress of the Internationalist Democratic Party, IDP, held from 26th to 29th December, 1998 at Hanumangarh, Rajasthan)

Present State of Human Interdependence And Its Priorities

I

1. Human interdependence denotes mutual reliance of human beings on one another. This is one of the basic features of social life (i.e., living in a group, community or society). The other basic feature of social life is the interaction (mutual action either through unity or struggle) of a given human group (or community or society) within itself (i.e., among its members), on the one hand, and with other human groups, on the other. These twin basic features (i.e., interdependence and interaction) have constituted the mode of human living since the beginning of human society.

2. Human social living, alongwith its two basic features of interdependence and interaction, do not emerge all of a sudden or in a vacuum. They arise in accordance with the fundamental law of nature, i.e., the law of interdependence and interaction among different phenomena of the Universe.

The process of nature-human interdependence and interaction proceeds in its specific way. Acting according to its rational nature, humankind tries to perceive the character of different natural phenomena (both positive and negative) and their given divisions of labour in the course of their mutual connection and movement. To use the positive and avoid the negative, he adjusts himself to his given understanding of the

theory, practice and organisation of the explored natural phenomena. In this movement, while humankind changes nature (within his limited sphere), he is, in turn, bound by nature to follow the theoretical, practical and organisational mode of the given natural phenomenon. For instance, to make use of the atom, one has to adapt oneself to the atomic theory, practice and organisation (as understood and worked out by humankind).

3. Historically, humankind has passed through four social stages of interdependence and interaction, i.e., clan, tribe, religious community and nation, with each phase characterised by its given social structure, i.e., ideology, politics, economy and culture. Now, it has entered its fifth epoch, commonly known as global (or international). This is a phase when the entire human community is in the process of becoming one social unit. It is also called the stage of interdependence of countries (or nations).

4. The basis of the new global phase of human interdependence and interaction lies in the newly acquired human scientific-technological knowledge of various new processes of nature, i.e., space, energy, bio-materials, information, etc. This knowledge has, by overcoming all spatial constraints, enabled humankind to communicate at the speed of light and to make personal contact and exchange material things at the supersonic speed on the global level. Thus humankind has reached a stage of global vision. That is why globalisation has become a buzzword today. The process is inexorable. Marxism, Western Liberalism, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., could, despite their missionary aim and working, not unite the world under their respective creeds, because the human interdependence and interaction was limited to restricted areas (regions, countries, etc).

II

5. Globalisation transforms national issues—such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, population increase, environmental pollution, lack of social justice, human rights violations, minority discrimination, gender oppression, child neglect, ethnic struggles, authoritarianism, conspicuous consumption, etc.—into global ones. All these problems have arisen from the old models of development. They cannot be dealt with old administrative techniques. Today, they demand a coordinated but just solution. Obviously, the main trend in the world today is towards integration, particularly economic. Integration is needed in order to overcome constraints on social development. Nation-states, on their own,

cannot manage the different integrationist processes. The gap between the world integrationist process and the disintegrationist national managements constitutes the basic restriction on the world evolution today. Thus, the world is moving towards some form of integration. No one knows what ultimate shape it will take.

6. The process of globalisation is obvious from every significant development in the world. In the economic sphere, the movement of capital, medium of exchange, share and currency markets, trade, technology, patents, trade related intellectual property rights, production of commodities have all become global.

7. The transformation of the old continuing national problems into global ones and the economic integration of the national economies with the global economy are creating the need for developing new appropriate forms of political management and cultural values. Political issues of widening and deepening democracy, stress on the accountability of the rulers, empowerment of the people, particularly the women, equal status for minorities and majority, upholding of human rights on a global scale, resolution of all conflicts through peaceful means, etc.—have become the main items of global political management agenda today. Humanist cultural values of the brotherhood of humankind, compassion and toleration, democratic behaviour, gender equality, equal status for all belief systems and ways of life and opposition to the culture of corruption, violence and vulgarity have been gaining ground.

The UN Secretary General's proposal requiring nation-states to get clearance from the world body before using any military force, both internally and externally; the demand for the universalisation of the enforcement of human rights as adopted by 50 year old UN Charter with a new precise definition; the British House of Lords' judgement that the basic human rights are enforceable anywhere in the world on behalf of any victim without any consideration of national laws in the Pinochet case; the setting up of international crimes tribunal in Europe; and the adoption (July, 1998) by several states of the statue of a permanent international criminal court with jurisdiction over war crimes against humanity—all point to the emergence of a new international jurisprudence and a global legal order in which criminals can be brought to book even by individuals in international courts for gross violation of human rights.

8. Information networks, internet, space satellites, computers,

robots, etc., are fastly uniting the world into one unit.

9. The replacement of US unilateral superpowerism by multi-polarism indicates the weakening of the military based hegemonic trend. The rise of regional groupings (such as EC, NAFTA, APEC, ASEAN, Mercouser, East and South African Common Market, SAARC, ANZUS, Organisation of American Countries, Gulf Cooperation Council, etc.), new and old global and multi-lateral bodies (like UN and its various agencies, IMF, WB, ILO, WTO, CTBT and NPT regime, and many other global commissions and committees, etc.) represent the elementary forms of nationalism's transformation into supra-nationalism.

