

# Lessons to Learn

The flash floods that tore through Jammu after record rainfall over the past few days are not merely the result of nature's fury. They are also the direct consequence of human neglect and shortsightedness. While the toll—lives lost, homes destroyed, roads and bridges washed away, over 12,000 people displaced—commands headlines, the deeper story is about how much of this devastation could have been prevented. For centuries, the Tawi River gave Jammu its rhythm and resilience, carrying away excess waters in nature's own cycle of renewal. But today, that self-cleansing balance has been disrupted. In the name of modernization, natural drainage systems have been choked, wetlands encroached upon, and riverbeds narrowed. The irony is cruel: the city that once flowed harmoniously with its river is now drowning in man-made floods. The truth is uncomfortable but inescapable. Poor urban planning has crippled Jammu's ability to withstand heavy rains. Ill-conceived projects, often drafted in distant boardrooms without regard for ground realities, have dismantled safeguards instead of strengthening them. Infrastructure built at great public cost has proven brittle, collapsing at the very moment it was most needed. This disaster, then, is not just about rainfall; it is about arrogance. The arrogance of believing rivers can be bent at will, landscapes reshaped without consequence, and traditional wisdom dismissed in favor of hurried, grandiose construction. The price of this hubris is now being borne by ordinary citizens—in broken homes, shattered livelihoods, and lives cut short. It is, of course, vital to focus on immediate relief. Evacuation, food, medicine, and shelter for the displaced must remain urgent priorities. But if our response stops there, we condemn ourselves to repeat this cycle of devastation again and again. What is needed, urgently, is accountability. A public audit of Jammu's urban development projects is overdue. Were they designed with sustainability in mind? Were local ecological and geographical realities respected? Did planners prepare the city for the increasingly violent swings of climate change, or were these projects mere showcases of "development" meant to please political masters? The answer, judging by current events, is obvious. Going forward, Jammu does not need ornamental projects. It needs resilient infrastructure, rooted in necessity and guided by foresight. Restoring natural drainage systems, protecting floodplains, and reorienting town planning around ecological realities must become the new non-negotiables. Climate change is not a distant threat—it is already here, and Jammu must adapt or continue to suffer. The floods are a tragedy. But they are also an inflection point. Jammu has a choice: to carry on with business as usual, ignoring the warnings written in muddy waters, or to reset its development model towards one that respects the environment it inhabits. It is late, but not too late. If lessons are honestly learned and acted upon, Jammu can still reclaim its identity as a city in harmony with nature, not at war with it. If not, the cycle of destruction will only repeat—each time, more brutal than the last.

# REWIND: Rajiv's China Visit & Nehru

With Prime Minister Modi attending the SCO meeting in Tianjin and the warmth being portrayed between India-China and Russia, this week we reproduce an article first released in December 1988. The piece, four decades ago deals with the then situation which interestingly is quite similar today i.e.: 'More than anything else, the visit should help better understanding among the two Asian giants at a time when a sea change is coming over international relations...India and China must resolve their border dispute if they are serious about restructuring and revitalizing their relations. They cannot afford to sit pretty when new and vital equations are being forged all round.' Indeed, Trump's trade war has both Delhi and Beijing orchestrating bonhomie, but given the historic inability so far, the big question is will it help build good relations?

■ INDER JIT

The Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, now in Beijing, deserves a hand for his bold initiative in deciding to visit China. Nothing would gladden the hearts of all of us Indians and so also of all the Chinese more than to return to the balmy days of "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai". But how do we restore the old atmosphere? How do we as two great neighbours resolve our crucial border problem, which even led to an armed conflict in 1962. Various suggestions have been mooted – some by the Chinese and others by our own leaders. But a question which has crossed my mind again and again in this year of Nehru's birth centenary is: How would Nehru have approached the problem today and tackled it in the light of two cardinal factors. First, Nehru's grand dream of India and China working together and contributing to the cause of peace and development in Asia and the world. Second, Parliament's resolution of November 14, 1962 which was moved by Nehru and, in his own words in the Lok Sabha, was passed by the House "in an unusual manner – by all the Members standing and pledging themselves to what it contained."

