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## Dr Dilip Khetarpal Reviews Phidalia Toi's The Dusk

### The Dusk - Enwrapping India with Darkness

Though born and raised in Jowai, a very small town of Meghalaya, Phidalia Toi acquired her Master's degree in Khasi Language Literature from North Eastern Hills University, Shillong. Adept in Cinematography, writing lyrics, novels and scripts for Dramas, she also has a natural flair for creativity and social service. Though she faced innumerable odds and misfortunes in her personal life, she never felt bogged down, but rather played all her roles valiantly and extremely well---- as a mother, a cancer survivor, an educationist, a creative artist and above all, as a great fighter. It is explicitly because of her sheer sense of creativity that she has successfully created various books, novels, musical albums and two regional short films that won her worldwide critical acclaim. She even dabbled into the political world to achieve her noble aims and purposes.



It is really hard to study the complex political situation, especially, the one prevailing in India. Harder still, it is to delve into its infinite

and weird aspects and bring out the truth from them honestly and fearlessly and put them before the whole nation to ponder, introspect and thereafter bring about drastic changes. All her five volumes ranging from 'The Dawn' to 'The Dusk' have demonstrated her intelligence, honesty, political foresight, perceptiveness, aesthetic prowess, humane outlook, mellowness of vision and objectivity.

In all the five volumes, Toi has portrayed the socio-political scenario and fiscal policies with utmost truth and grit in the most unbiased, unprejudiced and insightful manner. All her five books series have been considered by her, perhaps ironically, as 'Marathon Race to Acche Din', but this 'Acche Din' seemed to gradually disappear from her third book, 'The Afternoon'. The first book 'The Dawn' reveals the tall promises made by Narinder Modi, the 15th Prime Minister of independent India, during the first year of his rule. The second, 'The Morning', unfolds Modi's policies and ways of governance of his second-year rule under which the masses awaited the 'Acche Din' to arrive. The third, 'The Afternoon', was more eventful, replete with promises and announcements that could seemingly benefit the nation in many ways through demonetization, the draconian GST bill, the impressive slogans and catchy phrases, like, 'Sab ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikaas', and 'Reform, Perform' and whatnot. But all these only combined to create and maintain the image of a corruption-free govt., the flawless public facade and to keep the hope of the ignorant citizens of the country alive. However, the gulf between aim and execution, promise and fruition made people feel that all rhetoric by the govt. was only big in promise, but very small in execution. The fourth book, 'The Evening' projects the author's perception, feelings, thoughts and observations of the NDA govt. that took over the reins in May, 2014. The fifth, 'The Dusk', is the scathing attack on Modi's five years misrule. It unfolds many failings and pitfalls at almost all levels, eroding pathetically, the government's credibility and accountability.

All five volumes have a quotation before the start of every chapter. All quotations contextualize the essence of the content of the specific chapter in question. Toi substantiates every minor detail of

every happening, incident, event, description, statement, information, reference, opinion, policies and the way the govt. implemented them through clear-cut data that seemed to have been collected from various reliable sources. In fact, that was what I clearly witnessed while writing a review on her third book titled, 'The Afternoon'. Again, while going through this last volume, titled, 'The Dusk' I could easily see how Toi furnished a detailed data to support and strengthen every point she made.

'The Dusk', Toi's last book, most strikingly opens with a pertinent question: 'Have the good times rolled in?' Then followed the memorable statement of Abraham Lincoln, 'Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power'. It was in retrospect that the author spoke about the historic day 'when after decade-long interval, India witnessed a change of guard strongly mandated in 2014'. After winning the majority mandate on its own, the BJP became free from the constraints of coalition politics. There was an overall atmosphere of euphoria and excitement as the people thought they would be free from the corrupt regime of the Congress govt. and the whole unbecoming system would be revamped after many years. Towards the end of five years when the



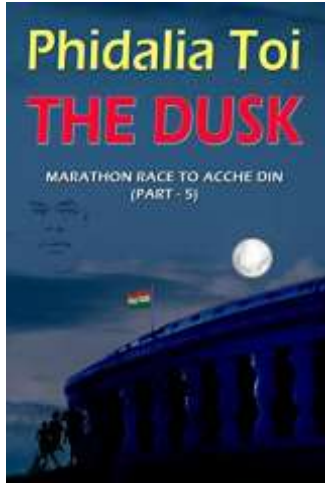
Prime Minister himself discovered that he could not give the desired output, he covered up his failings with the pretext that it was unreasonable to expect all his promises fulfilled within just the period of sixty months. However, on a closer observation, the writer becomes disillusioned when she discovered that the gap between intent and performance, promise and fruition became wider and wider day by day though in utter humility she said that sometimes good intents also could sometimes lead to unintended outcomes. Further, the valid question she raised was 'Are Indian citizens better

off today, socially and economically, than they were five years ago'? During the first five years of NDA rule, India passed through some worst phases since independence. The author could spot the govt.'s impetuosity, pomposity, empty rhetoric and tomfoolery from miles away. All these combined to birth hate-crimes, mob violence and collapse of the socio-economic foundations of the nation, pushing 'Aache Din' to some very remote corner. Viewing Modi's schemes, projects and plans, K N Govindacharya, former BJP ideologue and RSS pracharak said, 'Announcement wise these schemes were attractive; image-building wise these were positives; but achievement wise I feel very disappointed'.

The BJP rose to power with a firm promise to fight corruption, but nothing much of the sort happened. Firstly, the inordinate delay in appointing Lokpal and suppression of detrimental and sensitive data put a question mark on the transparency of the govt. The NDA govt. delayed to implement the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act passed by UPA govt. in 2013 for almost four years. However, the Apex Court set a deadline for the Feb. end of 2019 for the search committee to send a panel of names for consideration. Correspondingly, to protect its integrity, the govt. in Sept. 2018, constituted an eight-member committee to recommend names for the posts of Lokpal chairperson and members. As the govt. could not effect the huge disposal of a large number of appeals and complaints, the Supreme Court had to ask the center why so many posts are lying vacant at the Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commission (SIC). All this only proved that there was something lacking in the monitoring mechanisms to investigate various govt. dealings and corrupt activities.

Modi's much-vaunted catchy slogan: Karengé Aur Kar Ke Rahenge reflected Gandhi's clarion call of 1942: Karengé Ya Marengé, but there was hardly any iota of truth in what the former said. He often said that India needed to be liberated from poverty, violence against women, casteism, corruption, atrocities, gruesome murders, rapes, bribery, mob-lynching, communalism and extremism. Our country has adequate policies, laws, acts and policing to solve all these

problems, but since the law enforcing agencies are ineffectual, the problems, till date, remained more or less, the same as they were years ago. Liberal and non-Hindus were deprived even of their basic rights. Hundreds of lives were lost during the demonetization drive that also shattered small businesses and industries and gave rise to unemployment. While the masses were under stress and trying hard to cope with the note-ban and GST, the govt. made no sincere attempts to offer them any reprieve. Lawlessness began to reign supreme for all anti-social and corrupt elements were on a rampage and allowed to go scot-free while innocent lives, erased, proving true the adage: Laws catch flies and let hornets go free. Despite multiple internal problems, the govt. was also beset with problems from neighboring countries, especially Pakistan and sporadic bloodshed in Kashmir, frequent disruptive parliament sessions, shrinking exports, the decrease of foreign investors, increasing NPAs and the willful disappearance of loan defaulters have irked the nation like never before. However, certain issues which were growing during UPA rule, like cow-protection, cow-slaughter, Aadhar, Surveillance, UAPA, AFSPA, CAB and reservation for upper classes, are not only completely fed and nourished by the BJP led govt., but have rather been encouraged to grow beyond proportion.



What greatly vexed the nation was the govt.'s neglect of agrarian crisis. It failed to increase the Minimum Support Price (MSP) as promised before elections. Research by CSDS concluded that 76% of the farmers in the country would prefer to take up some other work today instead of doing farming. 15,000 farmers committed suicide every year from 1995 to 2016. And from 2014 to 2018 about eight farmers committed suicide every day. Lack of accessibility to loans and good quality seeds further added to their woes. Market

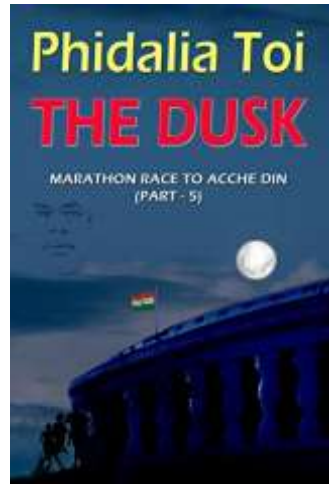
surveys showed that middlemen took away about 48% of the price of rice, 52% of the price of groundnuts and 60% of the price of potatoes offered by consumers. Despite many state governments' announcements about bumper harvests and loan waive, one witnessed various farmers' mass protests and rallies in many parts of the country, especially during the last two years of Modi's govt. In view the elections of 2019, the govt. allocated funds of Rs. 20,000 crore for the fiscal year falling between December, 2018 and March, 2019 and an income support of Rs. 6000 annually to 12 crore small and marginal farmers. This was clearly only an endeavour to woo and appease the farmers and gain political mileage. There was a shocking revelation by an RTI that out of 19 nationalized banks, SBI, Bank of Maharashtra, UCO and Bank of Canara have accepted in their reply that the money deposited in the farmers' accounts was "being taken back from their account barely hours after the deposit was made". This happened because, as probably, falsely claimed, the bank account numbers of the beneficiaries given were incorrect. However, there was no satisfying answer whether the money was credited in the farmers' account again after rectifying the account numbers.

