

Our Glorious Achievements and Crying Failures
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Most newspapers throughout India carried certain news items during the period of January-April 2006. The Ahmedabad edition of a popular Gujarati daily 'Sandesh' dated April 6, 2006 published a story that 32 Indian companies have entered the billion dollar club and listed the 32 companies on the front page.

This year 10 rich Indian citizens entered the billion dollar club according to The Times of India dated March 11. Among the 40 richest Indians there are 27 billionaires!

Quoting Forbes magazine 'Sandesh' and other newspapers have reported that India-born steel king, Mr. Lakshmi Mittal is the richest man not only in India but in the whole of Asian continent!

Every Indian can take pride in these achievements of Indian companies and citizens. These great Indians with business acumen and hard work place India in the company of developed nations.

The IIMs, IITs and other well-known institutions of management, engineering and information technology are also in the forefront in taking India among the developed nations. The managers, engineers and technocrats coming out of these institutions earn lakhs and crores of rupees as salaries in India and abroad!

This year a student, who passed from IIM, Ahmedabad got a job in an Indian company for a salary of Rs.30 lakhs according to The Times of India dated March 11. The same news report has mentioned three postgraduate students of IIM-A who secured jobs in Barclays Company of U.K. for the salary of \$ 185,000; that is, about Rs.83,25,000/=.

On the economic front India has progressed ahead of Japan to become the third largest economic in the world after USA and China according to The Times of India report of January 26.

India has also created world record in giving 20,00,000 mobile connections in one month! These kinds of development and progress of India make us happy and proud.

But is this the true and real progress and development of India?

Along with above news of development and progress there are also three other types of news reports which stare on our faces!

The Times of India has published a report with a photo of 7 year old girl Ranjo with a cardboard hanging on her neck, which says, "Sir buy me, pay Rs.2,000/-." In the report dated March 31, Ranjo says, "My two sisters have already been sold to people outside Jammu & Kashmir. But I am working in Talwara itself for studies. There is no shame if I get Rs.2,000/- but am allowed to study by whosoever buys me."

Another type of news item speaks about death of children on account of poverty and malnourishment in the states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Orissa!

A third type of news item speaks about the death of farmers under the crushing weight of debt and harassment of money-lenders!

There is nothing much to take glory or to celebrate about the progress and development even if India is considered among the top most economic powers. For, a vast number of her citizens endure hunger and go to sleep with empty stomach! A vast number of women and children suffer from malnourishment and die! A considerable number of farmers are forced to commit suicide on account of failed crops and debt! The progress is empty, which ignores the last man on the street. Such progress and development are unjust and immoral!

According to the annual reports of UNICEF India is the home of one-third malnourished children of the whole world! In comparison India is more backward than the sub-Saharan countries of Africa which have only one-fourth undernourished children! The children who survive the malnourishment grow with retarded brain development and poor physical growth.

In India each district has a Chief Executive Officer called Collector, a Development Officer, Medical Officer, etc. Then there are government employees at Taluka and village levels. Still, if people are suffering from inequitable distribution of food, poor or no access of health services, poor sanitation and inadequate immunization, then the concerned civil servants and officers should be called to account.

The officers and civil servants, under whose jurisdiction malnourishment and death of children occur, should be gathered together and kept without food for three days to give them an experience of the pangs of hunger which in the long run cause malnourishment and death. This way they will become aware that due to their negligences and irresponsibility the poor people have to suffer a lot.

Everybody knows that many of those rich and middle class people, who draw fat salary from the government treasury, hardly care for the poor and the Dalit people. So if the symbolic punishment of forced fasting of three days does not yield the desired result, then such civil servants and officers should be dismissed. Qualified people from the reserved category who care for the poor and Dalits should be appointed in their places.

In most places children suffered malnourishment and death due to hunger under the officials of merit category! In all such places and posts meritorious candidates from reserved category should be appointed to care for the poor and the Dalit. They will sympathize with their suffering brothers and sisters and remedy the situation.

The so called upper castes and the advocates of meritocracy have not been able to abolish the malnourishment, death due to hunger and poverty in India! Now they should make room for the reserved category of the people whom they have kept at arms length so long. In spite of India's constitutional support and the provisions of 22.5 percent reservation the people of the reserved category were not given level playing field under one pretext or other!

Many North Indian states including Gujarat have not filled thousands of vacant posts kept for the people of various reserved categories! In this way state governments have directly or indirectly violated the constitutional provisions and laws regarding reservation. Besides, we have made much noise without concrete proof that the reservation could bring down the standard!

But actual facts do not support such assertions. The glorious achievements and efficient performances of the people who rose to the top through reservation prove that reservation does not bring down the standard or the performance. On the contrary, the people who came up through reservation have performed equally or even better!

Our constitution gives equal rights to all its citizens such as equality and social justice. The government irrespective of party affiliation is bound to give these constitutional rights to all its citizens.

It is a great shame in some backward areas of India that children are dying without sufficient food and nourishment! Children grow retarded physically and intellectually due to malnourishment! Farmers are killing themselves due to poverty and debt! All these prove the failure of successive governments and of their officials and civil servants like Collectors, development and medical officers.

But now even the time to blame and counter blame has passed! Now is the time for all concerned government authorities and civil officials to make concerted and coordinated efforts to drive away malnourishment and poverty and death from famished children and debt-ridden farmers.

When hunger and want of basic necessities disappear from all corners of India and children everywhere get sufficient nourishment for their growth and the farmer do not have to resort to crushing debt, then India will arise to the ranks of developed nations. Then, we can proudly proclaim that we are on par with developed countries.