

One Man Show
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RECENT revelations in the media about the Ishrat Jehan encounter case, once again brings into sharp focus the secret nexus between crafty politicians and certain manipulative bureaucrats. Karl Marx had once opined "*....for the bureaucrat the world is a mere object to be manipulated by him.*" These sagacious words correctly epitomize the malaise that has steeped into Indian bureaucracy.

Reflect on the complex case scenario - different intelligence agencies, police forces of different states, central and state ministries all giving conflicting narratives about what transpired in a terror plot. The murkiest aspect revolves around the conflicts between the Intelligence Bureau, CBI, SIT and the Ministry of Home Affairs. While the first three organizations are headed by IPS officers, the last one is by an IAS officer. What has now emerged in the media are the inter departmental wranglings, manipulations and cover ups, doctored affidavits filed before Courts, third degree torture of reticent officials in order to direct the investigational course on a pre planned path so as to validate a conclusion, that was politically desired. I am reminded of a famous quote by Honor do Balzac-: "*Bureaucracy is a giant mechanism operated by pygmies.*"

Consider the structure of all these organization, it is a one man show at the helm of affairs. Remote, secretive bureaucracies built by the political elite, staffed by hand - picked favorites, who have also been excited with such offices as their sole pursuit. Potential unintended negative consequences emerge from such contaminated selection. The Ishrat Jehan case in an apposite example of favorites running amok lured by post retirement sinecures, driven by the belief that no price is too high to pay for the privileges of adorning a gubernatorial, ambassadorial or political office. Correctly commented upon by Sallust "*it is the nature of ambition to make men liars and cheats, to hide the truth in their breasts, and show like jugglers, another thing in their mouths, to cut all friendship and enmities to the measure of their own interest, and make a good countenance without the help of goodwill*".

What France Pope spoke about the Vatican bureaucracy can be applied to Indian bureaucracy" *_____ living hypocritical double lives in a parallel world, where they disregard all that they sternly teach to others and they start living a life that is secret and often dissolute*". The Pope spoke of lugubrious priests "*cold blooded assassins of other people's reputations, of hypocrites and sycophants*"

Recall what Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) said in 1787, about "*Dangers of a salaried Bureaucrat*", "*Sir there are the two passions which have a powerful influence in the affairs of men. These are ambition and avarice -the love of power and the love of money. Separately, each of these has great force in prompting men to action but when united in view of the same object, they have, in many minds, the most violent effects. Place before the eyes of such man a post of honor that shall at the same time be a place of profit, and they will move heaven and earth to obtain it. The vast numbers of such places it is that renders the British government so tempestuous. The struggles for them are the true source of all those functions which are perpetually dividing the nation -----*"

This is what is happening in our country. Massive bureaucracies, several intelligence agencies, ministries of all kinds, all presided over by a single bureaucrat, often a favorite of the ruling political party. This one man show facilitates easy indulgence in all kind of

manipulations, fabrications and conspiracies. This is what happened in the Ishrat Jehan case, changed affidavits, suppression of facts, framing innocents, and finally and predictably, the subsequent mischief of missing files. The highest figures in the bureaucracy, intelligence agencies and their political masters were manipulating and playing with security of the nation itself, only to satisfy their greed for power. These were not playing patriot games but undermining the nation's survival itself just for the cravings of a few politicians and bureaucrats for the loaves and fishes of office.

Another disconcerting factor is the utter helplessness of the judiciary to discern the truth at the admission stage itself. Heavily dependent on the Prosecution side (government) for the facts, the judiciary blindly sets in motion a prolonged serial drama starting with the bail petitions. For some cases even one human life - time is not sufficient in our country. Such is the system we have nurtured, perfected and still perpetuating. But for the delayed and unexplained sudden disclosure by the then Home Secretary, the Ishrat Jehan case would have labored on and on, generating divisive legal and political battles across the country, dividing people, institutions and damaging the image of the country. But do these scheming politicians and bureaucrats care? They are all now hiding under the specious plea of "*missing files*"

To quote from "*Corridors of Deceit: The world of John Le Carre, chapter 8- Trespasses, the Looking - Glass War (1965) both extends and deepens Le Carre's dramatized sermon on the inhumanity of spying. As Mundt showed in the spy, agents aren't chosen by intelligence organizations for their congeniality. Activities, the performance of which often sink the rest of us like blackmail, treachery, and murder earn them money and promotions. As in Call and Spy, the Looking - Glass war shows dirty deeds enacted under executive order. Again, spy masters risk or even destroy agents in the field. They do so not to protect the operations they have launched but to protect themselves. Their guile is a function of both sinking -lid budgets and personnel cutbacks. Security agencies would rather lie to both their sister branches and the ministry itself than surrender a brief. This bureaucratic chicanery can leave the field agent where he doesn't want to be- unprotected and alone in a dangerous place.*"

Mr. Narendra Modi was a victim of bureaucratic deceit, official untruths and intentional deception. What is intentional deception? It is "*a process within an organization, either public and private with an express social, legal or political responsibility whose leadership and bureaucratic structures are constructed in such a manner that allows, enables, or directs its power for the purpose of misleading, deceiving or otherwise obfuscating the actual situation it is entrusted to convey*" ([www.markswatson.com/institutional deception](http://www.markswatson.com/institutional%20deception))

Again, "*Authority has always attracted the lowest elements in the human race. All through history mankind has been bulled by scum. Those who lord it over their follows and toss commands in every direction and would boss the grass in the meadow about which way to bend in the wind are the most depraved kind of prostitutes*" - P. J. O'Rourke, A parliament of whores

India is facing such huge predicaments because our institutions and organizations are all one man shows. Whether it is Intelligence Bureau, CBI, RAW, Military Intelligence, DRI, NIA, or E.D all are one man shows, mini dictatorships, hence easily susceptible to manipulation and temptation, when weak men occupy those offices. The simple way out is to make them all into multi-member Boards, like the Election Commission, and Central Vigilance Commission. CBI itself needs to be reorganized into a multi-member and multi - service board to ensure that inter service rivalry is minimized.

This is the time for reforms and bureaucratic reforms are the simplest to implement. The bureaucracy is becoming unnecessarily too large, too expensive and too powerful and

hence getting organized into more confusing ways. According to a recent survey of the bureaucracies of 12 Asian economies, India's "suffocating bureaucracy" has been ranked as the least efficient and working with the country's civil servants is described as a "slow and painful" process. (www.livemint.com/opinion-agency-based-approach-to-reform-the-indian-administrative-service)

In many ways, the CBEC and CBDT have not been accused of manipulation and craftiness only because they happen to be multi member organizations. A freak Member trying to manipulate the system would easily stand exposed and isolated. This also explains their inability to grab any coveted governorships or ambassadorial assignments post retirement. It is this model that needs to be replicated across all bureaucratic offices in order to protect innocent citizens from predatory bureaucrats and politicians.

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