The drubbing suffered by the BJP in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh assembly elections in 2018 was surely a wake-up call to the four and a half years misrule of Modi govt. Though the BJP managed to get 20 Congress MLAs on its side recently in Madhya Pradesh, the party could not rid of avoidable issues like, cow protection, imposition of one language and one culture, empty rhetoric, construction of Ram Mandir, uncalled-for attack on opposition parties, etc, etc. Pathetically, as the clock turned full circle, the impressive start of the Modi govt. concluded with a depressive note, mired with controversies and misgivings. However, owing to the successful creation of real and effective mirage, the illusion of reformation and removal of corruption, the govt. continued to win the hearts of the masses and garner their votes and managed to get into power again for its second term by winning the 2019 elections. But we all know that politics is not a fair game.

Almost all politicians must acquire power through fair or false means, after all, the ends justify the means.

When less than a year was left for the 2019 elections, NDA govt. faced its first no-trust motion on March 2018 during the budget session when BJP's estranged ally Telegu Desam Party (TDP) submitted the no-confidence motion that was not taken up by Sumitra Mahajan on the grounds that the house was not in order. The second no-trust motion by Congress came up in July 2018 in support of the move by the TDP and YRS Congress. This was accepted in the Parliament, but Modi knew that his govt. commanded a majority and dubbed the move by the opposition as 'arrogance' that wanted to remove him. But those who watched the commotion and heated arguments in the parliament could feel that the motion's aim was not to topple the govt. but to expose its fault lines. Though because of the majority, Modi won the trust vote, the minority opposition won the day by effectively exposing all setbacks, pitfalls and deficiencies of the govt., filling the nation with anger and hatred and compelling it to reflect on the burning issues, like, joblessness, social injustice, mass-scale corruption, Rafael deal, disappearance of money from banks by the govt.'s tacit consent and renegeing on the solemn promise of granting special category status to Andhra Pradesh. Rahul Gandhi also affirmed that questioning the govt. without hatred or prejudice is the responsibility of every parliamentarian in order to make the govt. accountable to the people who elected them. But ironically and pitiably, the PM instead of rebutting Rahul's charges point-wise, chose to target the Nehru-Gandhi family by deploying sarcasm, allegations, snide remarks and eulogizing the govt. achievements on various fronts. In a situation as such, Rahul Gandhi's image came to be projected as a fierce contestant who could even shake the Prime Minister's chair.

One issue that has often become the chief concern of the voters was why the EC and some principled political parties failed to banish individuals with serious criminal and corruption charges from the political scenario and allowed them to contest elections. This happened because the law-makers and the ruling party fully knew that having criminals and tainted politicians in a party or public office could weaken the law and order situation and facilitate certain nefarious deeds and designs of their party, whether in power or not. Keeping this in view, in Sept.2018, the Supreme Court asked the Parliament to frame laws against criminals entering politics. In tandem with this, in Oct. 2018 the SC asked 11 states and two UTs “to furnish within two weeks the details on criminal pending against MPs and MLAs as it is said that the center will finance a special court to be set up to try these cases.” 1(p. 35). It was then hoped that this decision would contain the Neta-criminal nexus and obviate goons with political clout from interfering in any political sphere or the working of govt.’s administration, as since long there had been an urgent need for decriminalization of politics and of elected representatives.



It was really commendable that EC personally even moved the Supreme Court to take on cases pertaining to dangers of paid news during elections, decriminalization of politics, abuse of money, illegal funding to political parties, bribes given to politicians, booth capturing, etc, etc. The selection of ECs and CECs is made by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister of the country. This simply means that the Prime Minister has the right to select CEC and EC of his choice. But it is really urgent to free ECI from all political influences by laying down a statute that has the power to appoint or remove EC’s. However, this process of selection could



also make CEC/EC subservient to the ruling party. Hence, the Supreme Court, to bring about transparency and maintain the fundamental pillar of democracy (as termed by the author) observed that there should be a 'legitimate expectation of the Constitution of India that Election Commissioners, who are charged with free and fair conduct of polls in a democracy, should be appointed through a "most transparent and just process" formalized by a law enacted by the Parliament'<sup>2</sup> (p.37). On complaint that there were doubts about VVPAT'S and EVM'S being hacked, the EC told the Supreme Court that the machines were reliable, credible and tamper-proof. Hence, restoration of ballot papers for elections was ruled out. But pitifully, the alarming truth that was discovered by RTI enquiry was that there was inexplicable discrepancy in the number of EVMs reportedly supplied by ECIL and BEL to the ECI and the actual number of EVMs reported to have received by the latter (ECI). Before the year 2014, there were a minor mismatch between the number of EVMs supplied and the number received, but the worst period of 'mismatch was 2014-2015 when BEL supplied 62,183 EVMs but ECI received none.' Further, because of the malfunctioning and alleged tampering of EVMs and the errors detected in VVPATs due to over-exposure



to heat, humidity and light, the EC had to face a tough time rectifying the alleged wrongs, causing the public also to raise their eyebrows over the unhealthy, rather dysfunctional system. Most lamentably, the assurance we got from the EC was that EVMs were foolproof and infallible, but this was deplorably wanting during the 2019 polls. We all know that tampering of EVMs can swing the poll verdicts, but if ECs don't fulfill their constitutional obligations and polls are compromised, we can easily imagine what the fate of the nation would be!

It is really painful to see that the Finance Ministry has completely neglected the Law Ministry and EC over political funding. In response to an RTI, the EC clearly said that electoral bonds 'will have a serious impact on the transparency aspects of political finance and funding of political parties'<sup>3</sup> (p. 42). Electoral bonds also hide the source of corruption and inspire crony capitalism and anonymous donations. Strangely, the govt. forced its citizens to be transparent through Adhar linked digital transactions, but it accepted political funding through electoral bonds. During 2017 Budget Session there was a proposal to 'cleanse the system of funding of political parties' by amending three laws: the Income Tax Act, the R P Act, 1951 and the Companies ACT 2013. But ironically, these only opened the 'possibility of shell companies being created only to make political donations'<sup>4</sup> (p. 43). In 2014, the Delhi High Court held the Congress and BJP accountable for violating Foreign Contribution Regulation Act for accepting donations made by NRI-led companies. However, in tandem with the changes made in the foreign contribution (Regulation) Finance Act of 2016, unchecked funding of political parties was discouraged by EC to save Indian politics from being influenced by foreign companies. As a polls reform measure, the NITI Aayog forwarded a suggestion to hold parliamentary polls along with assembly elections with a view to overcome hard decisions and to reduce the huge burden on the govt. exchequer. BJP supported the move, but consensus among all parties was needed, so no conclusion could be arrived at. This apart, 'an expenditure of about Rs 4,555 crore will be incurred on procurement of EVMs for an imminent simultaneous election'<sup>5</sup> (p. 49). This apart, machines would also have to be replaced after every 15 years. All said and done, poll reforms are urgently required and all elements endangering democracy should be eliminated.

Toi considers media as the fourth pillar of democracy, being an 'integral part of our lives, reflects our society and continually keeps us informed of the socio-economic, political and foreign affairs of the country. The media influences and helps the public to form an opinion on matters of national and international importance. But

pathetically, in the current scenario, one gets to hear only oversensationalized and abnormally hyped news. Many renowned newspapers and TV channels in the country are owned by corporations and political parties that are running electronic media and media according to their whims, biases, prejudices and predilections, feeding the minds of the public with false information and ideas while keeping truth and reality in abeyance. Worst of all, when some media houses or honest journalists expose the corporate or govt. misdemeanors, the severe reaction one often gets to see is legal notice served under the defamation clause of law. Some such victims are NDTV, National Herald, The Wire and The Citizen. Vivek Doval, Ajit Kumar Doval's son, filed a criminal defamation suit against The Caravan magazine for highlighting how 'Mr Doval was running a hedge whose promoters are of dubious antecedents' (p. 52). Paranjay Guha Thakurta, the editor of EPW, in an interview with The Wire said, 'I was told I couldn't leave the room till the Adani article was pulled' (p. 53). When NDTV displayed sensitive information during the terrorist attack at Pathankot, it was forced to shut down for some time. On this, the Editors Guild of India and non-BJP political parties dubbed the ban a blatant attack on the freedom of press and compared the censorship to the years of emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Further, CBI raids conducted against Pranoy Roy and his wife were widely criticized by many. The Hindu group of newspapers described the raids thus: 'It certainly looks like an attempt to send a nasty message to the rest of the news media that the BJP regime will not tolerate criticism' (p. 53). Criticisms from various sources were also directed when punitive action was taken against NDTV when Nidhi Razdan asked Sambit Patra to leave during the live broadcast of her program. Sadly, some journalists who are real patriots are branded 'anti-nationals' as they do not fall in line with the govt. General Bipin Rawat perturbed by the politicization of the armed forces said, 'Of late we've been seeing that politicization of the armed forces has taken place. I think we operate in a very secular environment. We have vibrant democracy...military should stay far from polity... (p. 60). 'The media should understand and help in this'. But how would

the media understand when if it doesn't also work at the dictates of the govt. would incur the latter's wrath. Bipin only spoke ideally and partially, but not holistically.