10. The internationalisation of crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist acts, violence and vulgarity centred entertainment, conspicuous consumption, glaring inequalities (political, economic and cultural), etc.—all having been the product of nation-state system—constitutes the bane of the globular process today.

III

11. The challenges to the process of globalisation are many and varied. All types of fundamentalist determinism—religious, cultural, ethnic, economic, political, national, etc.—pose varying scales of threats to it. But the main danger comes from Western free market fundamentalism which, having been upheld by the developed countries under the leadership of the US, presents market as the only vehicle of social progress as well as globular process. Next, the Marxist (or the Leftist) model of state-centric fundamentalism, followed by various religious-ethnic varieties, constitute different degrees of menaces.

At the moment, the US style of dealing with global problems—like the firing of cruise missiles on the so-called terrorist centres in Afghanistan and Sudan to punish the "terrorist" leader, Bin Laden; imposing unilateral sanctions against every country dissenting from its basic policy; consolidating the NATO military machine despite the end of cold war; adopting an imposing attitude in every international organisation; threatening every country that differs with its policy; promoting conspicuous consumption; and above all, perpetuating economic inequality among the developed and the developing countries and keeping mum over this inequality existing in each country, including the US; etc.—is a clear manifestation of a power-entrenched chauvinistic mindset, creating a great hurdle in the development of the globalisation process.

12. All such threats can be countered by identifying the real nature of globalisation, adopting a proper attitude towards it and then sorting out its priorities and properly responding to them.

13. As regards its nature, globalisation denotes that the whole human community is ultimately going to become one social unit, with necessary changes in the present national structures. In the course of this process, all human issues become global. As humankind addresses to these issues, there will logically be a harmonisation between the interests of human society and nature, on the one hand, and within human society itself, on the other. There is going to be a fair levelling off between high and low, rich and poor, gender inequality and other discrepancies between countries and within each country. The human community will become prosperous as a whole and not region or groupwise. To believe that in this epoch of globalisation, one country or a bloc can dominate others or prosper amidst backwardness, poverty and deprivation is a perversion in terms. At the moment, all basic human issues, having become global, will have to be tackled by each country in friendship and cooperation with other countries, especially the neighbouring ones. Whosoever defies a coordinated action with his neighbours and generates tensions in national, regional or international relations will have to suffer the negative effects of the globalisation process.

This new social reality demands a proper change in our attitude (i.e., way of thinking and behaving) from the old to the new one.

14. Corresponding to its nature, the globalisation process may well be served by addressing to its following priorities.

The first priority is to adopt the social perspective of rational humanism and the general approach of scientific realism, both of which emphasise the proper resolution of imbalances within society, on the one hand, and the suitable handling of disharmonies between nature (i.e., environment) and society, on the other. Here, the main task is the awakening and involvement of the people in upholding rational and scientific outlook by countering all illogical and unrealistic dogmas.

The second priority is to establish a rational, just and viable global system which ensures the full democratisation of all political institutions through the rule of law with peoples empowerment as its most important component. Here, the main task is the rousing of the people at all levels for carrying out

democratic reforms (corresponding to given conditions), beginning from the UN and other international institutions to down below or vice versa (as the case may be). All laws, rules and norms vesting special powers in anyone, howsoever powerful, should be done away with.

The third priority is to ensure a genuine peace in the world by persuading all countries to follow a foreign policy of friendship and cooperation among themselves and by defusing all tension points (both within and between countries) in the world through dialogue and negotiations, either bilaterally or by some other medium, preferably the UN. Here, the main task is the mobilisation of the people against war, confrontation and militarisation and in favour of demanding two amendments in the CTBT, i.e., (a) global nuclear disarmament within a reasonable timeframe, and (b) the immediate handing over of the control of their nuclear arms to the UN (till their final disposal) by the N-weapon states.

The fourth priority is to take up a realistic development model which balances the interests of nature, human society and each individual. Striving for a balanced economic growth, it should pursue a three sided aim, i.e., productivity (to meet the social demands), equity (to safeguard the individual interests), and sustainability (to protect the environmental needs), thus developing human resources, on the one hand, and the natural resources, on the other. Here the main task is the preparation of the people to uphold the twin principles of market generated growth (for maximising productivity) and the state organised social justice (for ensuring equity and sustainability) and demand the removing of all inequalities and disparities among humans (e.g., rich-poor, urban-rural, gender inequality, etc.).

The fifth priority is to pursue a value based mode, characterised by humanistic, democratic, accountable, open, transparent and honest norms, in every sphere of activity. Here the main task is the convincing of the people about the ill effects of immoral and degraded manners on their lives.

15. No rational, just and viable system can be built anywhere today if the concerned people remain unaware of the need for such a social change. A given society is the product of the concerned peoples mindset and nothing else. If there is no rationality, justice or viability in peoples minds, no Constitution, law, state, government, institution, party or media can create even a liberal authoritarian order in a village. 18-12-1998

State Of Affairs In South Asia And Its Needs

I

1. South Asian region, comprising seven countries (namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives), presents a paradoxical state of affairs in the present-day world. On the one hand, it possesses a great developmental potential in its human and natural resources, and, on the other, it constitutes the poorest and the most backward area of our world.

