

Drone Warfare Lessons – Part 2

By Brig Hemant Mahajan, YSM

Author is M Sc, M Phil in Defence Studies. He joined IMA Dehradun in July 1973 and passed out as a Commissioned Officer on 15 June 1975. He commanded his battalion 7 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY in Operation Rakshak in the most difficult areas of Poonch and Rajouri.

Israel-Hamas War: The Israeli drones keeping the IDF safe in Gaza

Israel uses a plethora of drones, from the larger Herons made by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to the Elbit Hermes 450, known as the Zik. Israel uses larger drones to carry out airstrikes, which have become more common in the last year, including in the West Bank and now in Gaza.

Israel also uses new, smaller types of drones, called loitering munitions, that carry a warhead and fly into targets. These are called Maoz in Hebrew and are used in Gaza. The Skylark is something in between types like the swarming Thor drones or the various quadcopters and the larger drones that are more like aircraft. The Skylark is meant for battalion-level operations.

Skylarks are used to collect intelligence, soaring over the battlefield from where they can see in front of infantry or tanks. This can help the artillery, or what are called fire brigade units, to coordinate fire against targets.

"Insights and Lessons Learned from Israel Hamas' Conflict"

The operational success of drones has surpassed expectations, as demonstrated by Hamas effectively disrupting the Israeli army during the October 7 attacks.

A significant shift occurred in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict when Gaza launched a series of suicide drones, notably the Zouari model named after Tunisian engineer Mohamed Zouari. Zouari played a crucial role in the development of Hamas's military drone program, known as Ababi-1. Hamas's use of drones caught Israel off guard, despite its technological superiority.

Israel has long maintained control over Gaza's airspace with its advanced UAV industry. However, the emergence of affordable entry-level drones, available online for \$2,000 to \$3,000, challenged Israel's dominance. Initially seen as toys, these drones evolved and were creatively smuggled into Gaza, with local production of drone parts using 3D printers becoming common.

As drone capabilities advanced, the appearance of Iranian Shehab drones in Gaza signalled a significant development. Caught in a strategic blind spot, Israel hesitated to confront the growing power of the "air force of the poor." Palestinian groups continued to enhance their drone capabilities, and any attempts to counter this phenomenon risked escalating the regional situation.

Drones have become so widespread that Jordan requested Patriot air defense missiles from the United States due to constant incursions into its airspace. Jordanian forces regularly intercept drones carrying weapons and ammunition destined for the Palestinian territories. The extensive use of drones has fundamentally altered the dynamics of conflicts in the Middle East.

Advantages of Drones in Conventional and Sub Conventional War:

Drones offer several advantages in conventional/ Sub Conventional warfare:

Surveillance and Reconnaissance: Drones provide real-time aerial surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, allowing military forces to gather valuable intelligence on enemy positions, movements, and activities.

Precision Strikes: Armed drones equipped with missiles or bombs can conduct precise strikes on targets with reduced collateral damage. They offer the ability to engage targets with increased accuracy and reduce the risk to human personnel.

Force Multiplication: Drones can enhance the capabilities of military by providing an extended operational range, persistent surveillance, and the ability to operate in environments that may be challenging or dangerous for humans.

Cost-Effectiveness: Compared to manned aircraft, drones are more cost-effective to operate and maintain. This makes them a valuable asset for military forces with limited resources.

Russian & Ukraine Use of Drones In Ukraine War:

Russia has utilized drones in the Russia-Ukraine war for various purposes, including reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition, and even offensive operations. They have deployed both small and large drones, ranging from quadcopters to fixed-wing aircraft. These drones have been used to gather intelligence on Ukrainian positions, monitor troop movements, and provide real-time situational awareness to Russian forces. They have also been used to strike targets, such as Ukrainian military installations.

Ukrainian Use of Drones:

Ukraine has also employed drones in the conflict with Russia. They have used drones for similar purposes as Russia, including surveillance, reconnaissance, and target acquisition. Ukrainian drones have helped identify enemy positions, monitor Russian troop movements, and provide valuable intelligence to Ukrainian forces. Additionally, they have used armed drones for defensive purposes, targeting Russian military assets and disrupting enemy operations.