For the first time in independent India, honest journalists cannot work in complete safety and security. In 2016, India was deemed the third most dangerous nation for journalists after Iraq and Syria. No wonder, in all ages we witness the enemies of 'scientific temper' extinguishing the liberal voice of freethinkers everywhere though Article 19 of the Indian Constitution grants the freedom of expression to every citizen of India. Ironically, now, law-protectors and law-makers turn out to be criminals and murderers. Jagendra Singh, an honest journalist of Shahjahanpur (UP) who exposed the illegal activities of Ram Murti Verma, a Minister, was killed by the police. In N.E. India, an honest senior crime reporter was gunned down under mysterious circumstances for highlighting the gross financial irregularities in the paramilitary force. Likewise, Gauri Lankesh, Santanu Bhowmik, Shujaat Bukhari and many more, including intellectuals and RTI activists had to sacrifice their life because they were bold and honest and chose probity over wealth and power. All these happened because of tainted politicians, corrupt govt. officers and officials and the mafia illegally elicit the most and by hook or crook out of the three main spheres of life:

religion, politics and wealth.



It is really painful and shameful to see the lives of young students at risk. On Feb. 22, 2017, some members of ABVP clashed with members of the AISA over Umar Khalid's invitation to an event at Ramjass College, Delhi. ABVP had actually accused Khalid and his associates of sedition and also of anti-national slogans. But as per the police report submitted to the Delhi Court, there was a positive report: 'The video-clip obtained from an unknown social network,

apparently looks doctored'. Another person accused of sedition was a student leader of JNU, Kanhaiya Kumar whose video clip prepared by some unknown person was also found doctored. It is really shameful that the nation wants people to believe that innocent students like Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya who do not toe the line desired by the govt. are enemies of the nation and so are slammed with seditious charges and dubbed 'anti nationals' and 'anti students'. Pathetically, the media also was so handicapped that it did not dare to pressure the police to trace out and punish those culprits who doctored the videos. Mark the anguished cries of Umar Khalid on the eve of the audacious attack on him: I don't know who came to kill me. But I certainly know who made my life so vulnerable. That includes spokespersons of the ruling party and shrill media anchors who are the self-proclaimed voice of the nation. From TV studios, they have incited violence against me on absurd lies'. I shuddered and was moved to tears when I read these words, but I don't know whether media, the police and the govt. felt aggrieved and remorseful when this heart-rending tweet was made public.



In the present democratic set-up, social media has a very vital role to play in all spheres of life; it has rather become an integral part of our life. It is also a boon and bane to mankind. It is a boon because it provides easy access to information on all branches of knowledge and areas of life conceivable to mankind; it also acts as a medium of interacting with people across the globe. Through the main social media applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Blogs, Twitter, Websites, etc, the whole globe shares personal and impersonal information, ideologies, personal talent, pain, frustration, anger, love, hatred, joy, sorrow and many more on a large scale in the form of music, audios, videos, live-feeds, news items and articles. But it

is also discernible on the other hand how excessive use of social media hampers the academic and social lives of modern youth. 'Blue Whale' the online game tempted youngsters to inflict self-harm, leading many a time to even suicides. More than 100 deaths have been reported globally due to this game. Though the govt.'s regulatory mechanism becomes a tool to identify opponents, it sometimes leads to the violation of citizens' privacy rights. Snapchat dysmorphia has also caused deep concern among experts who are worried about its adverse effect on people's self-esteem and its power to generate Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD).

Pitiably, fabricated news, many a time, become factual ones on social media. Fake news so, becomes the executioner of truth. Some who are social media savvy sometimes share their personal version of the truth or untruth while sharing with ignorant masses. Any distortion, amplification and suppression of facts could transform a harmless rope into a deadly serpent. Social media applications today, have become a means for recruiting terrorists, for inciting communal violence and hate and for spreading fundamentalist ideologies. Further, the acts of juxtaposing fake images and videos with incomplete facts and details and then floating the same on social media can only heighten division, violence and hatred and create disturbance and chaos in the country. In Tripura, a man who was hired by the State Govt. to bust the gang of fake news and rumours of child-lifting, was lynched by villagers mistaking him to be a kidnapper. This was the grimmest of ironies, because a fake-news buster was killed by fake news. Mob lynching takes place sometimes due to misinformation also. However, there were lucky few who could owing to their luck, escape this fatal experience. E.g. a two-year-old boy and two women were attacked by a mob at Malegaon on the night of July 2, 2018, based simply on rumours that they were child-lifters. But luckily, the truth was revealed and they were saved by a group of locals who kept them safe until the police arrived to rescue them. Unchecked exploitation of WhatsApp also resulted in 27 mob-lynchings in nine states within just three months. It is really heartening that non-governmental agencies have

come out to fight against the misuse of social media and curb fake news after witnessing many uncalled for lynchings. Some concerned common citizens are also taking up the task containing fake news. The Supreme Court issued a stern warning to the State and Central Govt.'s saying that lynching is 'a crime unacceptable in a civilized society and no one could take the law into their hands'<sup>6</sup> (p. 80).

Social media has often been misused by the troll brigade also, doing a great disservice to humanity and extinguishing our national motto of India, 'Satyameva Jayate'. The online abuse by trolls victimized even the late Sushma Swaraj, the then Indian Foreign Affairs Minister. She was trolled after the passport officer was transferred for humiliating the interfaith people. Ironically, most of her trolls are the extended members of her own political party and shockingly, some of her trolls are the followers of Modi, but then should the blessings of the PM meant to provide trolls immunity from the law of the nation? There was a greater shock when Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, the two senior cabinet ministers had to remain numb and dumb when Swaraj was unnecessarily trolled. Swati Chaturvedi, a journalist and an author of an internationally acclaimed book- , I am a troll –Inside the BJP'S secret digital army (p. 86) was bold and honest to say, 'Why is it among world leaders that he alone follows vicious trolls who routinely make rape and death threats and indulge in incitement? Why does he invite them to his official residence for a selfie meet and greet? 7(p. 86) However, one must still thank those hoax slayers who fearlessly attempt to combat and expose such pernicious trolls in the society. These are in fact, true patriots and law abiding citizens who have raised our hopes to see a better future.

Modi really appeared great and big when he overtook China as the fastest progressing economy and took Indian economy from 'Fragile Five' to a 'Bright Spot' in global economy. While addressing the India-Korea business symposium in Feb. 2019, Modi said, 'The fundamentals of our economy are sound. We are all set to become a five trillion dollar economy in the near future' <sup>8</sup> (p. 92). All this seemed to be fulfilling his pre-poll promise of economic development, entailing his motto: 'Sab ka saath sab ka vikas'. Now

the pertinent question is, 'Has India reached even the threshold of development?' Viewed objectively, while revamping the whole economic system on the bases of demonetisation, changes in the tax system through GST, Crop Insurance, Benami Law, Labour Laws and Bankruptcy Laws, he violently shook the foundations of Indian economy. The hurried implementation of GST without a trail-run



has invited much criticism. Although FDI in the past more than four years of Modi's govt. shot up from \$ 45 billion to \$61 billion, its growth rate has comparatively slowed down. This was precisely because the govt. did not post the FDI figures on the website. The 'Make in India' flagship also has not gained momentum and remained on papers only. Contribution to economy from various household and private sectors has also decelerated. All welfare schemes and good reforms remained on paper only since they were not

implemented and well managed. Because of the rise in the fuel prices and domestic cooking gas (LPG), the poor household could not afford to buy something that they got through Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna; the condition of the poor further aggravated as the supply of kerosene was also stopped. The scarcity jobs in the midst of inflation intensified the pangs of ordinary citizens. Once Nirmal Jain, a BJP worker from Puducherry told Modi straightaway, 'The middle section of the people think your govt. is only busy collecting tax in all manner and in all ways'. Even Yashwant Sinha disappointingly reflected that many years have gone to develop GST and at the end India got a flawed one. He also said that earlier there was a single rate in service tax, now there is multiplicity of rates. Ironically, there is no arrest for violating VAT rules, but surely there is arrest for violating GST rules. Some traders, especially those dealing in perishables and seasonal products are afraid of GST. They feel the pinch because they have to borrow money to pay tax and



interest and this puts them under pressure as after they borrow money to pay GST fully the refunds due to them do not get credited on time. Due to tax burden, working capital of small traders is now locked up that led to business closures, adversely affecting farmers and daily wage earners who are not connected with black money in any way. But as clearly witnessed, demonetization made the rich richer. Late Arun Jaitley was only sharp as a lawyer, but not as a public intellectual i.e. he lacked critical thinking. As a finance Minister, he lacked the sense of social justice; his main role in the Modi govt. was only to cleverly answer the opponents questions and satisfy them with his communicating skills. Intoxicated with power, he mocked the intelligentsia for their 'Award Wapsi' in 2015 but expressed no word of sympathy and compassion for the victims of mob violence and the problems of the suffering poor.