II

2. On its positive side, it is characterised by a geographical contiguity, 1/5th of human community, with a shared history and socio-ethnic affinity, 700 million effective consumers, second largest railway network (a total of 92,256 kms) after the US, the largest irrigated land in the world (about 680 million hectares), a large number of scientific and technical personnel, surpassing even certain developed areas and a rich stock of bio-diversity and natural resources. All these helpful characteristics can become the basis for developing a prosperous South Asian community and contented societies within it.

3. Yet, at the same time, the region as a whole and its individual countries, present a pathetic picture all around. Compared favourably with other developing countries of the world in the middle of this century, the South Asian nations are now caught in a two dimensional crisis, both human and environmental, pushing its people to a sub-human level.

4. As regards human resources, over 400 million South Asians go to bed hungry every night. Another 300 million hover just above the poverty line. More than half the South Asian people are illiterate, 1/3rd homeless, 2/5th under-employed, 1/3rd devoid of safe drinking water and other health-care facilities and 3/4th do not have access to latrines. Fifty-three percent of children

below 5 years are underweight. About 100 million children in the 5-14 age group work as labourers. The condition of women is highly distressing. South Asia tops in gender based violence the world over.

5. The average annual income of the people at $309 is even far below $555 of Africa's sub-Saharan region, the most deprived region of the world two decades ago. Country-wise also, national incomes are among the lowest in the world, ranging from Bhutan's $180 to $300 for India.

The problem of poverty is further aggravated by various other social deprivations.

6. South Asia requires primary schooling for 126 million children, health-care for 690 million and safe drinking water for 770 million people, adequate nutrition for 87 million children and provision of family planning services to 287 million married couples.

All this demands a huge amount of finance. But the ruling elite pursues its own priorities. The internal and external conflicts, generated by wrong official policies, devour much of the region's financial resources.

III

7. Taking up its environmental resources, the region has witnessed an extensive erosion of its natural resource base over the last five decades. As a result of rapid deforestation, the forest cover of the region has declined to 17.5% of the land area. Some of the worst natural disasters, like floods and drought, are directly linked to the pressures on its eco-system. Global warming caused by the greenhouse effect is bound to have serious implications for all coastal regions, with the Maldives and Bangladesh being the most vulnerable.

8. The wastage of resources, coupled with the low growth rate, have increased the official debt burden, both internal and external. The growing debt service payments along with the rising military expenditure and wastage and misuse of funds have declined the region's credit worthiness, increasing its ineffectiveness to attract adequate portion of investment and aid from global resources which are being diverted to other seemingly more promising regions. It receives just 3.6% net long-term flows to developing countries and accounts only for one percent of the world trade, while comprising 20% of the world population. The effect of these trends is further marginalisation

and a substantial reverse flow of resources—human, natural and financial—from South Asia to the developed countries.

IV

9. Feeling the imperative demand of the globalisation process to accord top priority to regional economic cooperation and trade and following the global trend of the formation of regional groupings, the seven South Asian countries formed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985. But, despite being in existence for over 13 years, the SAARC has so far not been able to make any substantial progress.

10. For example, the SAARC trade among its seven members amounts, according to a UN estimate, to little over 3% of their total world trade in contrast to 80% for European Community and 20% for ASEAN. A workable common market in South Asia can, as per the Centre for Global Trade Development, boost the total trade potential to fivefold, (i.e., $15 billion) by the turn of the century from the present level of $3 billion. But this could not be possible for the SAARC in its present form.

11. In 1997, the 9th Male SAARC Summit committed itself to convert the region into a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by the year 2001, thus giving a boost to regional development. In the 10th Colombo SAARC Summit, its seven members have agreed to reduce tariffs on 2,459 items, with India announcing to remove import restrictions on 2,000 trade items. Now India had raised the ceiling for Indian joint ventures in SAARC countries under the fast track from $4 million to $15 million.

V

12. So far, the development of SAARC has defied all solutions. This is, because there are several hurdles to cross. The biggest one is the Indo-Pak conflict over Jammu-Kashmir. Another is the apprehension among the smaller members that Indian goods would flood their markets. The third one is the bilateral irritants between India and every SAARC member. The fourth one is the internal political compulsions of the ruling groups of all the SAARC members who try to use bilateral disputes in their own favour. The fifth one has been the domineering 'big brotherly' role of India which has in the past tried to dominate its youngsters.

13. A common market needs an attitude of friendship, cooperation and partnership among its members. It cannot be built in an atmosphere of mistrust, suspicion, tension and

confrontation. Unless the causes generating such an atmosphere are removed, the genuine relations of mutual trust and confidence among the SAARC members cannot be established.

14. The responsibility for creating a congenial atmosphere within the SAARC logically and necessarily falls on India. Because, it is the biggest party in almost all bilateral disputes in the region. To inculcate goodwill among its trade partners even at the cost of concessions is an appropriate sacrifice which will serve the cause of peace, democracy and development not only in South Asia and the world, but also India.