Lessons for India from Ukraine War

Investment in Technology: India needs to continue investing in drone technology, including surveillance and armed drones, to enhance its military capabilities. India should prioritize the development and acquisition of drone technology for surveillance, reconnaissance, and offensive operations, enhancing its capabilities on the modern battlefield.

Integration of Drones into Military Operations: The armed forces should undergo specialized training for the effective use and integration of drones into conventional warfare strategies.

Indian armed forces must focus on integrating drones into their existing operational doctrines and tactics, leveraging their capabilities to enhance situational awareness and operational effectiveness.

Adaptability and Innovation to Evolving Threats: Given the evolving nature of drone technology, the military should remain adaptable and innovative in its use of drones for various purposes.

India should continuously monitor and analyze the evolving use of drones in warfare and adapt its military strategies, training, and equipment accordingly to stay ahead of potential adversaries.

Collaboration and Alliances

Establishing collaborations with countries that have advanced drone capabilities can facilitate knowledge exchange and technological cooperation.

Counter-Drone Measures:

India needs to invest in the development of counter-drone technologies and strategies to mitigate the threat posed by enemy drones, including detection, jamming, and interception systems.

Cybersecurity Measures: Strengthen cybersecurity measures to protect drone systems from potential cyber threats and hacking attempts.

Use of drones by police and law enforcement agencies

A drone can quickly fly over, detect threats and provide aerial images and real-time footage. This allows security staff to assess the level of danger and identify the appropriate response. Indian police can use drones in many ways to improve law and order situation.

To be continued in next issue

Iranian Irresponsibility Challenges Indian Interests and Friendship

By Gr. Capt. Praveer Purohit (Retd)

The writer is a former Indian Air Force officer and an independent analyst on defence and strategic issues. He can be reached at praveerp@rediffmail.com

The dreadful terrorist attack on October 07 by Hamas, was rightly deplored in most parts of the world. The despicable act garnered a sympathy wave towards Israel and it soon retaliated by launching an offensive against Hamas. Since then, the people of Gaza have been subjected to unrelenting (barring a brief ceasefire) and often unconstrained bombardment. The suffering of innocent civilians on both sides, be it the victims of the terror attacks or the civilians in Gaza has been pushed into the margins by the hardening of stance by both Israel and Hamas. Even as efforts to broker peace continue, it seems sense and sensibility have been lost in the spiralling violence.

In post-World War II West Asia, Israel had no shortage of enemies and countries unfavourably disposed towards it. However, the Camp David Accords in 1978 (officially titled "Framework for Peace in the Middle East") and the Abraham Accords of 2020, both brokered by the USA, reduced animosity towards Israel and enhanced peace on its periphery. Even Saudi Arabia and Israel were well poised to establish diplomatic relations and bury their hatchet. That left only Iran as a country of some consequence which retained its enmity with Israel. No doubt given their frayed relationship with the USA, Iran found favourable mention in geopolitical narratives in China and Russia. The China-Iran oil trade continues unabated. Despite the economic woes faced by common people in Iran, the regime seems unaffected by sanctions due to an allegedly burgeoning 'black market' for the sale of Iranian oil through Iraq. Given its hostility towards Israel, Iran has opportunistically built a narrative of the Hamas and Hezbollah being 'freedom fighters', whereas in reality, they are terrorist organisations. As long as it was limited to statements, the Iranian stance did not count for much. However, by allegedly arming, supporting, and training Houthi rebels to target commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Iran has taken brinkmanship to a new level in the muddled geopolitics of the Middle East. By resorting to grey zone warfare, Iran has created more strife and caused destabilization and misery to Palestine, whose cause it purportedly espouses.

So how does this concern India? For one, the recent drone attacks on India-bound ships, the MV Sai Baba and MV Chem Pluto are indicators of how precarious the situation is. 95 percent of India's trade by volume occurs through the seas. The route for 65 percent of India's import of crude oil is through the Red Sea. Around \$ 200 billion worth of exports from India ply through the Red Sea to their destinations. A crisis in the region pushes the cost of transportation and insurance upwards. This affects the competitiveness of exports and the cost of imports. Ultimately, it is the Indian citizen, already reeling under high inflation who will bear the added cost. Secondly, the events from October 07 have created hiccups for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). The IMEC which carries great economic potential and geopolitical advantages to India has come under stress. Thirdly, even if Iran is fishing in troubled waters for tactical advantage, the real strategic beneficiary is China. It benefits by diverting the US attention away from Taiwan and covering its territorial theft in East Ladakh, Bhutan and the South China Sea. It is now axiomatic that whatever benefits China strategically almost invariably is detrimental to India.