Indian economy was also adversely affected by runaway fraudsters. The past NPAs that has been haunting the banks, the numerous loot and scoot of the recent past by fraudsters like Vijay Mallaya, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and many more fugitives have become an added bane to the Banks and non-bank lenders. They cannot be taken to task because their foreign citizenship cover provided them with immunity. Such sudden flight of wealth along with the thieving carriers has largely demoralized the nation. To add fuel to the fire, 5,55, 603 crore loan since April 2014 were written off sans disclosing the defaulter's identity. However, the unethically compassionate govt. bailed out the whining banks by mercilessly repleting them with tax-payers' money. RBI also showed that personal loans rose to around Rs. 9,600 crores till May 25, 2018. Due to rising bad loans and defaulters, the fugitive bill was passed to award harsh punishment to fugitive economic fraudsters. As per the data of



April 2018 submitted by Ministry of External Affairs in the Lok Sabha, '31 individuals accused of fraud and economic offences are holed up abroad' 9(p. 110). RBI is trying hard to increase its efficiency by dispensing with the old practices. However, for complete transparency, the culprits have to be caught; the RBI has to bring its policies and innovative methods in the public domain to deal with the colossal crisis. Ex-governor Raghuram Rajan wrote to PMO 'seeking concerted action against the country's 10 biggest frauds allegedly involving ten prominent real estate, media and diamond firms that happened to be probed by the CBI. He also listed the scams pegged at about Rs. 17, 500 crores and outlined their dates, the reasons cited by the banks for delays in their investigation and the status of the cases obtained from the CBI' 10 (P. 115).

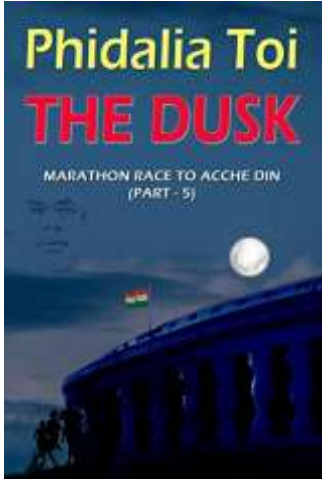
To contain bank fraud the govt. introduced a new policy named Insolvency and bankruptcy code (IBC) that is a single-step solution that addresses all insolvencies in a time-bound and economically viable manner. 'The IBC permits relaxation of a maximum of 180 days, extendable to 270 days, for resolution of a distressed company' and that late bids won't be accepted and late bidders won't be entertained. It is true that all those doing business are not defaulters. But for the willful ones, IBC puts its noose around their necks. The public welcomed this move and the govt. sent a clear message that it ran out of patience and strict law so, became inevitable. According to the govt. systematic and holistic reforms such as IBC and GST are significant steps towards recovering debts and facilitating business in India. Frequent modifications of IBC and GST seemed to show the positive intent of the govt. to satisfy all political parties in India. However, from Dawn (2014) to Dusk (2019) the govt.'s race seemed to be a far cry from 'Acche Din' i.e. good days. Even his demonetizing drive—a bold reformative measure, was a miserable failure, though, perhaps, implemented with good intentions. Surprisingly, the note-ban was enforced without the approval of RBI governor, Urjit Patel, whose approval was sought only after five weeks of the announcement. Kapil Sibal exposed money-laundering scam through video clippings during

note ban by BJP members and govt. officials. Even RAW unearthed thousands of crores printed abroad and transported to India by special aircraft. BJP became the richest party after demonetization drive at the expense of the nation. Shamefully much, Sudhir Bhargava, Information Commissioner, had rejected the justification of the currency printer Bhartiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran (P) Ltd that 'disclosure of the data would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, strategies, economic interests of the country' 11(127). We all know that money plays a major role in all types of election in India. To regain the lost ground, Modi, through demonetization, financially weakened all its opponents after it faced defeat (except Assam) in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal.

Digital technology seems to be breaking domestic barriers and providing easier access and faster delivery of services to the people so that the dream of digital India could be realized. To prevent any leakage in govt. schemes, all subsidies and benefits granted by the govt. were being transferred into beneficiaries account under the Direct Beneficiary Transfer (DBT), saving Rs 90,000 crore by removing middlemen and false claimants. However, digital transactions could only transform India if every household has online access to all govt. services. Secondly, India has not spent enough on the security of the digital system especially, when the threat of global hackers and cyber frauds lurk in every nook and corner, making people apprehensive. During the lockdown period the world over, due to corona virus invasion, the digital economy has taken a major hit. But things seem to be doing very well for at least one sector i.e. video conferencing provider, Zoom Video Communications. Zoom has cleverly used Covid-19 as a marketing tool. Corporates, Govt. and non-Govt organizations are using zoom for meetings while educational institutions are using it for conducting online classes. Though zoom's popularity has skyrocketed, it was confirmed that it was routing data of several users through servers located in China. Responding to this, Zoom said, they had mistakenly routed the calls of several non-China users

through China. So, whenever our Defence Minister communicates with the army, navy and air-force chiefs, there is every possibility of leakage of secret information. China's National Intelligence Law 2017 requires that all organizations give the govt. access to any data that they request. The need of the hour now is to improve infrastructure and data security. More digitally literate service providers also have to be generated. Personal Data Protection bill (PDP, 2018 Act) should also be effectively enforced. Though Modi has been lauded for launching digital India, it will take some more time to realize the vision of cashless and digital India. Sweden, even today has to conduct 20% of its transactions in cash despite having a full-fledged financially digitized economy.

The idea of enrolling all citizens through Aadhar is purportedly meant to make India a tax compliant society and to confirm that all benefits of welfare schemes reach the deserving beneficiaries. The passing of the Aadhar Act to avert any debating in the Rajya Sabha put many into doubt as it showed that the govt. wanted to browbeat



the opposition in legislating and coercing the quick implementation of the Act. However, Aadhar becomes a playing field for unscrupulous hackers. Linking Aadhar with bank account is also violating the voluntary nature of privacy of Aadhar. Even the Apex Court's judgment on Aadhar arrested the increasing infringement on citizens' privacy rights. Further, some fear also lurks in the psyche of citizens because a weak Aadhar database could be very harmful to national security since individuals' data are not stored in India, but in an American Cloud. Though the central govt. and UIDAI affirmed that there was no such risk, doubts could not be removed.

Though removing poverty, hunger, starvation was on the top of the agenda of Modi, unemployment and job loss have completely ruined

the fate of the homeless, the low-income groups, the middle class and the poor. Pathetically, India accounts for nearly one-third of the world's 150.8 million stunted children and wasted children have shot up from 19.8% in 2005-2006 to 21% in 2015----2016. Surely, starvation amidst prosperity is caused mostly by unemployment and death by starvation is a clear sign of poverty. According to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) data of the World Economic Forum, 'India fared poorly on the Global Hunger Index for 2017 as India ranked 100 out of 119 countries on the GHI', while in 2016, it ranked 97 out of 118, but in 2018 it deplorably reached the 103rd position on the GHI and now it is among few countries with 'serious levels of hunger' despite the launch of 'Poshan Abhiyan' scheme with its catchy and pleasing slogan 'har ghar poshan tyohar' . The harsh truth is, general people can't afford proper healthcare and balanced diet owing to joblessness or unemployment. Many unfilled



posts could be witnessed in various departments. The labour market has shrunk; the trend of job market did not show any progress or growth. Even the IT sector---the backbone employment of modern India is still in its worst shape; its slowing pace has caused much anxiety to tech-employees. Instead of creating two crore jobs as promised, the govt. has reduced them. There was a reduction of 1.1 crore jobs in 2018. Shutting down of sick companies, decline in the steel industry, the ban culture that has banned beef sale, liquor, plastic, and even the coal-mining adversely affected job markets, generating among the youth and poor a feeling of hopelessness, anger, despair, insecurity and depression.

Education is the main aim of all parents to secure a better world and future for their children and for the entire globe. However, no educational policy can be operational unless it has committed, well-

trained teachers and suitable atmosphere. But such teachers are very rare these days. Secondly, many parents in India are illiterate, superstitious and traditional and so are ignorant about choosing the type of education that should be given according to the interest and mental propensity of their children. Some children are also raised in an abusive family or toxic atmosphere. As such, with an unhealthy mental make-up, they don't fare well in schools and colleges. However, teachers should pay special attention, arouse interest and inspire creativity and innovation among students, especially students coming from a broken home or belonging to illiterate or poor families. But then we already still have many teachers who just shy away from the critical and subtle questions of the students, leave alone their interest in teaching. Due care should be taken while appointing teachers, education officers, V.C's and principals for the wrong appointment of these could vitiate the whole education system. Quite shocking that even UGC has made several controversial appointments. In 2017, CAT had to quash the appointment of 17 education officers by the UGC. While as per norms, the UGC cannot appoint more than two or three officers in one go, it so, violated the prescribed rules by appointing so many in one single stroke. Unbecoming elements in the curriculum should be deleted, e.g. a chapter of the XIth Sociology syllabus of Maharashtra refers to the ugliness of the handicapped people. Another chapter, to reasons why parents have to pay a higher dowry for a daughter's marriage. Historians do a lot of research to discover facts. But if those facts were rewritten with emotive twist sans facts being substantiated by evidence, it would not pass for history. It is really unethical and transgresses all civilized norms that the present govt. is vigorously pursuing its objective of introducing changes of certain facts in tandem with its ideology in Indian history.