Firstly, the sorting out of a proper solution to the Jammu-Kashmir problem would defuse the principal global flashpoint and put an end to the wasting of public funds or unnecessary arms race between India and Pakistan. Consequently, both these countries have, due to their unbearably high defence expenditures for 50 years, become marginal in terms of development and social welfare on the global scale.

Proceeding from Jammu-Kashmir problem's basic nature (i.e., a bilateral issue in the legal sense but a trilateral question according to the political criterion) and its ground realities (i.e., putting at stake their national honours by India and Pakistan to secure the exclusive control of Jammu-Kashmir; the Kashmiris' desire to opt out of India, while other Jammu-Kashmir ethnic communities having their own aspirations and concerns), a just, fair and viable solution to this problem is the one that reconciles the respective national interests of both India and Pakistan, on the one hand, and fulfils the aspirations and concerns of all the ethnic groups of Jammu-Kashmir state, on the other. Based on this principle, an appropriate option is the establishment of an Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over the entire Jammu-Kashmir state (which will handle only defence, foreign affairs and currency concerning this state), with full autonomy to each of the eight ethnic regions of Jammu-Kashmir under a federal setup. Such an arrangement will result in creating a partnership of India, Pakistan and Jammu-Kashmir people, on the one hand, and open the way for the development of SAARC, on the other.

Secondly, the removing of the anxiety of the SAARC's smaller members about Indian goods overwhelming their markets by giving proper Indian guarantees to the former would give a new fillip to trade and development in this region, thus benefitting one and all.

Thirdly, the easing of the bilateral irritants—like the matters

relating to Ganga waters, Chakma tribals, common borders, transit facilities to India, Bangladeshi immigrants in India, etc., between India and Bangladesh; the questions relating to Kalapani, 1950 Indo-Nepal friendship treaty, water sharing and some power projects, etc., between India and Nepal; the issues relating to LTTE militancy, fishing in each others sphere in the Indian ocean, etc., between India and Sri Lanka; the question of Bhutan's displeasure on India's refusal to help the former in its dispute with Nepal on Nepali settlers in Bhutan; and Maldives security concerns—would generate new friendly spirit among the concerned countries.

Fourthly, the tackling of the contentious issues with other SAARC members would lead to the eradication of anti-Indian feelings among the people of these countries.

Fifthly, the cultivation of friendly relations among all the SAARC countries would change India's 'big brother' image into a democratic and rational personality.

Today, it is more than obvious that if the SAARC fails to take off, the consequences would be disastrous for all concerned in general and India and Pakistan in particular. In general, it would retard the developmental process of all the South Asian countries as compared with other nations in the world. In particular, the economic deterioration in India and Pakistan coupled with their confrontationist politics and sharpening internal ethnic conflicts would create destabilising effects on both these multi-ethnic countries. 19-12-1998

Present Indian Realities And Their Demands

I

1. History tells that humankind has always tried to understand the problems of his social existence since his inception. And he has done this by knowing the facts of his social process of development. Today, when humankind is entering a new social era, it becomes incumbent upon us to understand the actualities of our social living and its concerns. This naturally demands of us to comprehend the social realities of the process of our basic social unit, i.e., India, and their demands.

II

2. The principal social reality of India today is that its direction (i.e., theory), movement (i.e., practice) and structure (i.e., organisation) is being determined by the newly emerged process of globalisation. This fact is obvious from the national agenda of our government and parliament (e.g., Patents Bill, Insurance Bill, Strategic partnership with Russia, question of CTBT, Rupee-Dollar exchange rate, foreign investment, population increase, environmental pollution, human rights violations, foreign debt, etc.) as well as India's membership of and commitment to the decisions of so many world bodies (like the UN, IMF, WB and dozens of other international institutions). All this shows how India (just like other countries of the world) is tied to the newly emerging global order. No country can today afford to develop outside of this historical process. But this is only one side of our principal reality.

3. The other side of this reality is that we are answering its global aspect with pre-global themes, such as *Hindutva* led nationalism (based on 4,000 year old vedic tribal reality), Mandalism directed nationalism (guided by over 2,000 year old caste reality) and *Bharatiya* secularism geared to all religions (a

jumble of Gandhian Liberal Hinduism and Nehruvian money-cum-power led opportunism).

These themes may work to exploit peoples centuries old religious and casteist sentiments or money-cum-power driven ideas for seizing power or grabbing money. But they cannot correspond with the demands of the 21st century globalisation process and thus the social needs of the people of this country.

4. Globalisation process demands a new social paradigm (or model) that imbibes the social approach of rational humanism; a new political structure, based on the peoples empowerment-centred rule of law; a new development model with its three sided aim of productivity, equity and sustainability; a new cultural pattern, characterised by a humanistic-cum-democratic value system and a new peaceful, harmonious and tension free global environment, centred around the concept of brotherhood of mankind and the practice of the principle of friendship and cooperation among nations.

5. Yet, the *Hindutva* agenda stands for the politics of one nation, one culture and one country (contrary to the multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic character of India); *Swadeshi* economy (as opposed to its integration with the world economy); common civil code (denying the minorities the right to use their personal laws till they are convinced to opt for a democratic personal law); abrogation of Article 370 (denying Jammu-Kashmir an autonomous status), etc. In practice, however, the protagonists of *Hindutva* are, contrary to their whole agenda, pursuing Congress-cum-UF type prescriptions.