Wisdom undoubtedly lies in seeing that we do not become prisoners of the past. At the same time, the past cannot be wished away, especially in a vigorous democracy and, what is more, in a pre-election year. In fact, we would do well to remember that Nehru decided to cultivate China after the revolution in 1949 even though Peking, as Beijing was then called, had branded his Government as a "running dog of US imperialism". He did this not in any spirit of romanticism but because he was clear that India's security demanded this. Peking, for its part, responded eagerly, as it wanted an influential friend who would provide a bridge to the non-Communist world. (Nehru introduced Chou-En-Lai on the Afro-Asian stage at Bandung.) Proof of this is an incident which, according to knowledgeable people, took place when the Nepalese Prime Minister, Tanka Prasad Acharya, visited Peking. At a reception in his honour, he raised the slogan of Nepal-China friendship. Mao, who was present, quickly corrected him, saying it was Nepal-China-India friendship. Nehru also foresaw that China and Russia would clash one day.

A ringside view of the times and development is available from Durga Das, author of "India from Curzon to Nehru and After", described by the late President, Dr. Zakir

Hussain, as "Indian history seen from the inside". He writes: "India and China had drifted apart towards a point of no return by April 1960 when Chou came to Delhi for further talks on the border question. Nehru was anxious to get China to accept the McMahon Line as the northern boundary of NEFA and Chou was willing to do so. But in return, the Chinese Prime Minister asked for India's acceptance of Chinese presence in Aksai Chin. Nehru was not interested in Aksai Chin... and at one stage was quite agreeable to strike a deal. But premature leakage in the press of what was going on between him and Chou and its description of the proposed announcement as a 'sell-out' on Aksai Chin blocked the agreement. The Opposition in Parliament pounced on the report and extracted from an embarrassed Nehru an undertaking that 'not an inch of Indian territory' would be ceded or bartered away without the approval of the House."

In fact, Parliament's record of "Discussion regarding Chinese Incursions" in the Lok Sabha on December 5, 1961 makes interesting reading and deserves to be recalled. Nehru was initially accused by the Opposition of "suppressing facts" in regard to developments in Aksai Chin. Nehru, I recall, stood his ground stoutly and said: "We must know the facts; and I do not understand how you arrive at the truth by minimizing the facts which are known to everybody else but we ourselves refuse to see them properly, ostrich-like. The importance of it (the area) is very great for a variety of reasons and more essentially for the reasons which I have just mentioned. (Himalayas are not only a part of our territory but they are part of our hearts and minds!) But, nevertheless, the fact remains that this area is a most extraordinary area in the world as far as terrain is concerned. No tree grows anywhere in this wide area --- there may be some shrubs..." But his effort to carry the House with him came to naught as Mr. Mahavir Tyagi interrupted: "No hair grows on my head. Does it mean that the head has no value?"

China's attack on India on October 22 greatly angered Nehru. He came forward with a resolution dealing with "this aggression and how China had betrayed the friendship and goodwill of India as well as the principles of Panchasheel which had been agreed between the countries." The resolution, which said that "the flame of liberty and sacrifice has been kindled anew" concluded: "with hope and faith, this House affirms the firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil

of India, however long and hard the struggle may be." Nehru recalled the resolution in the Lok Sabha during a discussion on "the border situation resulting from the invasion of India by China" on December 10, 1962. He denounced China repeatedly of "imperialist aggression", "betrayal" and much else, and asserted: "We will endeavour to the utmost of our ability to face the challenge and protect our motherland". Importantly, however, he did not allow his anger to cloud his good sense and said: "But, we shall always seek peaceful methods to resolve the dispute. But conditions for a peaceful approach have to be created if this is to yield any fruit."

Not a few, including some Opposition leaders, feel that Mr Gandhi's current visit to China goes against the letter and spirit of the 1962 resolution. This, however, is a superficial view. Mr. Gandhi's visit is essentially in keeping with Nehru's own approach to the problem in the wake of the aggression. It seeks to pull the whole issue out of the rut into which it has fallen and create what Nehru earnestly desired, namely "conditions for a peaceful approach" --- and "a peaceful solution". I heard Nehru conclude his speech on December 10, 1962 in the Lok Sabha with the words: "This House has already expressed itself in the resolution which it passed on the 14th of November and clearly started what it is determined to do and taken the pledge. By that pledge we shall stand and I hope we shall honour it in full." The pledge, too, is not being violated in any way. The resolution affirmed the "firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long and hard the struggle." The precise extent of the sacred soil has yet to be determined in view of China's claims and the resultant controversy.

