

BJP'S FRESH
FACES

True to its policy, the BJP has given opportunities to fresh faces while distributing tickets to the candidates for contesting the Lok Sabha elections. The most shocking and yet interesting change was the party picking Ujjal Nikam, who rose to fame by playing his role as public prosecutor in the trial of Ajmal Kasab in the 26/11 trial. He was picked as against the two time MP, Poonam Mahajan. She was no ordinary person. Fiery speaker of the Parliament Poonam came into politics as daughter of her stalwart father Pramod Mahajan, who was unfortunately killed by his brother. No doubt she proved herself by winning two elections from the Mumbai north central seat. However, the saffron party dropped her and other candidates from Mumbai and other places like Ladakh to pick fresh faces. This is probably aimed at infusing fresh blood in the party and broadening the party's support base and not confining it to individuals. While it is the prerogative of the party to distribute tickets to the contestants, in a massive party like the BJP there are many more positions on which its leaders can be positioned to make the party strong and do the organizational work. There is lesser limelight in that work but it is important for a party that is based on ideology and pan Indians identity. The other political parties must learn from BJP that no cartels should be encouraged in politics and no constituency should become a fiefdom of a person or a family. Building a political organization is as important as winning elections. Some of the MPs have been representing a constituency for decades and this can perhaps be avoided by a cadre based party like BJP. Of course no party worth its salt can give tickets to candidates for tokenism; his ability to win is of utmost importance. However, a political party can always find some gaps and give chances to others to contest.

Nilantha Ilangamuwa

When conspiracy theories gain traction and permeate the public consciousness, they inevitably taint the discourse surrounding the event in question. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in politically charged contexts. Five years ago, amidst the Easter attack on tourist hotels, two Catholic churches and a Zion church in Western and Eastern provinces, a plethora of conspiracy theories surfaced. Initially, speculation swirled suggesting the involvement of a powerful Western nation, followed by theories positing the attack as a ploy to consolidate political power. More recently, local politicians and various social groups have propagated the notion that India orchestrated the attack. Yet, none of these claims have been substantiated with credible evidence. Meanwhile, the culpability of the investigating officers' negligence, which played a role in the tragedy, has been overshadowed by these baseless allegations. Instead of being held accountable, those partially responsible have reshaped the narrative to deflect blame onto others.

However, in the aftermath of the attack, public media reports surfaced alleging that prominent politicians and Government officials were aware of the impending threat. Some even openly discussed this matter. Additionally, a leaked classified document from the police indicated forewarning of an imminent attack. What followed was not just the proliferation of various interpretations but also the dissemination of misconceptions. For instance, blame was swiftly pinned on the State Intelligence Service, the country's premier intelligence agency, extending to judicial

indictments. However, a more rational examination, grounded in verifiable data, reveals a different societal reality. It uncovers a systemic failure across institutions tasked with national security and a disregard for prior warnings. Furthermore, it exposes concerted efforts to downplay this negligence for political gain. In a nation scarred by nearly four decades of internal conflict and widespread devastation, such institutional negligence sadly becomes almost unsurprising. It's crucial to highlight overlooked facts concerning the attack in question.

Leading up to the incident in question, there was a noticeable proliferation of extremist factions advocating violence across Sri Lanka. This surge wasn't limited to Muslim extremist groups but encompassed various ideological factions, each pursuing distinct political agendas. The emergence of the Islamic State in West Asia particularly bolstered the prospects of extremists across different nations, with Sri Lanka serving as a pivotal transit hub.

Investigations have revealed a significant influx of extremists from regions like Kerala, as well as countries such as the Maldives, into Sri Lanka. It's evident that intelligence agencies within the region, including those of Sri Lanka and Western nations, amassed substantial intelligence on these activities and collaborated in information sharing. Testimony from the wife of Zahran Hashim, a ringleader of the carnage, attests to the financial backing he received from a Singaporean national to establish his initial mosque. She further detailed Zahran's extensive involvement in extremist endeavours, including recruiting adherents and garnering financial and logistical support through-

out the country.

This revelation sheds light on the proliferation of extremism in Sri Lanka, culminating in the Easter attack and subsequent incidents like the suicidal blast at the Sainthamaruthu house, where Zahran's family last resided. Zahran and his cohorts have exhibited affiliations with extremist ideologies and have been inspired by the Islamic State. Moreover, Sri Lankan nationals who joined the organisation's ranks in Syria have been observed exerting influence on local activities. Between 2014 and 2018, a staggering 41,490 individuals from 91 nations travelled to Syria to support the Islamic State, including 32 Sri Lankans.

Exploiting this influx, organisations espousing extremist ideologies, under various guises, began proliferating throughout Sri Lanka. Additionally, individuals of Sri Lankan origin who attempted to travel to Syria via Turkey but were unsuccessful have returned home and aligned themselves with figures like Zahran. Simultaneously, the ideological backing of Mohamed Naufar, known as the "second emir" and a close relative-specifically, the husband of Zahran's maternal aunt-played a pivotal role. Naufar, identified by the FBI as the mastermind behind the attack, exerted significant influence on the events.