As curriculum development plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process, curriculum developers have a lot to contribute to the progress or regress of learning process. Highly trained educationists with more than at least 10 years of teaching experience are needed to meet the requirements of the updated enlightened

students, as these days learners are not pawns, they're fully active and aware of the latest knowledge that should be imparted to them. For a sound and healthy education system, there should be perfect coordination among stakeholders, specifically the govt., the education developers, the youth and the employers.

NASA researchers verified that the earth's surface has been warming for the past 15 years and 'the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 have been the warmest years in the instrumental record'<sup>12</sup>(p. 180). Since there have been large scale deforestation and encroachment due to industrialization and developmental projects, environmental degradation was caused. Tribals too had to vacate their fertile lands in such a scenario and when they were relocated to barren or infertile land they were left to starve. Tribals look at their land as a source of sustenance while corporate businessmen, only as a huge source of income. Pathetically, global warming has caused a loss to the Indian economy by 31%. Today, because of the drop in the burning of fossil fuel with reduced industrial activities and public traffic we are witnessing a climate change during this lockdown. But lamentably, environmentalists are of the firm opinion that though carbon emissions may have reduced drastically, we are likely to revert to the pre-corona levels in just a few weeks, once the virus threat subsides. The Ministry of Department of Environment Forest and Climate Change in India need to create a balance between industrial growth and protection of environment, on the other.

Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2017, accusing developing countries of squeezing from developed countries, billions of aid-dollars with the pretext of fighting climate change sans doing anything much. With a strong emphasis on putting an end to deadly gas emissions and environmental crisis, many countries are pursuing clean atmosphere and eco-friendly measures. The signatories of the Paris Agreement (2015) on climate change aimed to strengthen the global response to the climate threat by keeping a global temperature rise below two degree Celsius. In Sept. 2018, U N Secretary General also warned that if our course is not changed by 2020, there would be 'disastrous consequences for

people and all the natural systems that sustain us' 13(P. 182). Environmentalists have criticized successive governments for the dilution of norms relating to the protection of India's weak ecology and for issuing clearance certificates to Industrial projects that adversely affected tribal livelihood and their displacement. The installation of Statue of Unity was constructed at the expense of the land of the farmers that was the main source of income for their livelihood. It became a parody of justice when on Feb, 2019, the Supreme Court mindlessly directed the State Govt. to evict about one million Adivasi and forest dwellers, sans thinking of protecting their basic rights. But luckily, Tribal Ministry intervened to put the orders of SC on hold. Shamefully, the govt. collected 91,000 crore as environment fund, but spent only 14,000 crore. Deplorably, India stands at rank 173 out of 180 regarding air quality which was all owing to poor performance in the environment health policy and deaths due to polluted air.



Since the dawn of civilization, all races and communities have a craving for a certain amount of respect and social position. When their yearnings are not realized, they are likely to be united in such a way that it formed combined forces of individuals which could turn the wheels of fortune to such an extent that their self-esteem is restored. Since ages, our country has failed to stand out against bigotry as discrimination is legitimized by anti-secular elements with faulty mindset. Exploitation, empty assurances and unfulfilled commitments by the ruling political class have vexed the lower caste terribly. It was because of this that the 'Jai Sri Ram' slogan was strongly countered by the 'Jai Bhim' slogan. This was made possible because a young Dalit leader, Jignesh Mevani, Babasaheb Ambedkar's grandson, Prakash Ambedkar joined hands which led to the emergence of a young icon, Chandrashekar Azad, a



professional lawyer, who founded the Bhim Army organization and rattled and fought the caste distinctions in the society. The anger and defiance of the Dalit leaders were triggered by numerous grievances. The Unna flogging episode indicated the age-old disdain of the upper for the lower castes. The suicide of Rohit Vemula in 2015 displayed the continuous harassment and discrimination that the Dalits and OBCs are still facing in higher educational institutions. On the flogging of four dalit youths in Una by cow vigilantes, Rahul Sharma, a retired IPS officer organized a 355 km padyatra in the honour of Dalit's pride. Communal violence flared up thrice within 20 days in Saharanpur. BJP MP, Raghav Lakhnarpal carried out another unauthorized procession against the Muslim residents of Dhudli village in Saharanpur. After that Thakur community carried out another unauthorized procession in the name of Maharana Pratap against the Dalit residents of Shabbirpur village, leading to the burning of dalit homes and killing many of them. The apathy of the administration enraged the dalits who took to the streets under the banner of 'Bhim Army' demanding the compensation for their losses and arrest of Thakur's men who burnt their houses and killed their men on 5th May 2017. All these sent a strong message to fight against the ideological forces that continuously target the SC, ST, OBC, Dalits and Muslims in various BJP ruled states. Had the local authorities and administration attempted to eradicate violence in the beginning there would have been peace, but because of their Indifference and inaction, the situation only escalated into full-scale violence. When the voiceless weaker sections feel insecure and the stronger sections nourish the feeling that they can get away with any crime or murder, the law and order of a country becomes non-existent.



Social ostracism exercised against the dalits and the lower class generation after generation, is really scary and shameful. Even the two bench justice, A K Goel and U U Lalit diluted the 1989 SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act on March 20th 2018, by taking cognizance of a few hurt sentiments and willfully ignoring thousands of cases of atrocities against the dalits. Ironically, Jat violence and violence of rapist-criminal Ram Rahim didn't prompt even a single lathi-charge by the police, while the violence indulged in by SC/ST is controlled with iron hands. To cite more examples, in Rajasthan 5000 powerful mob set ablaze the houses of a sitting and former MLA, both Dalits. In Bihar, the higher class goons killed 21 Dalits including women and children just because the Dalit labourers demanded an increase in wages. This class prejudice is most deplorably illustrated in a conversation between L K Advani and Charan Singh. The latter once advised Advani that he was a Sindhi and hence, should not step out of line, for then the RSS would dump him. But if Vajpayee did that, nothing would happen, because he was a Brahmin. This came true, because since 2005 till today, Advani has been sidelined by BJP and also ignored by the PM, his old protégé.

Many types of research and surveys by various reliable sources and agencies unfold that the weak and backward Indian citizens are perennially exploited and getting sucked into the whirlpool of casteism with their fate further sealed by the indifference and apathy of justice. When the BJP dalit MPs and MLAs asked the party high command not to treat them as second class citizens, Modi, before 2019 elections, promulgated an ordinance to undo SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act diluted by the Supreme Court that invited protests not only from the BJP'S Dalit MPs and MLAs but also from all opposition parties. Today, all those belonging to the lower sections of the society have begun to feel that it is futile demanding justice from some superior authority that is cruel, biased, prejudiced, discriminatory and inhuman. Modern India perhaps failed to be inspired by the ideologies of Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, Vallabbhahi and many founding fathers of democratic India who

castigated casteism, but then should be at least inspired by Sri Lankan cricketer, Kumar Sangakkara (a non-politician) words: 'No one in Sri Lanka can be marginalized or threatened or harmed due to their ethnicity or religion...' (p. 209). But shamefully, in the 21st century, some families and organizations have been harping on the importance of dogmatism and conceitedness and fostering disdain for the lower classes and the less fortunate. Dr Ambedkar, the great icon and father of Constitution vowed not to die a Hindu; he left Hindu to embrace Buddhism. Strangely, when Modi took over the reins in 2014, he clearly said that the only holy book for him was the Constitution of India. But he always used to be silent whenever atrocities are committed against the SCs and STs. Dalits' mass conversion to Buddhism or Christianity is solely due to the discriminatory approach adopted towards the lower castes by the Hindus. Reservation did not come into existence by itself, it emanated from the Brahminical hierarchy of the caste system that assigned an unequal status to persons by birth. But to remove caste discrepancies and anomalies, article 46 of the Indian Constitution mandated that the state shall take all special care regarding the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of people and in particular of the SC's and ST's who shall be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. But this has never been so, never to be likely to ever happen in future also.