No one in New Delhi is under any illusion about what can be achieved and what cannot be achieved during the present visit. There is talk of getting both the sides to agree to maintain peace and tranquility on the border pending a solution of the boundary dispute.

But this is neither new nor adequate. An agreement to this effect was reached during the visit of Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Janata Foreign Minister to Beijing in 1979. Yet, the understanding came to be violated when Beijing, according to New Delhi, made incursions into Arunachal Pradesh, the most serious of these being the one into Sumdorong Chu Valley. The important thing, therefore, is not merely to have a fresh accord on maintaining peace and tranquility. There is need to get both the countries

to respect the line of actual control along the entire Sino-Indian border and, importantly, to get the armed forces of each side to withdraw 20 kilometers from this line and disengage. (On a visit to Nathu la three summers ago, I saw men of the two armed forces ranged against each other, almost eye ball to eye ball.) Happily, thoughts in both camps appear to be moving towards disengagement.

But a pertinent question that arises is where precisely is the line of actual control? The Chinese should be asked to specify where exactly the line runs if we are to avoid repeating Sumdorong Chu. (Informed sources say that trouble erupted in Sumdorong Chu because of the Chinese decision to change the pattern of patrolling.) Simultaneously, efforts need to be made to draw up what authoritative circles describe as the "Objective criteria" for determining the Sino-Indian border. Over the decades, controversial borders are known to have been determined in accordance with certain acknowledged criteria such as watershed, highest mountain range, history and tradition. Alas, no agreement has been reached so far on these principles or criteria. The summit would have served a great purpose if it could set up a group to lay down a clear direction and format for negotiations. A lot of time has been wasted already.

Much else will no doubt be attempted during Mr Gandhi's stay in Beijing, especially during his meeting with Mr Deng Xioping. (The Chinese prefer not to disclose in advance the fact of such meetings at the highest level. President Nixon, for instance, was told of his meeting with Chairman Mao during his visit to Beijing barely half an hour earlier.) There is talk of setting up a Sino-Indian Joint Commission and of signing some agreements, including one on science and technology. (Among other things, India needs to learn the secret of China's success in agriculture which has enabled it to produce some 270 million tonnes of foodgrains as against India's total of 160 million tonnes with barely two-thirds of our arable area.) More than anything else, the visit should help better understanding among the two Asian giants at a time when a sea change is coming over international relations and one witnesses the incredible spectacle of Washington talking to Mr. Yasser Arafat's PLO! India and China must resolve their border dispute if they are serious about restructuring and revitalizing their relations.

They cannot afford to sit pretty when new and vital equations are being forged all round. ---INFA

# Bharatiya Knowledge Tradition: Where business means trust

■ PRASHANT POLE

I am often invited to speak on the Indian knowledge tradition at various forums. At almost every such event, I make it a point to mention Professor Angus Maddison — a renowned British economist who authored several influential books on the global economy. Through detailed data and references, he convincingly demonstrated that, at one time, Bharat was the world's wealthiest and most prosperous nation. Bharat accounted for one-third of the world's trade and held more than 30 per cent of its total wealth. These facts clearly prove how wealthy and advanced Bharat was before foreign invasions.

## Bharat—The Pioneer of Technology

When we look at such historical evidence, a natural question arises: How did we manage all this so efficiently? We dominated global trade; our ships reached as far as Latin (South) America. The demand for Bharatiya goods was high, thanks to their exceptional quality. The textiles we produced were so exquisite that kings and nobles from distant lands competed to acquire them. Our ancestors constructed astonishing temples, palaces, and monuments that still leave experts in awe of their craftsmanship and ingenuity. The grandeur of Angkor Wat, for example — one of the largest temple complexes in the world — is a testament to that brilliance. We pio-

neered metallurgy, mastered water management, and were technologically far ahead of our times.

## Master of Business Management

But how did we "manage" such a vast, efficient, and ethical system without formal management education? Today, we believe that only MBA graduates and business school alumni are capable of running organisations and industries. Was it the same back then? Did institutions like Takshashila, Nalanda, Ujjayini, Vikramashila, Vallabhi, or Sulo[gi offer courses in management? Historical evidence shows that formal education in "management" as a subject didn't exist in ancient Bharat. There were no departments or universities teaching it in the way we know today. And yet, our ancestors achieved incredible feats — building the world's largest ships, conducting international trade, innovating across disciplines, and upholding ethical business practices.