6. The Mandalisation agenda advocates caste led social justice, but, in practice, pursues caste oriented nationalism. Its single point action plan includes the reservation of seats in Parliament, Assemblies and services for lower castes. Corresponding to its splintered social ideology (i.e., the social reality of the existence of 4,000 castes), it consists of a number of caste based political outfits, such as, BSP, RJM, Samajvadi Party (Mulayam led group), Janata Dal, Samajvadi Janata Party (Chandra Shekhar faction), etc. Of these caste groups, only four have their specific mass bases, drawing support from some bigger castes, e.g., RJD's Yadav basis in Bihar, SP based on UP Yadavs, Samata Party located among Bihar's Kurmi caste and BSP having its mass influence among SCs in two or three states.

7. The *Bharatiya* secularism (as upheld by the Congress and

supported by the Left) claims to establish a democratic order under the present centralised Constitution and jurisprudence. But the 45 year long practice of this brand has turned the 1950s medium level developed India into one of the most backward regions of the world.

8. Obviously, none of these brands has any relevance to the new globular paradigm. That is why all these samples (e.g., Narasimha Rao led Congress rule, UF government or BJP directed coalition) have, at their given times, responded to the various demands of the globalisation process but never taken any social initiative facilitating its movement forward. The reason is that, having been grounded in the outdated theories of nationalism, they lack a global vision. Such a vision in our era emerges, or can emerge, from an internationalist approach as well as the outook of an interdependent (or a global oriented or a South Asian centred) nationalism.

III

9. The second social reality of India today is that the potential of our human resources has been throttled by the prevalence of sub-human living conditions.

Five decades after independence, 62% of our people come under the category of poor; 40% live in absolute poverty—with no job, no home, no proper food, no electricity and safe drinking water, etc.; 40% have no access to basic health facilities; 75% have no proper latrines; 10% live in urban slums; 48% are totally illiterate; 5% are unemployed and 33% under-employed; 33% have no houses of their own; 10% are invalids who remain a neglected lot; about 12% are landless, constituting the poorest strata of our society; over 53% children are denied the right to basic and quality education. Nearly 75% women in the country suffer some form of oppression.

According to a *Times of India* survey, 80% of Indians want to go abroad for work. Brain drain from the country goes on unabated. About 6,000 highly trained Indians, comprising 40% engineers, 10 to 12% doctors and 15 to 20% scientists move to other countries for securing lucrative jobs every year.

According to the 1998 UNDP report, India has slipped one notch from 138 to 139 since 1997, while Pakistan has moved one point up from 139 to 138 during the same period among 174 countries in the matter of human development index (HDI) which ranks countries not on the basis of incomes but indices such as

average life expectancy, literacy and overall well-being.

While taking note of India's economic development, the report also warns that the country may be paying a heavy price for this development, bringing in its wake ecological devastation and numerous health problems. A conservative estimate of environmental damage puts the figure at more than $10 billion a year or 4.5% of the GDP in 1992. If higher estimates are used, the total environmental costs would be $13.8 billion or six percent of the GDP.

The report says urban air pollution costs India $1.3 billion a year, while water degradation leads to health costs amounting to $5.7 billion every year, nearly three-fifths of the country's total environmental costs.

The 1996 UNDP report said that, in South Asia, notably India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, 29% of the people were living in extreme poverty and more than 62% were living in conditions that could adversely affect their futures.

The unprecedented increase in population from 342 million in 1947 to 1,000 million today has been resulting in serious social tensions.

IV

10. The third social reality of India today is that its natural environment has been extensively damaged. The state of environmental resources speaks for itself.

Out of a total of 143 million hectares of cultivable land, nearly 60% suffers from soil erosion, waterlogging and salinity.

Another 16 million hectares is afflicted with ravines and rivulets. Such massive land degradation shows the gravity of the problem.

The forests have been the worst sufferers. In 1864, 40% of the country's landmass had a tree cover. By 1952, it is said to have come down to 22% and today it is only 11%.

The problem of water is even more serious. Water availability is constantly decreasing due to the wastage of rainwater and the overpressure and misuse of groundwater. Already, the water shortage in the towns and villages has become alarming. The quality of water (whether running, underground or overground) has been constantly decreasing.

The use of toxic chemicals, automobile transport and the coal based thermal plants and some other industries are creating pollution. The Centre for Science and Environment said that,

while the GDP in India has more than doubled in the past 20 years, the pollution from vehicles has gone up 8 times. Global warming is now becoming a reality and is increasing much faster than its earlier prediction.

Deforestation, land and water degradation and air pollution have created threats for India's genetic resources (comprising 45,000 plants and 75,000 animal species) as well as human species.

V

11. The fourth social reality of India today is the criminalisation of its political process.

By the criminalisation of politics is meant that our political process is being managed by politician-mafia gang-ups, power brokers, extra-constitutional centres, power abusers, communalists and casteists and owners of money and muscle power. In other words, it means that crime has become politicised.