The Supreme Court once asked the govt. of U.P., Bihar, Maharastra, Gujarat and West Bengal the number of ST's and S T's who really got govt. posts through reservation. The court also asked why the data on SC'S/ST'S and OBC'S are not available in so many states. However, the data provided lacked clarity. The BJP govt. moved an 'Introduction of quota system in sections of the lower judiciary' which was a move that 'didn't find favour with the higher judiciary in the past'. So far, 'There is no reservation for any social groups in the High Courts and the -Supreme Court'. Law Ministry also wrote to Dipak Mishra, expressing the shortage of judges from the reserved community: 'there is no representation of Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe communities in the Supreme Court since

long'13(p. 220). It is precisely because of this that some judgments on offences under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (PCRA) and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act did not produce reasonable results. Pitiably, the govt. has failed to supply the data on how many IAS from the lower class were promoted as cabinet secretaries, as chief justices of High Courts, as Convener of RBI, as Chief Election Commissioners, as CM's, etc, etc. So, ironically, the fruits of reservation are for the upper class only. Research scholars from backward communities work extremely hard with great determination and devotion just to reach the top. But pitifully, had to end their lives or leave their studies when they were at the threshold of touching the finishing line due to harassment and difficult hurdles and so failed to get any representation in administration and national affairs. When V P Singh granted OBC statutory quota in 1990 there was widespread agitation against the quota by the upper class as it did not take into account the merit of the candidate. Later, Narsimha Rao tried to give reservation based on economic criteria but was rejected by the Supreme Court. It is also pertinent to mention that reservation is not designed to alleviate poverty, but primarily, to address caste discrimination and social inequality. The govt. while



introducing reservation for any section of the society should also furnish empirical proof that the beneficiary section is properly represented in govt. jobs, education and even politics for ensuring healthy governance.

What has been generally observed during the five years of BJP'S rule was only Adivasis, Dalits, human rights activists and those who spoke against the moblynchers, rapists and wrong policies of the govt. were punished or considered 'anti-nationals, 'Urban Naxals' and 'jihadis'. A member of the Ambedkar Periyar study circle, the IIT, Madras said, 'In the eyes of the police, except for the

BJP and the ABVP, all students' organizations, all human rights activists and organizations, everyone who is not supporting the govt. or questioning its policies are Maoists'. All firebrand leaders were arrested for speaking out boldly against the govt.'s misdeeds, oppression, police excesses, abuse of power and right-wing atrocities. Again, through doctored videos some striking students were jailed but were released when the truth was revealed. In yet another incident, some students, through doctored video were shown shouting 'Pakistan Zindabad' slogans in a Zee news video which was later found fake and later through magisterial probe it was discovered that those shouting slogans were ABVP members. Delhi Police finally caught the anti-national sloganeers and makers of the doctored video, carrying tricolor and using foul language and unnecessarily beating up people simply to insult the national flag. In a grim situation as such, it is essential to do away with all the anti-national elements and rise in solidarity above politics and free our motherland from fear, injustice, hate and bigotry.

Though a mother and a father are equal partners in life and also in a family, fathers often take advantage of the patriarchal system to demean mothers on the basis of the age-old concept that a woman is physically and mentally weaker than a man who should always have his say, and as such, his dominance and chauvinism should thrive. Laws have changed with the changing times, but deplorably the patriarchal mindset has not changed. In India, even today, males exploit women from almost all points of view. The patriarchal code is so deeply entrenched in the psyche of males that they often attribute the cause of rape to provocative dress of a female or failure to protect herself when alone. When sexual abuse is sometimes highlighted, the victim's family or the victim herself is persuaded to forgive and



forget, mostly by accepting compensation in some form. It becomes bitterly ironical when such heinous acts are sometimes indulged in by Hindu, Muslim and Christian priests. Sexual abuse is rife even in the higher rung of the society, like female celebrities of the film industry and those even in the world of politics and religion. Some prominent personalities, having no shoulder to lean on have to turn to social media as a shoulder to lean, to vent the plethora of the choked feelings, cry their hearts out and express their outrage. Though the helpline facility, no.181 was launched, fast track court and death penalty for rape of minors incorporated in law and lion's teeth given to the POCSO Act, no concrete results seem to be in sight till date. Shamefully, men hide their medieval mindset by putting on the garb of a civilized being. Gender discrimination in fact, starts from home where exploitation and even domestic violence are witnessed. A woman plays multiple roles in the society and yet throughout her life, she is deprived of her fundamental rights and is vulnerable to all sorts of heinous crimes, such as female foeticide, infanticide, molestation, acid attacks, rape, dowry killings, honor killings and trafficking. The plight of girls in shelter homes is hellish. Empowerment and equality of women should mean that inter-caste, inter-faith and inter-cultural marriages are permissible. When boys are raised in a superior manner they feel authorized to exploit girls, though the Supreme Court clearly said, 'In a civilized society, male chauvinism has no room' and those who indulge in such 'pernicious, horrid and disgusting' 14 (251) practice must be condemned. Unless our society ponders, introspects and seriously follows the teachings of ancient sages, sexual crimes will continue to take place unabatedly in this bleak scenario.

Since years, India's foreign policy has been a 'strategic autonomy' having a format of 'multilateral, quadrilateral, trilateral and bilateral relations with all major powers, regional groups and individual countries'. India also does not work under the pressure of any country but follows the rules and regulations of the UNO. Regarding foreign policy, all the preceding Prime Ministers of India have adopted the 'statecraft' of accommodating the chief concerns of

other nations while upholding at the same time, our national interests and integrity. Under Modi's rule also, there is continuity in existing foreign relations; there is great keenness to maintain cordial relationships with neighboring countries also. But acting like a regional superpower does definitely made smaller neighbors uncomfortable. However, despite hectic negotiations on territorial disputes, India and China have failed to exchange maps for the delineation of the international boundary and Pakistan-based terrorists have been vexing India ceaselessly, further vexed by the scrapping of the Article 370 that granted special status to J&K. India's relations with other neighboring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are full of vicissitudes that require to be ironed out every now and then. Sheikh Hasina recognizes her country's healthy connections with India. She cracked down on all anti-India armed groups taking shelter along the Bangladesh border touching India in the North East. Modi was the first person to felicitate her on her being elected the Prime Minister for the fourth term. Nepal wants to benefit from China economically, but at the same time wanted to depend on India for trade and also to become a bridge between India and China relations. India and Nepal continued mapping a 'no man's land encroachment and cross-border occupation'. India also tried to expand its ties with Israel, but it attached equal importance to West Asia also. The UAE assured regular oil supply to India. Due to India's close strategic relationship with both UAE and Saudi Arabia, it is not difficult to fill up any shortage if the supply of oil from Iran is disrupted. Today, India is the third biggest crude oil importer. As India-Iran trade ties range from energy to connectivity projects, it was a predicament beyond conjecture for India when Trump reimposed sanctions on Iran and insisted India and other countries to cut oil imports from Iran to zero by 4th Nov 2018. Finally, India, to save itself from various other losses, arrived at an amicable settlement after sustained discussions with both Iran and the US. China did not bow before US pressure, but India, to a certain extent, did but that could waste Modi's long-drawn efforts to build strategic understanding between India and Iran and lower our country's

esteem in the eyes of Iran. Sushma Swaraj clearly said that India would continue trading with Iran despite US sanctions, since she only recognized UN Sanctions.

India has been establishing trilateral military cooperation with member nations of Quad, like India-Japan-US cooperation since 2011 and India-Australia-Japan Cooperation since 2015. At the same time, it also maintains bilateral ties with China and is also active as a member of Russia-India-China (RIC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS. In an informal Sochi summit, Modi told Putin that 'he should view India as its partner to safeguard its interests in the Indo-Pacific just like India views Russia as its key partner in Central Asia'. He also unequivocally declared that India's relation with Russia is deep and Russia's relations with Pakistan would have no effect on trade between India and Russia. During Putin's two-day visit to India, defense deals totalling about \$10 billion were signed between the two countries. The world observed the USA's new attitude towards global trade under Donald Trump with a sense of confusion. The economic order based on dollar has enabled the US to remain the superpower that controls almost all global affairs. Many countries that had big export



industries dumped their surplus goods in other countries that adversely affected their local business. Trump had been charging that some of its trade partners were responsible for stealing jobs and creating industrial stagnation in America. So, he tried to right the wrong by turning to NATO allies and non-NATO allies into trade adversaries that include India and China. Some countries entered into diplomatic negotiations to avoid confrontationist stand that could bring down their already vulnerable and weak economics. But China was annoyed and fiercely reacted, though it would not 'fire the first shot'. This



resulted in the undercurrent to create another trading bloc vis-à-vis the US. Trump said, 'Fair trade is now called fool trade if it is not reciprocal'. He also said that the EU problem was as great as that of China. He then imposed a 25% duty on import of steel and 10% on aluminium and also threatened a 20% duty on EU auto imports. But the EU warned that US exports up to \$294 billion worth would be countered if the US carried out its threat. All partners in the trade of US then insisted on Trump to honour his past promises.

Trump had been against India for deficit trade. He terminated the key Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade program for India which was to be effective from June 5th 2019. There had also been various disagreements on the import/export duties between the two countries. Additional duties impact manufacturing industries since the cost of production rose which finally led to an increase in the price for the consumers. According to some experts, the retaliatory tariff between two economic superpowers—US and



China benefitted India. India, in such a situation, could capture the Chinese commodity market vacated by the US; it could also scrutinize the US commodity vacated by the Chinese exports. In the ongoing disagreements and trade tussle between China and USA, global stock market has greatly plunged. The investors so, have to resort to some safe investments as, buying bonds, gold and the Japanese yen. However, unfair trade practices, whether at national or international level, should be avoided for the global economic peace and harmony.