Since March 2017, there have been eleven significant incidents leading up to the Easter attack, yet none have undergone thorough investigation. This failure on the part of investigative agencies, which were supposed to act on precious intelligence passed on to them, has been perceived as a deliberate effort to conceal the underlying truth of the entire episode from society, thereby impeding

the crucial lessons to be gleaned from this tragedy.

The series of events began with a clash at Kattankudy Aliyar junction on March 10, 2017. Following this conflict, police attempted to arrest Zahran, but their efforts proved unsuccessful. Subsequently, on May 17, 2017, a member of National Thowheeth Jama'ath was shot. This was followed by a bomb thrown at the National Front for Good Governance (NFGG) Mohammad Farzan's house on February 06, 2018 and another bomb thrown at the NFGG Kattankudy office on February 12, 2018.

Further escalations occurred with the shooting of Palani Bawa in Kattankudy on June 08, 2018 and the detonation of a bomb by Zahran's brother Rilwan in Arayampathy on August 26, 2018, resulting in injuries and fatalities at Wavathiv police post on November 30, 2018. The incidents continued with the vandalism of religious statues in Mawanella on December 23, 2018 and further vandalism on January 16, 2019, related to providing information about the destruction of statues and concealment of explosive materials in Vanathavilluwa of Puttalam District.

The situation intensified with the discovery of material and the shooting of informant Raziq Mohammad Taslim on March 08, 2019, resulting in permanent disability. Finally, a motorcycle explosion in Thalankudah on April 16, 2019, just five days before the Easter attack, marked the culmination of these incidents. Numerous intelligence reports concerning these events have been received by the commissions tasked with investigating them, shedding light on the negligence of the officers responsible for the criminal investigation.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TEA

PROF (RETD) VERINDER
SINGH MANHAS (JU)

The discipline and name 'Historiography' was coined by Herodotus considered as father of history and father of geography. Born in 526 BCE in Heli-carnassus a city on border of Greece and turkey. Spent most of his life in Thurile (Greece). Famous for his writings and findings of the known world in 'Illiad' and the 'Odyssey'.

The Historical geography of tea is shrouded in mystery, myths, and beliefs and rituals more than any other crop, product or a beaveradge or any industrial product. Tea is a compliment of hospitality in the modern world, especially in Asia, i.e. Asia, east Europe, Russia, china, mid-west Asia and the kangaroo islands of Australia and Newzeland. It is therefore necessary to know of its evolution and origin researchers in chinese civilization reveal that in 2737 b.c. a herbalist shan nung discovered some leaves of a bush, after getting boiled in hot water gave a smell and fragrance which spread in south china's scezchan area, which delighted the people of s.w. China and s. China bordering India and s.w. In Yarkand, Khotan and Samarkand of central Asia.

In literal terms tea came into writing as a drinking sleepless beaveridge in the sixth to Fifth Centuries b.c during the tang dynasty when the Buddhist thought started flourishing in China and Japan.

The Chinese originates tea came to India through Buddhist travellers,



thinkers, philosophers and writers like Fahien, Hieun Tsang and Itsang in times of Kanishka, Ashoka and Harsh Vardhan tea became a popular beverage in the first Buddhist council (Gandhara, Kandhara), the second Buddhist council in Kabolia (Kabul), the third Buddhist council in Kashimara or Srinagar and the fourth Buddhist council in Patliputra or Patna.

Trade between India and China was established in which tea was the main component. After the British East India Company, the biggest and largest exploring and trading company established in 1757 after the battle of Plassey. Authorized an explorer and trader Robert Bruce to collect and send seeds of tea to England for trading purposes.

In 1786, a cup of tea got royal patron-

age with the ruling king/queen of wales started having tea on specific occasions.

By 1790 to 1832 a cold war between the Indian tea seeds and the Chinese tea seeds had started, bringing a dark age in tea trade between British India and china until 1832 where the British Indian tea under a broker s.m. Barua won against a Chinese broker sung tu.

The Indian tea from Brahmaaputra valley, Darjeeling, eastern Assam and silchar was priced at 325 pounds per kg the London tea market popularly known as Wall Street was and still today is flooded with Indian manufactured tea of various tastes and colours.

On 10 January 1839 for the first time a consignment of Assam tea was placed at the London commercial sales tea

stocks and the highest bidder of tea bought and sold the Assam tea at 530 pounds per kg by w.j. Thompson.

Today India is the biggest producer and largest exporter of tea in the world. Even back home it provides large scale employment to population of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, north Bengal, Tripura, palampur _ kangra and areas around the nilgiris hills. Tea cultivation has a direct correlation with north east trade winds and monsoons in June July august months, thereby giving lot of employment opportunities to garo, khasi and toda tribes.