There has been an alarming increase in mafia culture. It has spread far and wide. Mafias have sprung up in every walk of life—administration, forests, education, stock and currency markets, import and export, etc. According to the 1994 official Vohra Committee report: "Mafia is running a parallel government in the country."

The domination of mafiaism implies the perversion of the rule of law and deprivation of the people of even the meagre rights available to them in the existing set up. Politicians and their parties are only interested in establishing their own rule rather than the rule of law. All the basic institutions of the state, bearing a responsibility for ensuring the rule of law in their respective social areas, have in one way or another failed the people.

Mafiaism has given rise to crime syndicates. They jeopardise the smooth functioning of the administration and the safety of life and property of the common man. Consequently, the crime rate in India has gone up. According to the latest Home Ministry document, the all India crime rate stands at 12.4%. Rajasthan topped the list of the most crime prone states in 1996, while Delhi had the highest rate of crime among metropolitan cities in that year.

Women are the worst sufferers of crime in the country. According to a Delhi based women's group, 76% women in the country suffer some form of sexual abuse. Sixty percent of woman detained in mental hospitals are not mad, but victims of ruthless husbands and in-laws. Next to women, SCs and STs,

followed by minorities are the targets of the criminals.

Communalism, casteism and corruption also are other forms of the criminalisation of politics.

Obviously, no genuine freedom or democracy can exist in a polity dominated by criminalisation.

VI

12. The fifth social reality of India today is the emerging major economic-financial crisis. All major economic-financial indicators are sounding alarm bells.

On the economic front, there is a downward trend in industrial growth. It is suffering from a prolonged recession since 1996-97. It is not expected to grow more than 4.5% as against a target of 12%. Agricultural growth too is not likely to be high. Exports (which had been in decline since 95-96) prospects look bleak. The inflow of tourists and the foreign exchange earnings from it is also not promising. A widening trade gap and constraints on the invisibles are likely to create a crisis on the current account. All in all, the economic fundamentals provide no hope.

As far as the capital account is concerned, India has not been able to take advantage of the ongoing global economic crisis. It has not succeeded in attracting large-scale capital flows because it has no clear-cut policy on FDI and did not carry out administrative and infrastructural improvements and agrarian reforms. Nuclear tests also created negative effects. Instead of reducing government deficit, it proposed to increase revenues through higher excise collections and import tariffs.

The fiscal scenario is also gloomy. The mid-term review conducted by the National Council of the Indian Applied Economic Research (NCAER) says that, with the downward rigidity of expenditures, likely revenue shortfall and lower than budgeted growth in the economy, the targets set for key fiscal indicators in the 1998-99 budget are likely to go awry.

According to this survey, the gross fiscal deficit is expected to be higher than the targeted 5.6% of the GDR. Because, the actual expenditures of the centre would exceed the budgeted amount.

It said, the continued sluggishness in the economy will imply reduced buoyancy in government revenues. The government's programme seems to be inconsistent with the money supply target of 15 to 15.5% for 1998-99.

It further stated that the trade deficit is likely to widen. Assuming 9.2% growth in exports and 6% in imports, it estimates

the balance of trade deficit at $8,566 million, representing 26% increase over the previous year's $6,799 million.

The state of affairs of the Indian economy is pretty bad. Now a severe economic downturn stares at India.

VII

13. The sixth social reality of India is its hyper consumerist culture which orientates one to consider money and power as the basic inputs of his decision taking. Its distinguishing feature is that, while parroting the universal values of truth, peace, non-violence, equality and justice, it is distinguished by all types of trickery and fraud.

This double-dealing culture of saying one thing and doing another has made power grabbing and money laundering as the be-all and end-all of social life. Polluting all moral values, it has wrought havoc both at the political and the public level.

At the political level, while announcing peace as its goal and non-violence as its fundamental principle, it actually follows the path of confrontation and militarisation. While swearing by democracy, it always crushes dissent by all means. While making solemn declarations of upholding secularism, it at the same time hobnobs with the communal and the casteist forces. While pledging to fight corruption, it is the personification of all types of corruption.

At the public level, it has created an immoral atmosphere all around. Food adulteration, sub-standard goods and drug taking; black market in getting water, electricity, ration card, gas facility, telephone connection, railway reservation, admission to school, college, hospital and hiring for a house or a shop; fleecing through bogus companies, employment exchanges and visa agencies; tax evasion, money laundering, smuggling, manipulation of foreign trade, bond frauds and securities scams; etc.; all flourish with impunity.

It has created a social environment where there is a premium on all types of dishonesty.

VIII

14. The seventh social reality of India is its force based concept of national greatness which logically moves towards militarisation and domination.

To aspire for national greatness is one of the normal features of nationalism. But, while some nationalisms behave in a realistic way (i.e., taking into account their internal and external balance

of forces), others act subjectively (e.g., Japan and Germany during the second world war, the Soviet Union recently, etc.).