Part five of the book, titled, 'The Fringe Elements' has a very telling and striking quotation by Steve Maraboli, 'When we replace a sense of service and gratitude with a sense of entitlement and expectation, we quickly see the demise of our relationships, society and economy'. Sadly, the victory of BJP in 2014 elections with great

majority ultimately resulted in the entitlement culture firmly rooted in the Sangh Parivar's mindset and Hindutva dogma. The superimposition of one culture on other cultural identities of different regions created only a feeling of anger, distrust, alienation and discrimination. It is, as it were, an attempt to restore a colonial-like situation across India and infringe the well-established rights of the citizens. The govt. which came into power with the help of the RSS, a self-governing organization, was bound to strip away some of its own ideals and willingly get them replaced by the ideology emanating from the diktat of xenophobic RSS. But then, things still no more remained ideal, for the Sangh Parivar that represented the medieval mindset that always attempted to drag civilized India back into olden days through mono-cultural patriotism and subjugation. It was not the BJP, but the RSS that was virtually ruling the Indian civil society through aggressive workers in the previous regime of the govt.

The fake tendency of RSS and BJP to clean the rot through empty rhetoric, false commitments and labels are also some disappointingly glaring features one witnessed in the last five-year term of the NDA government. The govt. also had the audacity to blame the snooping eyes of other parties whenever its faults were exposed. Further, it is primarily devoted to exposing the past flaws of the opposition rather than to the burning problems and pangs of the masses of the current time. Advocating religious superiority is senseless and dangerous, but advocating that all non-Hindus are the enemies of the Hindus or India, was still worse; it is a ploy simply to misguide people and justify hate-crimes. Again, it is so foolish to even imagine that unless one developed the ways of thinking, feeling, eating and dressing and followed RSS beliefs, one would be an anti-national. Mob-lynching which gained momentum during NDA's rule was considered a crime by the Apex Court which also recommended that the Parliament should enact a separate law to punish offenders participating in lynching. The former CJI, Dipak Mishra also rued this ugly fact.

The views of RSS were those followed by Godse who killed Gandhi, the father of the nation whose noble and inspirational ideals are still loved, cherished and followed by the whole world. The followers of Gandhi believe that India is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country and firmly follow the principles of non-violence, equality and peaceful co-existence and communal harmony, seeking unity in diversity as opposed to 'unity in conformity' as cherished by Godse and the RSS. Further, RSS never believed in tricolor, but only in saffron flag, a symbol of Hindu Rashtra. Adopting Manusamriti as its constitution and give the authority of law and order in the hands of vigilantes and then recognize them as Gau Rakshaks that could stop cow-smuggling, the so-called love-jihad, sounds insane and foolish.

Our former President, Pranab Mukherjee 'advocated the credos of tolerance, non-violence and pluralism' and asserted that the acceptance of divergent opinions is necessary for a cohesive existence among citizens (p. 308). Most ironically while 30th Jan 1948 is still celebrated as Martyr's day to honour Gandhi, the RSS, Godse's followers, choose to observe it as Shaura Divas, i.e. 'Bravery Day' that obviously lauds Godse as a brave soldier for killing Gandhi. It is also really disappointing that constitutionally elected representatives degrade one another mostly baselessly and even drag the armed forces to gain political mileage and intensify socio-political tension by creating a communal divide through provocative and inflammatory speeches. Hindutva brigade has always been a creative tool for the RSS to control and rule the country. Sardar Patel never wanted or said that India should be made a Hindu Rashtra when he invited more than 500 princely states to join the Indian Union. However, attempt by the RSS to revive pre-independent India with 600 kingdoms and some princely states was nothing, but retarding India's progress. Even after surviving various onslaughts since millenniums, India is still intact and has maintained its identity, but then to say that the Hindus are in the state of danger sounds absurd. Rather other indigenous religions and cultures that existed in India are under threat. India belongs not to a single

community. It belongs to the Indian Hindus, Indian Muslims, Indian Christians, Indian Sikhs, Indian Jains, Indian Parsis and Indian Buddhists who have been living here for generations under one single roof of India. The diverse communal statements, caste-driven binaries and the strange classifications of many insiders and outsiders escalated violence against 'not the sons of the soil' often compel one to ask, 'To whom does India really belong?' Does it belong to the Dravidians, Aryans, Mongolians or the Adivasis? It would serve no purpose when all communities start redrawing the map of India based on ancient or past history for the focus should be on one united democratic India consisting of various religions, castes and communities.



Most militant outfits across the world emanate from the sense of entitlement or insecurity. They are yet to be banned anti-democrat outfits that are often self-contradictory. For instance, Digvijay Singh, a Congress leader once said, 'I am a Hindu, RSS is a Hindu organization, then why does it hate me?'<sup>15</sup> (p. 321). How also hypocritical that when Godse was arrested for killing Gandhi, the RSS was quick to disown him to save its skin. Moreover, the criteria on which the govt. decides to ban any secessionists or separatists should be the same for all. Those groups that murder journalists, activists, writers and intellectuals should be instantly banned. But the Sanatan Sanstha and the HJS, to achieve their narrow ideological goal of making India a purely Hindu Rashtrya, demanded time and again to remove the word 'Secular' that was inserted in the 42nd Amendment (1976) into the Constitution of India. Even the judiciary is influenced by the self-entitled mindset of the RSS. Rohini Salian, the public prosecutor admitted that NIA told her to be soft with those accused of Malegaon bomb blast terror. Later, Judge, Ravinder Reddy, resigned after delivering the verdict

in the Mecca Masjid bomb blast, freeing the accused on grounds that the prosecution failed to prove its charges. Likewise, Jagdeep Singh, judge, declared with great anguish that the accused of Samjhauta Express blast case that killed 68 and injured many had to be left scot free for want of evidence. An accused in terror activities, Sadhvi Pragya Thakur, was arrested twice between 2008 and 2011 on her alleged involvement in Sunil Joshi's murder, an RSS worker, who was to expose the conspiracy of those involved in the Samjhauta and Malegaon blasts and other explosions in which Sadhvi was involved. Pragya's mobile records and her visit to Joshi's house showed she was in constant touch with the accused and so was, in all likelihood, instrumental in his murder. By giving a clean chit to her, the govt. went against its principle of being an 'inclusive national party' and spoilt its image as the largest democracy of the world. Again, Hemant Karkare, an honest ATS chief who was extremely dutiful, devoted and did all he could to protect law and order by trying to arrest some saffron-robed political criminals of Malegaon blast. But he became an 'anti-national' in the eyes of Pragya and was so, done away with simply by her curses, as she claimed. But all know the inside story. Sakshi Maharaj also said that her curse killed him. In tune with curse politics, Sakshi Maharaj's threat to curse those who did not vote for him went viral on social media. There is no wonder since for decades the doors of some political parties have been wide open for criminals and corrupt people to enter and have their comfortable seat in Parliament and Assemblies. In a grim scenario as such, the BJP and RSS openly went against their very high moral principles that preached lessons on anti-terrorism to the nation.



Chapter 12th dealing with the Citizenship Amendment Bill, started with a very meaningful statement of A B Vajpayee, 'If India is not

secular then India is not India at all. Governments will come and go. This nation must remain'. The CAB was passed in the Lok Sabha on 8th Jan, 2019. The bill recommends six religions, (except Islam) from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan as eligible for Indian Citizenship after at least residing in India for six years i.e. for those who entered India as late as 2014. North East regions like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura have been inhabited by hundreds of indigenous tribes and sub-tribes since time immemorial. The 6th Schedule of the Constitution assured the protection and survival of the cultural identity and land of the Northeast. But CAB adversely affected the indigenous people of the Northeast. Initially, the NRC that was conducted to identify illegal immigrants, started identifying only Bangladeshi Muslims. This only revealed divisive politics of vested interest which was also unconstitutional and motivated on religious grounds. As the people of the NE were not against Hindus or Muslims, but against illegal migrants, CAB became a vital source of disaster for them. Instead of deporting illegal immigrants, the CAB welcomed the Bangladeshis and added Pakistanis and Afghans to the team of recognized migrants. Contrary to this, before elections, Modi said, if BJP came into power, he would deport the Bangladeshis; Amit Shah also called Bangladeshis 'termites' and some BJP leaders even encouraged genocide. Meghalaya warned BJP to withdraw CAB, else it would sever ties with the govt. and AGP also endorsed it. But when the elections approached, both joined hands with BJP for reasons best known to them. However, apart from naked protests in Guwahati and semi-nude ruckus in Delhi, FKJGP, HNYF, RBYF, NEIPF and many NGO's and students' organization observed a 'Black flag day' and effigies of 'anti-tribal' CAB were also burnt not only in North East, but in various parts of the country. It was not surprising for anyone to hear the statement made by Assam Secretary -General of ABVP when he said, 'Assamese identity can't be saved unless Assam becomes a Hindu State. National Secretary of the ABVP also said, 'India is a country for Hindus'. Since the people of NE wanted to uphold the spirit of the constitution by simultaneously trying to maintain their

linguistic and cultural identity they are deemed 'seditious' and 'anti-nationals'. Due to extreme pressure from the NE and to their relief, the govt. did not table CAB in the Rajya Sabha, but enforced it after 2019 elections. The govt. also did not fence its borders and so smuggling of sophisticated arms and weapons and entry of illegal immigrants through these borders did not stop. Keeping all the foregone facts into consideration, it can be easily concluded that CAB was basically meant to appease the majority Hindus and upgrade the vote bank of the govt.