As an important stakeholder in the Middle East, India has its task cut out. The Indian PM has held talks with the PMs of the UK, Israel, the Presidents of UAE, and Iran and Saudi Crown Prince amongst other leaders. One can safely assume that similar efforts could be underway at the diplomatic level too. India has taken a nuanced stand, condemning the Hamas attack even as it has supported a homeland for Palestine. India has a healthy relationship with the Arabs and Palestine even as we pursue a strategic partnership with Israel. However, India needs to look beyond and act vigorously to mitigate and eventually overcome the adverse effects of the current crisis. Firstly, we ought to coordinate more closely with the US and jointly impress upon Israel to calibrate its use of force, explicitly refrain from targeting civilians and ensure humanitarian aid in Gaza. Our common friend (Israel) should be convinced that its disproportionate use of force and a frenzy for 'revenge' is counter productive. Secondly, India should take the initiative to build a consensus along with other major stakeholders like the US, UK, Arab states, Australia and Japan for a UN-mandated collective deployment of warships to protect merchant shipping in the Red Sea area. If done under a UN mandate, it will find greater global acceptance and take the steam out of Chinese and Russian propaganda. The third action concerns Iran. Characterized by high inflation, weak GDP growth, depreciating currency and rising unemployment, Iran nevertheless continues playing the game of geopolitical destabilization by violence mostly through proxies. Iran has displayed growing closeness and strategic convergence with our strategic rival, China while waging a hybrid war against our strategic partners – the US and Israel. Despite Iran's profane track record on women's rights, likely nuclear weaponization/ proliferation and religious fundamentalism, India has been quite friendly to Iran, even supporting its entry into SCO and BRICS. Iranian act of supporting and covertly directing attacks against commercial shipping including India-bound ships is in direct defiance of India's principled and consistent stand on freedom and safety of maritime commerce. Iran's irresponsible actions are increasingly becoming an embarrassment to our friendship. More importantly, they have raised the economic and reputational costs for us while reducing our strategic space. It is high time India firmly conveys this to Iran and reminds it to be mindful of our interests and concerns. The time for 'fence-sitting' is over. Instead, it is time to call 'spade a spade.' Geopolitical stability is crucial for a rising India. Let us hope and pray for a more peaceful 2024.

Bharat Shakti Exercise at Pokhran to Display Might Of Indigenous Weapons

By Ravi Shankar

The Author has over two decades of experience in communications, print journalism, electronic media, documentary film making and new media.

The Indian Army will organise a major integrated tri-service war game exercise demonstrating the firepower might of Made-in-India weapon systems and platforms on March 12 at the Pokhran field firing range in the deserts of Rajasthan. The “live fire and manoeuvre exercise”, called “Bharat Shakti”, will be witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and the top military brass. It is aimed at showcasing indigenous weapons firepower and the military’s operational capabilities and readiness.

“The event will demonstrate the indigenous capability of the three Services through an Integrated Tri-Service Firepower and Manoeuvre Exercise for about 50 minutes in battlefield conditions, under the country’s Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. This event will be followed by a Static Equipment Display,” stated Maj Gen C S Mann, ADG of Army Design Bureau.

The Army official emphasised that achieving maximum lethality and potency is possible only through a coordinated effort across multiple domains when confronting anticipated threats. To highlight the integration of domestically produced arms, ammunition, equipment, and systems within the Armed Forces, this Tri-Service Exercise, featuring Live Fire and Manoeuvre Demonstrations, has been named Bharat Shakti, he explained during a press conference held in New Delhi on Saturday.

“It will showcase the shock and awe that the three Services seek to achieve in an operational situation by employing the manoeuvre and fighting capabilities effectively. Broadly, it will also involve the establishment of an Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance grid, Interdiction and Shaping Operations by Aerial Platforms, Firing of Long-Range Vectors, manoeuvre by Mechanized Forces and movement of Infantry in Protected Mobility Vehicles,” Maj Gen Mann said.