To understand how they did it, we must set aside modern management theories and look at ancient practices through a different lens.

During that golden period, management was not a part of curriculum directly, hence not taught as a subject. Yet, the principles of management were deeply ingrained — not through structured courses, but indirectly and very effectively through lived experiences, value-based learning, and cultural transmission. One powerful medium for this was the Upanishads —

ancient texts written 4000 to 6000 years ago by our ancestral sages and seers. Of those 108 Upanishads, ten were widely studied and taught. Today, we tend to see sacred texts like the Gita, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavatam as religious scriptures meant for retirement years. But that was not the case in ancient times.

Back then, the meaning of 'Dharma' was different. Rituals were less. Dharma referred to a noble, value-driven lifestyle. Boys and girls went to gurukuls (traditional schools) to study, where they would get introduced to these texts early in life. Far from being boring or abstract, the Upanishads were filled with insightful stories and lessons — practical guidance on how to live with integrity, responsibility, and purpose.

## Modern Meaning of Management

The modern wave of management thinking largely originates from America — a country shaped more by commerce than by spiritual or philosophical roots. The indigenous wisdom of the Red Indians (Native Americans) was largely wiped out by European settlers. Hence, material success and wealth naturally became dominant themes in American management philosophies. Therefore, in America, whenever anyone gets the slightest success in management, the Americans run behind him like a flock of sheep.

During the sixties — seventies, different thinkers and approaches took center stage in the U.S. —

from Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People" to Transactional Analysis (TA) of the "I'm OK, You're OK" model, and even Shiv Khera of Bharatiya origin, whose motivational ideas found wide appeal. Each of these systems emphasised aspects of human behaviour and productivity. But what's truly fascinating is that all these ideas were already written in detail in Bharatiya sacred texts thousands of years ago, articulated in unique and profound ways by our sages and seers in Upanishads, Gita etc. The

## Foundation of Management

The foundation of the Gita and the Upanishads is built upon ethics, integrity, and authenticity. These weren't just idealistic values to be admired from afar, they were expected to be practiced and lived. Truthfulness, ethical conduct, and personal integrity were seen as essential to every aspect of life, including trade and governance. As a result, deceit and manipulation found little room in our societal and economic systems.

This Shanti Mantra from the Mandukya Upanishad says: Om Bhadram Karnebhih Shrunuyaama Devaaha | Bhadram Pashyemaakshabhih Yajatraaha ||

Meaning, "May we hear with our ears what is auspicious. May we see with our eyes what is auspicious". The word "Yajatraa" here refers not only to those who perform fire rituals (yajnas), but — as explained by the Upanishadkars — to those who live their lives with a spirit of sacrifice, knowledge, and purpose. True

yajna lies in doing selfless work for the greater good, with awareness and commitment.

Another profound verse from the Mundaka Upanishad says: Satyameva Jayate Naanrutam Satyena Panthaa Vitato Devayaanah| Kramantrushayo Hyaatakaamo Yatra Tatsatyasya Paramam Nidhaanam || Meaning, "Only truth triumphs; falsehood can never win." Satyameva Jayate, a part of this Shloka, was adopted as Bharat's national motto on 26th January 1950.

The 14th Mayurav of Narayana Upanishad has a Shloka that states: Dharma Iti Dharmena Sarvamidam Parigruheetam | Dharmannaatidushaashcharatam Tasmaaddharme Ramante ||6|| Meaning, Everything is sustained by Dharma. Righteous conduct, integrity, and trust are all parts of Dharma. Faith in scriptures is the soul of Dharma.

These teachings, through gurukulas, universities, institutes, family values, trickled down to the bottom, embedding them in daily life in schools, homes, and communities. These values seeped deep into the consciousness of children growing up in ancient Bharat. As a result, truthfulness and ethical conduct were seen even in business.

This trust and reliability became Bharat's hallmark. Hence, international merchants and rulers blindly trusted Bharatiya traders not just because of product quality, but because of their integrity. In modern management language, this would be called a strong ethical code of conduct.

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