India's desire for national greatness has also been a usual national feature. But it suffers from two misperceptions. One is the immensity of its size (but with a plural ethnicity) and the other is its notion of India having been a divine land, destined to play a unique role on this earth. And these beliefs formed the rationale for its adoption of the path of regional superpowerism since its inception (1947). Giving priority to the politics of gun over the politics of social peace, equality and justice, it has gone through four wars with its two neighbours, Pakistan and China, without any substantial gain to its people. Even after the end of the era of cold war when global military expenditure has been decreasing by $4 billion each year since 1987 and when every region of the world had reduced military spending, only India and Pakistan have been increasing their military budgets. Also, India has the distinction of having been the biggest importer of weapons among the developing countries. And now it has gone ahead by cracking the nuclear bomb.

India justifies its gun politics by pointing out twin threats from Pakistan and China. But this reasoning ignores the existing world realities which underline the futility of the politics of gun in our epoch. One reality is that the superpowerism of the Soviet Union collapsed because of its failure to provide bread and freedom to its people. The other is that the non-military Japanese and the German models have transformed these two war devastated countries into world economic superpowers, with the world community giving its unanimous approval to their elevation to the permanent membership of the Security Council. The third reality is that the non-confrontationist path adopted by Canada, Austria, Scandinavian countries, Costa Rica and a few other Asian, Latin American and African countries has enabled them to attain a satisfactory degree of welfare for their people.

The historical experience of the Indian path of regional superpowerism with its imperative of militarisation shows that it has always hindered the improvement of India's relations with its neighbours, especially Pakistan, on the one hand, and throttled India's social development and kept it one of the poorest countries of the world, on the other.

IX

15. The eighth social reality of India is the decreasing effectiveness of its two safety valves, i.e., the judiciary and the media.

A

Now, it is widely recognised that there has been an alarming decline in the country's administration of justice. Even the President of India, K.R. Narayanan, and the Chief Justice of India, A.S. Anand, feel highly disturbed at the situation, though for different reasons.

The President gave expression to his feelings at a seminar in New Delhi where the Chief Justice of India was also present. He expressed serious concern over the slow speed of the judicial process and characterised it as a denial of justice to the people. Expressing serious concern over a backlog of 30 million cases in various courts in India, he said that the government and judiciary should take steps to tackle them on a war footing. He said that, despite the advent of public interest litigation, the citizen's access to law remained limited due to the enormous costs involved in the process of litigation and the unending process of appeals available. He was candid in declaring that if lawyers are responsible for prolonging the disposal of cases by all means, the judges have failed to prevent the misuse of the law to seek the adjournment of cases at will.

The Chief Justice said that the huge backlog of cases is a product of the small ratio of judges as per the Indian population and the existence of large vacancies at different levels.

Whatever the case, the problem of delayed and expensive justice is not new. Various Commissions and Committees have made a number of recommendations as remedial measures. But the situation has only aggravated. Thousands of obsolete and archaic laws have created a jungle of rules, regulations and procedures. As many as 1,300 outdated laws out of a total of 2,500 central laws and nearly 15,000 useless laws out of a total of 25,000 state laws (which cause delays in the disposal of public business) have been the source of corruption in the central and state government offices. The mess at all judicial levels should be set right. The method of Lok Adalats can be one way out for the cheap and speedy delivery of justice. The present judicial setup has proved unequal to the task.

B

As regards the role of the media, the press in India has a two hundred year long positive history. But, recently, it has been

showing some signs of degeneration. The main reason lies in the attitudinal change of newspaper owners.

Earlier, a newspaper owner interfered in its running only when his personal interests were involved. In that situation, the newspapers adopted, more or less, a healthy attitude towards social issues. But now an owner has started to treat his paper as a market commodity and a political tool to serve his interests. Accordingly, many owners have brought necessary changes in the managements of their respective papers. Obviously, this has resulted in a shift in the process of the Indian press. Now it has become more personalised and commercial, thus lowering the quantum of its positive approach towards social problems and mainly resorting to sensationalism.

The other snags in the process of a free press comprise the politicians efforts to woo the papers in their favour through newsprint and advertising concessions, the use of official electronic media by the ruling party, etc.

There is a need for a watchdog mechanism to ensure the freedom of the press and its accountability to the people.

X

16. The ninth social reality of India is the growing crisis of the BJP led coalition in the post-November 1998 Assembly elections period. The crisis is obvious from five facts: The increasing contradictions between the liberal and the extremist factions within the BJP as well as the Sangh Parivar; the rising inflation, lawlessness and corruption; the growing discontent against the BJP led coalition; the emerging differences between the BJP and its coalition allies; and the back up of Sonia led Congress by all the anti-BJP forces. All these trends indicate that the coming days are going to be very hard for the BJP led coalition.

XI

17. All the afore-mentioned social realities demand a proper response from all concerned.

The first demand is to be clear on the question of the nature of globalisation and its priorities and to awaken the people on it.

The second demand is to be clear on the state of affairs in South Asia and its needs and to awaken the people on it.

The third demand is to be clear on the present Indian realities and their demands and to awaken the people on them.

The fourth demand is to chalk out a general programme for the

development of India by applying the theory and the priorities of globalisation to the present Indian realities, thus working out a paradigm of India's interdependent (or global oriented or South Asian centred) nationalism. Here, it is highly necessary to awaken and mobilise the people in favour of the above stated programme of an interdependent nationalism.