The demonstration will include a wide range of technology domains, such as indigenous aircraft, helicopters, torpedoes, unmanned aerial systems (UAVs), counter-unmanned aerial systems, AI/autonomous systems/robotics, armament, ammunition, communication systems, survival/protection, alternate power solutions, 3D-printed bunkers, operational logistics, mobility, and training simulators, the official stated.

As the lead service for the mega event, the Army official disclosed that major equipment/weapon systems to be demonstrated include LCA Tejas, ALH Mk-IV, Light Utility Helicopter (LUH), Lightweight Torpedo, Autonomous Cargo-Carrying Aerial Vehicle, Mobile Anti-Drone System, T90 Tanks, BMP-II, Artillery Platforms such as Dhanush, Sharang, K9 Vajra and Pinaka, Swathi Weapon Locating Radar, UAV-launched precision-guided munition, Quick-Reaction Fighting Vehicles, and Drones of various types, including Logistic Drones.

“The static display will primarily involve standalone equipment that cannot be part of the demonstration. It will also include equipment which may be common to the Fire and Manoeuvre Demonstration but the capability and technical specifications of which can only be showcased in a static display. Important/major items indigenised for import substitution will also form part of the static display,” he said.

The top army official explained the tri-services integration and said that the most important aspect is communications. Therefore, jointness in tri-service communication will be showcased by the seamless integration of services-specific Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networks and Tri-Service organisations.

“Synergised joint operations will be decisive in the Indian context. Through the Live Fire and Manoeuvre Demonstration, Tri Services’ operational capabilities to counter any threat, leverage indigenous capability, and undertake conflicts in the face of global upheavals will be showcased,” Maj Gen Mann concluded.

Transformation through Modernisation and Technology Infusion: Swadeshikaran Se Sashaktikaran

Talking about the strides taken by the armed forces under the government's policy of Atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in defence production, the top official said "the announcement of Make in India was a watershed moment, wherein the year 2020 brought about a paradigm shift with the launch of Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign. The campaign proved to be a catalyst for transformation in indigenous R&D, adoption of niche technology and establishment of indigenous manufacturing eco system, ushering in the manifestation of Bharat's quest for self-reliance".

"This is evident from the fact that the global share in Indian Armed Forces Capability Development projects has steadily declined, whereas the share of the domestic component has increased considerably. Specific to the last year, i.e., in 2023, subscribing fully to the Government's objective of Atmanirbhar Bharat, 98% of contracts have been concluded with Indian Industry," he added.

Numerous schemes and projects have received Approval of Necessity (AoNs) in the past two fiscal years, favouring the Indian industry. This development is expected to enhance indigenisation and yield significant positive effects cumulatively over the next 5-10 years, he hoped.

[Read complete article on website bharatshakti.in](http://bharatshakti.in)

Kerala-Kashmir-Kabul and The Islamic State

By RSN Singh

The Author is a former military intelligence officer who later served in the Research and Analysis Wing, or R&AW and author of books Asian Strategic and Military Perspective, The Military Factor in Pakistan

Reports regarding emergence of a new terror group 'Base Movement' has been making rounds for some time. The ramifications, reach and consequences of this terror group, however, has not been analyzed to any degree. Least to say, the ramifications are pernicious.

The Base Movement, which has been carrying out revenge blasts, came into existence in January 2015 at Madurai in Tamil Nadu. This group is affiliated to the Al-Qaeda.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Al-Qaeda continues to be the umbrella organization of all jihadi groups rooted in the Wahabi / Salafi philosophy. It includes outfits like Haqqani group, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Jundulah, JMB, Al-Nusra, Boko-Haram etc. Hafiz Saeed was put in under preventive detention on 17 December 2008, this was a week before the US Security Council designated Jamat-ul-Dawa (JuD), the parent organization of LeT as an associate of Al-Qaeda.

Significantly, the Islamic State is also under the same umbrella. This is a loose conglomeration and most jihadi groups do not necessarily take all the orders from the Al-Qaeda. To that extent they are autonomous.