Chapter 13 deals with the defence deal of NDA govt. Especially, when elections are near, allegations and counter-allegations are on the rise. As the BJP continued its attack on the purchase of Bofors Gun and Augusta Westland helicopters, the Congress would not spare the alleged wrong processes adopted during the Rafale deal. Though the govt. boasts of complete transparency and corruption-free rule, it failed to put the case of Rafale deal before JPC, giving rise to doubts and suspense not only for the opposition but also for the whole nation. As per the records, Modi finalized the deal himself without following any due process or even getting approval from IAF or any MOU inked. As per the established defence criteria, the following that constitute a body have to be involved for deciding the number of aircraft to be purchased and clear the tender: DAC, Army chief, Air Force Chief, Navy Chief, Defence Secretary, Secretary of Defence Finance, DRDO Chief, Coast Guard Chief and the Secretary of Defence Production. However, none of them were made to involve or taken into confidence when the deal was struck. Manohar Parrikar (late), the then defence minister also clearly said, 'Modi ji took the decision, I backed it up'. So, unilateral and not bilateral decision was taken on the vital issue related to the security of the nation. Most shockingly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Rajan Gogoi, owing to some pressure or his closeness with Modi, gave the latter a clean chit on the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets and rejected all the petitions seeking a probe regarding the process and price finalized by the govt. on the grounds that it was not the work of the court to deal with comparative details of

pricing. Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, both former ministers backed Prashant Bhushan who moved the Supreme Court was disappointed when the govt. overlooked the documented facts stated in the petition. The sudden replacement of HAL with Anil Ambani's Reliance was another contentious factor in the controversial deal. BJP's claim that the deal was dropped during Congress regime was sharply countered by HAL Chairman Suvarna Raju, who was then the lead technical negotiator on behalf of HAL. In fact, till March 25th 2015, it was clear that the IAF chief, the HAL Chairman and Dassault CEO were not even aware of any such deal. No one could also imagine that HAL would be totally excluded from the deal. To make matters worse, Sitharaman alleged that HAL was incapable of building Rafale and this deeply hurt HAL funded projects. But Sitharaman was caught unawares by her own statement claiming that orders worth Rs one lakh crore was in the pipeline for HAL. This was rebutted in the Parliament on 4th Jan 2019. Pathetically, in a news conference, HAL employees clearly said that the govt. was building a false narrative of HAL with an aim to mislead the nation; it was a systematic conspiracy to bleed and shut down PSU, HAL.



As the domestic manufacture was discouraged India became the largest importer of defence equipment.

As per records, there was no evidence of corruption against Alok Verma, an honest CBI Chief. But enquiry against him was conducted mainly on CBI Special Director, Rakesh Asthana's false complaint while Asthana, himself facing various corruption charges was at that time under investigation by the CBI itself. Rahul Gandhi clearly said that the midnight crackdown and the sudden removal of CBI chief, Verma was related to Rafale deal. It was because of all this that the Congress persistently demanded a CAG report, a CVC investigation and a JPC. The party also seemed to be



right when it said that that the Supreme Court is not the right forum for investigation issues like Rafale deal. The govt. was then forced to accept its error and was also bound to approach the Supreme Court seeking correction of the judgement. Ram Jethmalani had also shown his disappointment and wrote to the President of India that the Rafale deal was 'the greatest disaster that will fall on this unfortunate nation' 16(p. 369). Subramanian Swamy said that the removal of Verma was an act of injustice and former CJI, S. Thakur said that it was a clear violation of natural justice. Thus, the humiliation of Verma, after many honest years of service, was against all the laws of justice. Many officers, in fact, were transferred by those in power to save the ruling skin, but creating doubt, confusion and speculation in the minds of citizens. Had the occupants of the chair not acted against the laws of integrity, probity and transparency and followed the laws of the Constitution, India would have been a healthier, stronger and more reliable nation.

Jammu and Kashmir had always remained a contentious issue that all successive governments failed to tackle since independence. In June 2018, the BJP broke all connections with the PDP by pulling out all its 25 legislators on the grounds of deteriorating law and order situation and miserable failure of PDP 'to ensure an equitable development especially of the Jammu and Ladakh regions' 17(p. 374). However, hours later, PDP staked claim to form a govt. with the backing of the NC and the Congress, but the Governor, Satpal Malik dissolved the legislative assembly on the pretext that it was the coming together of 'opposing political ideologies'. But even a layman knows that the joint govt. of BJP and PDP was also, ironically, a marriage of opposing ideologies. Presently, J&K is ruled directly by the center. While the BJP was busy with displaying its nationalistic spirit, the number of youth



joining militancy groups started rising rapidly. From 16 in 2013, the number of youth shot up to 53 in 2014, to 66 in 2015, to 88 in 2016 and to 126 in 2017. 2018 was recorded as 'Kashmir's bloodiest year in a decade. Over 150 Indian soldiers and policemen and 300 militants were killed. Caught in the cross-fire, 160 civilians also lost their lives. Yet more young people were radicalized and joined militancy' 18(p. 375). Bloody actions and reactions have become endless and the removal of article 370 and 35 (A) was like adding fuel to the fire or rubbing salt on the wounds of the people of Kashmiri. General V K Singh said, 'Kashmir was peaceful during 2005-12. Over the decades 'neither the snake is dead nor the stick broken'. Modi also said in Srinagar about two weeks before the Pulwama fatal attack that he would break the back of terrorism. Instead, one witnessed how the backbone of the citizens was broken. 40/44 Jawans died in the deadliest blast wrought by the terror suicide squad in Pulwama. In less than two weeks after the Pulwama suicide attack, India for the first time since 1971, launched pre-dawn airstrikes deep into Pakistan's territory, destroying training camps of Jaish-e-Mohammed and Jihadist outfits. In aerial combat, an Indian MiG21 was shot and brought down Wing Commander, Abhinandan Varthaman, an IAF pilot on the soil of POK. After being captured by the Pakistan army, he was later released. India's claim that it shot down one of Pakistan's US built F 16 aircraft during late Feb. 2018 was deemed to be untrue, according to the report of Washington DC based Foreign Policy Magazine. However, amidst the breach of airspace by both the neighbouring countries, Imran Khan urges for a peaceful dialogue with India and in this context attempted to project himself as an apostle of peace to the whole world. Extreme jingoism was also revealed when Yeddyrappa said the death of 40/44 jawans would fetch him 22 seats out of 28 in the elections in Karnataka. Media also did a lot of disservice by putting the wrong questions to the govt. A video was released online that Jaish-e-Mohammad would carry out an attack using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the video was circulated via the J&K police two days before the bomb blast. But the authorities did not heed or take any cognizance of that. Lessons also were not learnt from Pathankot and

Uri attacks. Based on past bitter experiences, should not a long convoy of 2500 Jawans move on a route sans sanitizing it? Ironically, the govt. was quick to boast and impress the country by pre-dawn airstrikes on Pakistan, but miserably failed to protect the precious lives of so many soldiers in Pulwama and pitifully, did not acknowledge its faults also. So, for an insightful, enlightened and subtle writer like Toi, Modi's five-year rule ended on a disappointing and depressing note as it was only very high in promise and very low in execution.

Toi finally ends her book with a touching and moving poem, titled, 'The Dusk'. Infused with melancholic strain, hopelessness, mistrust and despair are writ large on every chapter. Certain such terms and phrases that were attributed to the NDA govt. bespeak its soul, demeanour and texture: 'humbug explosions', 'wolves in sheep skin', 'ever changing axioms' 'revered totems smeared' 'emotive wars heighten, webs ever weaving', bonfires ablaze, cracking in dissonant symphony', 'hello ideology! Bye-bye harmony!' and many more that connote and denote the govt.'s real façade, its state of topsy-turvy, its degraded plight that is beyond redemption. The poetess so, exhorts her countrymen to 'rise up', 'wake up' and not to wait 'till there is none to bell the cats!' The summing up of the explosive and enlightening book is complete, perfect, comprehensive and incisive. The writer uses her saber wisely, but effectively and convincingly to rattle the misrule of five-year NDA govt. Through her powerful critique, sound current political knowledge and subtle scrutiny she has made her book a permanent and memorable document that shall go deep down in the annals of political history for posterity to learn, introspect and rectify its vision, so that an ideal India is built in the coming times.

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## About the reviewer

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Dr Dalip is an author, poet, critic, editor, and reviewer. He has worked as a Lecturer in English at Manchanda Delhi Public College, Delhi. He worked in various capacities, as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and H .O. D (English) in various academic institutes in Haryana. He was a Dy. Registrar and Joint Director at the Directorate of Technical Education, Haryana, Chandigarh.

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## About the author



### **Phidalia Toi**

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Phidalia was born and raised in a small town called Jowai, in Meghalaya, North-east of India. She has acquired a Masters degree in Khasi Language Literature from North Eastern Hills University Shillong. She has also learnt Cinematography from Mumbai. Writing Lyrics, Novels and scripts for Dramas are her passions.

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