The fifth demand, but of immediate importance as a starting point of our mass work, is to sort out the problems facing the deprived and the under-privileged classes (i.e., poor, landless, unorganised urban labour, hawkers, rickshaw pullers, mine workers, city slum dwellers, pavement dwellers, female labour in small enterprises, small and marginal farmers, fishermen, invalids, blind, women, children, students, youth, unemployed, *dalits*, tribals, backwards, etc.) and to awaken and mobilise them for their solution. Further, it is also necessary to organise the masses for protest against rising prices, unemployment, corruption, crime, human rights violations, atrocities on women and weaker sections. 20-12-1998

Signals From November 1998 Assembly Elections

I

BJP lost, while Congress won in the above elections. Different reasons had been advanced concerning this event.

Some say that it happened due to centre's failure to halt the price rise, growing lawlessness and insecurity, increasing corruption, etc.

Others say that it was an anti-incumbency vote.

Still others hold that it was the result of BJP's attempt to pursue its sectarian *Hindutva* agenda, e.g., communalising education, victimising minorities, ignoring weaker sections, etc.

Further, some ascribe it to the BJP's internal dissensions.

More, some regard it as a vote against BJP state governments' poor performance.

Still more, some maintain that Sonia factor was responsible for this happening.

All these arguments contain some force.

II

The main reason seems to be that the BJP failed to live up to peoples expectations. There was a wide gap between its promise and performance. It proved to be just like another Congress version, even more poor performer than the latter. Its illusory image of a party with a difference and its commitment of "an able leader and a stable government" were blown to pieces on the test of practice. Its *Hindutva* based nationalism and nuclear patriotism proved less effective than the mundane public issues. It also indicated that the extremist politics is generally counter-productive everywhere today, especially in a plural country. It was a vote of no confidence against the BJP as a whole, including its central and state governments. The argument of Sonia factor as the basis of

Congress victory lacks conviction as it did not work in the February 1998 general elections.

III

The first signal these Assembly elections sound is that voters can no longer be taken for granted. They demand accountability from the government they elect. If their representatives fail to deliver in time, they send them packing in the next turn.

The second signal is that the voters opt for any available viable alternative, even if they had rejected it at the previous occasion. Their preference is mainly linked to their immediate perception. It can vary from poll to poll or stay constant during a number of such times.

The third signal is that the people voted for the Congress, because it was the only practicable choice before the electorate in the three states. No other non-BJP or non-Congress party has any worthwhile influence there. They did not go for other non-BJP parties, such as the Leftist ones, because their respective leadership had already promised unconditional support to the Congress to replace the BJP led central government. The vote for Congress represented an anti-BJP trend and not any bilateral electoral polarisation led by the Congress, on the one side, and the BJP, on the other.

The fourth signal is that a very tough period lies ahead for the BJP led coalition. At the moment, it is premature to assess as to how long it will survive. The trend is likely to become clear after the due April 1999 Assembly elections in some states. For the time being, the BJP allies are sticking to the ruling alliance.

The fifth signal is that the transformation of power from the BJP to the Congress in the three states represents only a change from the tweedledom to the tweedledee. While the defeat of the BJP implies a set back to the *Hindutva* forces, the victory of the Congress means the reinforcement of authoritarianism and sycophantic (or bonded labour) culture. Congress gains are likely to prove temporary unless it seriously learns from its five decade old mistaken politics, discards the one person centred national politics and organisational structure and opts for genuine democratisation. 21-12-1998

On Jammu-Kashmir

1. This house resolves that a fair, just and viable solution to the Jammu-Kashmir problem is the trilateral option. It reconciles the national interests of India and Pakistan, on the one hand, and harmonises the interests of the Jammu-Kashmir people with those of the Indian and the Pakistan people, on the other.

2. The respective national interests of India and Pakistan should, and can, be balanced by establishing an Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over Jammu-Kashmir state (which would handle only Jammu-Kashmir's defence, foreign affairs and currency), while the interests of the Jammu-Kashmir people should, and can, be harmonised with those of the Indian and the Pakistan people by giving semi-independence to the state, with the maximum possible autonomy to each of the ethno-regional identities in the state.

3. With regard to the harmonising of the different aspirations and concerns of Jammu-Kashmir's various identities, these should, and can, be reconciled by adopting a federal Constitution of the state which should, on the one hand, give maximum possible autonomy to each ethnic region with a provision for further devolution of powers to the district, block and village councils, and which should stand for a single Jammu-Kashmir state, having a common Head of the State (to be elected by the ethno-regional councils) and a common High Court, a common Election Commission, a common Public Service Commission, a common Environmental Commission and a common Human Resources Development Commission, all to be appointed by the ethno-regional councils, with one representative from each.

4. The Indo-Pak or SAARC Condominium over Jammu-Kashmir will be a new experiment of a new global oriented development model in today's world—showing how the divergent national interests of various nations be reconciled and the different aspirations and concerns of various ethnicities

be harmonised.

5. This house also condemns the human rights violations—rape of women, killings of the innocent people, burning of houses, torture and beatings, etc.—committed by the security forces in Jammu-Kashmir state, particularly the valley.

21-12-1998