The autonomy is imperative because respective groups have their respective catchment, and operational areas, given their local / regional expertise. For example, the catchment area of LeT is the Sialkot region and that of JeM is the Bhawalpur region. This architecture of global jihad cannot sustain without this arrangement. The Islamic State catchment area is the entire globe, wherein it attracts educated, English speaking, media and social network savvy youth, cutting across nationalities. Curiously a medical student from Hyderabad in Pakistan joined the Islamic State in Syria. She was in contact with a boy on social media for quite some-time, who transformed her mindset. Interestingly, two of Leghari's friends were Hindus.

All jihadi groups in the world have some basic commonalities, i.e. opposition to the West, extremist narrative, designation of US and Israel as primary enemies, and the concept of Caliphate.

The difference between the Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State on territorial issues is that the former has no immediate concern for 'Caliphate', while the latter has been insisting on its immediate establishment, and accordingly carved a territory for itself in Iraq and Syria. Also, while the Al-Qaeda believes in large scale dramatic attacks to mobilize the Muslims of the world, the Islamic State seeks targets that are closer to home. The other major difference is that though both Al-Qaeda and Islamic State are anti-Shia, the Al-Qaeda believes in postponement of its anti-Shia agenda but looks the other way when other affiliates like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi carries out terrorist attacks against Shias. On the other hand, the Islamic State believes in immediate and total annihilation of Shias.

It is instructive for Indians to know the mindset of the Islamic State. Significantly it was Jama'at al-Tawhidwal-Jihad (Al-Qaeda in Iraq), which had morphed into Islamic State. The leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (killed in 2006) and later Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi ignored the Al-Qaeda's main leader Aymanal-Zawahiri's advise against killing of Shias. In a letter to Al-Zawahiri in 2004, Al-Zarqawi wrote that he would continue targeting the Shias to provoke them to retaliate against the Sunnis in order to compel the latter to gravitate to the fold of Islamic State. Till this day, the Islamic State follows the same strategy.

The arrival of the Islamic State or the inroads by Al-Qaeda in India poses danger not only to the Hindu-Muslim fabric of the country but more grievously on the Shia-Sunni harmony. The rise of the Islamic State has made the Shias in India restive to the extent that about 300 Shias had gathered in Lucknow clamouring for a special flight to Syria so that they could fight for the protection of Shia Shrines in West Asia.

Zakir Naik therefore not only posed the Wahabi menace in India, he was a serious threat to the sectarian balance amongst Muslims. Moreover, the Islamic State philosophy of provoking other sects / groups to draw Muslims to its brand of jihad may already have been tried in India manifesting in communal clashes. The biggest beneficiaries of Hindu-Muslim clashes in India are the jihadi groups because it provides them a rich crop to harvest jihadis from.

Coming back to 'Base Movement', this new terror group has carried out five blasts in different Court premises in southern part of India. These, as per the admission of its members were carried out in revenge against so-called victimization of Muslims in rest of India. The first bomb attack on 15-June-2016 was carried out in Kollam Court against the encounter killing of Ishrat Jahan. The second attack was carried on 01-August-2016 in the Mysore Court because of hanging of Yakub Menon and killing of eight terrorists of SIMI in Madhya Pradesh. The third attack was in Nellore Court on 12-September-2016 following the killing of Burhan Wani.

As per the NIA charge-sheet, the jihadis of the organization were asked to identify offices in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Mumbai. It indicates that the targets being explored by the Base Movement are not confined to South India but Mumbai and Delhi as well. In fact, the entire India for them is an arena of revenge. Also on their target is the French consulate in Bengaluru.

The NIA has very timely exposed this dangerous development of Base Movement. Earlier, the targets were parliament and legislative assemblies or security forces or infrastructure, but this is the first time that the judiciary has been under threat as part of a comprehensive design. It adds a new dimension to India's threat perception. Also, on their hit-list are the Prime Minister, Home Minister, LK Advani and Gen VK Singh.

Significantly, it is not only the French Consulate in Bengaluru under threat, but the Embassies of US, Russia, France, Israel and Myanmar located in Delhi as well.

This jihadi threat to foreign embassies must be assessed in the backdrop of the massive bomb attack in the diplomatic area of Kabul on 31-May-2017 during Ramadan. More than 100 people lost their lives and more than 300 were wounded.