The tea plantation, production and manufacture was a total British industry but today Indians are large players in tea. The majors group dominated tea for about seventy years. Today tatas and other private companies have also joined tea.

After the dark age of tea trade commercially, the tea market of sales in Britain was flooded from tea brought by the Potugese, Dutch, French, Indonesia, East Africa, Russia and Sri Lanka. The number of brokers and bidders increased in London tea market. The

Portuguese and the Dutch were the first European countries to import tea seeds from China and India in 1728. This was followed by large scale tea cultivation, production, and export of tea from Kenya. This was also joined by Indonesia, Russia, Japan and Sri lanka.

The commercial tea rate kept on increasing upto 1200 pounds per kg to 2600 pounds per kg.

The U-turns and contradictions in Antony's political journey

Kumar Chellappan

The year was 1993. The Kerala Press Academy (since renamed as Kerala Media Academy) under the ownership of the Kerala Government was having the Mathai Manjooran Memorial Day. Mathai Manjooran was a socialist party leader and was a member of the EMS Namboodiripad-led coalition Government during the 1967-69. He was also a trade union leader who never hesitated to speak his mind. It is unfortunate that he passed away in 1970 at the age of 58.

A K Antony, the quintessential Congress leader was the speaker who delivered the Manjooran Memorial speech and as a journalist, I was there to cover the event. The country was yet to come out of the impact of the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya and the entire secularist forces were up in arms against the Hindus for the "barbaric" act. Not a single day passed in Kerala without communal harmony meetings and all speakers were vying with one an-

other in blaming the Sanatanis for the heinous act and praising Islam as the religion of peace.

But Antony chose a different approach in his 45 minutes. He warned the minority communities (read Christians and Muslims) from attacking the Hindus and reminded the two communities that they should be grateful to the Sanatanis for their magnanimity in offering the minorities more than what the Hindus themselves enjoyed. "The minorities have been given more rights and privileges to run their own educational institutions and hospitals while the Hindus were denied the same. We should always bear in mind the truth that the minorities in India enjoy unique rights and privileges that the Hindus do not have and we should be grateful to them for their broad-mindedness," said Antony, which made the next day's headlines.

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Antony became the chief minister of Kerala for the third time in 2001 but he quit in 2004 for reasons best known to him, the then Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the then Muslim League boss Mohammed Shihab Ali Thangal. Eight Hindu fishermen were butchered by members of a Muslim extremist organisation at Maradu in Kozhikode district in May 2003 and there was a demand for a CBI probe into the massacre.

and the then Muslim League boss Mohammed Shihab Ali Thangal. Eight Hindu fishermen were butchered by members of a Muslim extremist organisation at Maradu in Kozhikode district in May 2003 and there was a demand for a CBI probe into the massacre. A prominent Muslim League leader, who later on became a Union Minister in the Manmohan Singh Government played a significant role in offering shelter in a mosque to the assassins.

When the issue of the CBI probe came for consideration in the liaison committee meeting of the UDF, the Muslim League leaders warned Antony who was the then Chief Minister against an investigation by the Central agency. The UDF had won 99 out of the 140 seats at stake and was in a comfortable position. The Muslim League ultimatum against the CBI probe angered Antony and he announced in a public meeting the next day that political parties, especially the

caste and community-based outfits, should not make the Government dance to their tunes with organised bargaining power. That turned out to be the nemesis for Antony as the Gods in Malappuram asked Sonia Gandhi to remove him from the post of chief minister. Despite Antony tendering an apology, the chieftains of the Muslim League, controlling Kerala politics from the Kudapanakkal castle in Panakkad, were not humoured and they insisted on the former's ouster. That was how Antony resigned as the Chief Minister and shifted camp to Delhi. The Sulthans of Malappuram had the last laugh.

Antony knows very well that his shirt and dhoti should be more secular than that of the CPI(M) and other outfits to stay in the reckoning. That is why the person who wanted the minority communities to be grateful to the Hindus wants the Sanatan Dharma to be demolished. There is nothing surprising in Antony's stance as he was always against the Hindus even as the president of Kerala Students Union, the

feeder organisation of the Congress. The group in the Congress party in Kerala has its roots in Antony's grievances about the status enjoyed by Hindu leaders like K Karunakaran and their clout in the High Command. The group in Congress has nothing to do with ideology and Antony's hatred towards Hindus is reflected in his cursing his son Anil Antony joining the BJP. What Antony should have done is to give freedom to 38-year-old Anil to select the party of his choice and wish him all success.

Instead of that what Antony has done is to demand the Nehru-Gandhi clan to field candidates for the Lok Saba election from Amethi and Rae Bareli. He also declared that the Congress party cannot exist without the Nehru-Gandhi family. Isn't this another way of telling that India is Indira and Indira is India?

Remember, this is the same Antony who ridiculed Indira Gandhi cast his lot with the CPI(M) in 1980 and formed a Government with the Marxists during 1980-1982.