Since the emergence of Islamic State, jihadi attacks during Ramadan has become an essential feature. An official Taliban spokesman said: “our fight is jihad and is an obligatory worship, reward for every obligatory act of worship is multiplied 70 times in Ramadan.” Islamic State has recently called for bloodshed during Ramadan exhorting its cadres ‘attack them in their homes’. The Islamic State emphasis on attacks abroad during Ramadan is to galvanize their followers and demonstrate their reach. In 2015, the ISIS killed nearly 400 people across the globe during Ramadan. In 2016, the figure ratcheted to nearly 480 and this year till today attacks attributed to the ISIS directly or indirectly include Britain (2 attacks), Kabul (2 attacks), Baghdad (2 attacks), Kashmir (4 suicide attacks), and Manila.

The threat to consulates and embassies by the Base Movement must draw lessons from recent attack in Kabul. Being a diplomatic area it was heavily fortified. The bombing was only 100 meters away from the Indian Embassy in Kabul. The French, German and Japanese embassy suffered damages. The jihadi group responsible for this attack has not been identified but its philosophy is no different from Base Movement.

If setback to jihadis in Kashmir or in Madhya Pradesh, has reverberations in the judicial courts in South India or foreign embassies or consulates, surely then we are in throes of global jihad. It is not merely Kashmir and Kerala (euphemistically speaking for South India) connection or pan-Indian phenomenon, but the alignment is Kerala, Kashmir and Kabul, and other co-laterals of global jihad extending to West Asia, Southeast Asia and even Maldives.

To these three ‘K’s i.e. Kerala, Kashmir and Kabul can also be added another one, i.e. Kokrajhar. It may be remembered that in the year 2012, communal clashes in the Arakan region of Myanmar, wherein the Rohingyas suffered had its ugly reverberations in Kokrajhar in Assam, which in turn incited communal violence in Mumbai and then there was a chain of communal incidents in Pune, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. Boys and girls from Northeast had to flee the city of Bengaluru in fear, such is the pan- Indian and global dimension of jihad in the Indian context.

Therefore, it would be suicidal for India to treat jihadi terror in the perspective of ‘law and order’. It is a grave security problem, which has external and internal dimensions with the dividing line getting increasingly blurred. The impact of a jihadi attack or incident in Kashmir is not limited to J&K region, it triggers chain reactions throughout India and of course amongst jihadi outfits in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

It is thus, all the more pressing that Article-370 be removed.

If Indian Muslims from Kerala are travelling to Afghanistan to join the Islamic State and if Kashmir has reverberations on the Muslims of Kerala, then one is compelled to deduce that the global jihad in India has transcended all geographical, linguistic and cultural barriers.

[Read complete article on website indiandefencereview.com](http://indiandefencereview.com)

Openness And Transparency

By Sanjay Sahay, IPS

Author is former Police Officer of Karnataka. He is Founder & Director of TechConPro Pvt Ltd., Bengaluru.

We are scared of being transparent. The democratic movement towards transparency or the show of it have no takers. Major stakeholders bask under the cover opaqueness. The name of the game is to take giant strides towards greater opaqueness while indulging in best possible lip service and display of an urge to achieve and practice transparency. That is reason why it keeps breaking at its seams over and over again. The propellant to transparency is barely talked about, though we have all realized that transparency cannot hang in mid-air. Societal openness is at the core of it.

Do we believe in societal openness? If that would have been the case then, in a democratic ecosystem, the existent societal openness could have smoothly transitioned into democratic openness. Our experience is that it did not happen. Suffice to say we had insurmountable hiccups in our societal format which kept on surfacing, as one bottleneck after the other. Why has there not been any credible movement towards openness. Our societies don't subscribe to it. The comfort of openness cannot be understood by people who have hiding every piece of information and have crude confidentiality as their DNA. There is a common feeling that if the worst variant of confidentiality is not there to take care of us, we will not be able to deliver at peace and of quality.

At every step, every law, every rule and every practice are grounded in the lack of official openness. The machinations of the hide and seek Indian families and the politics in it, translates into community hide and seek and lo and behold, it has manifested in our governance and the overarching functional democracy. One aspect of battle for transparency we have seen in the right to information, how much have we gained out of it, would be a billion-dollar question. The legality was created perforce, and even today getting worthwhile information remains a challenge. It was not a natural or organic result of openness.

The beauty of the whole exercise is that some laws of this nature exist and exist for decades but those have not been able to make any dent in the lack of openness we practice so blatantly. Information is power they say but in Indian communities and governance, hiding information is real power. Why have we not inched closer to an open date regime? What ease would it bring into our lives? Don't we deserve it? If we have to exist as a robust democracy only openness and organic transparency is the way out.

TRANSPARENCY CANNOT BE CONSIGNED TO A LAW OR TWO, IT IS A WAY OF LIFE

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the FINS or its members.

India is Proud of:

Dr. R. Ganapati - Mahaguru of Leprosy Workers



Dr. R. Ganapati (1930 – 2011)



Dr. R Ganapati was born at Tirunveli in a middle-class family. He graduated from Madras Medical College in 1955. Initially after getting MBBS degree a career in leprosy was never contemplated at that stage, though he was impressed by the plight of advanced leprosy patients who used to attend for their quota of dapsone tablets at the Primary Health Centre, Valathi in the hyper endemic district of South Arcot District.

That was his first salaried Govt job. This changed his life's mission as a doctor. He dedicated his full life for treatment and upliftment of socially boycotted Leprosy patients. He began his career in his pursuit to treat leprosy patients at Acworth Leprosy Hospital, Wadala, Mumbai, on October 1, 1963, as Assistant Medical Officer, and within one year he had become a Research Officer. He faced unfavorable circumstances while undertaking novel concepts of leprosy control, which he successfully put into practice, with the help of some likeminded colleagues who formed a 'ginger' group of leprosy workers in that hospital. He pioneered the work of active school surveys and slum surveys in Mumbai city.

In order to widen his scope of work, he founded the Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP) in September 1976 with the help of the ginger group. He demonstrated effectively the importance of field work in leprosy control. He toiled hard to reach the root causes of leprosy in the urban situation.

The Government of India (GOI) took cognizance of his gigantic work and bestowed upon him the coveted title of 'Padmashree' in January 1983. Thereafter, he was showered with awards for his yeoman's services to leprosy patients. He was a scientist with a keen interest in research and went on to publish more than 100 research papers on different aspects of leprosy in the medical and scientific journals of the world. He understood the pulse of the leprosy problem and created a well-trained team of workers to manage it. He is the doyen of the history of leprosy control in Greater Mumbai city.

He participated actively in the genesis of organizations such as The Society for the Eradication of Leprosy (SEL), the Acworth Leprosy Hospital Society for Research, Rehabilitation and Education in Leprosy (ALHRRE), Bombay Leprosy Project (BLP), Maharashtra Branch (MB) of Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL-MB), and rejuvenated organizations such as Maharashtra Branch of Hind Kushta Nivaran Sangh (HKNS-MB), and Indian Association of Leprologists (IAL) through close associations with the executives of these organizations, and has played a samaritan's role of achieving the aims and objectives of these organizations.

Welfare of patients and their rehabilitation was the ultimate motive of this stalwart. People remember his role in evoking interest in leprosy management among skin specialists across the country. GOI sought his assistance for assessing the anti-leprosy work in the country including the functioning of training centers for leprosy. As his name is, he was considered the God of knowledge of leprosy. Patients all over the country knew him because wherever he visited for conferences, workshops, he made it a point to create a rapport with local leprosy patients in their colonies. A resurgence has been observed in the leprosy problem, but, unfortunately as he has already left for his heavenly abode on 13 Nov 2011, Dr R Ganapati will not come back.

He was concerned about the leprosy problem and wanted to draw the attention of the authorities concerned with the subject of care after cure of leprosy patients with deformities and disabilities for a worthwhile Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR).

His desire to see 'World Without Leprosy', is yet to become a reality. He was a great human being.

Write to us at:

bulletin@finsindia.org

**OFFICE :4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu
Road, Dadar (East), MUMBAI - 400014
Phone 022 24127274, 98339 24371**

EDITORIAL BOARD

**Shri. Milind Bondale
Col Ravindra Tripathi**