

The Weekly

OBSERVER

Coalition (a)dharma

The facts are too compelling to ignore the analogy between the UPA government pulling out of the much-touted Indo-US nuclear deal and the JD (S)-BJP coalition ending in a whirlwind period of 20 months. This entire analogy is drawn with a broad brush dipped in filial relations.

Let us concentrate on the national front. To save its government, the UPA has kept the deal at abeyance, which suggests it is as good as over. The usually complacent AICC supporters are at their nonchalant best because the deal always defied their intelligence. And this is Manmohan Singh's baby. Why care about him when Mama's boy is already gearing up for his inclusion in the big league? There should not be any doubts about why Sonia Gandhi is not supporting the deal. Even if divine providence strikes and Congress emerges as the single largest party Manmohan Singh will not be the Prime Ministerial candidate. As it is, many things are going against him. He is not a rabble-rouser, he does not hobnob with the grass root leaders. Consequently, he does not command much appreciation from the hoi polloi and his recent ten commandments at the recent CII meeting did not endear him to the corporates either.

All said and done, even if the Congress had gone ahead with the deal, jeopardizing its rule it would not have made political sense. The nuclear deal can never be a poll plank and Manmohan Singh will not be the face of the Congress.

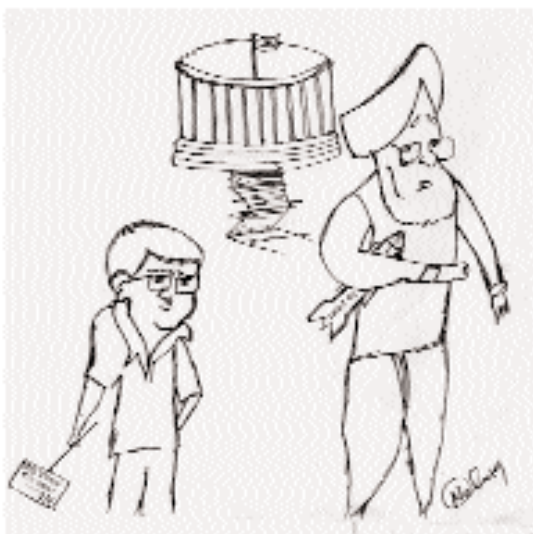
Further, all indications suggest yet another coalition government. Why start the entire vicious circle only to end up with the Left as partner again? When the deal was scrapped Manmohan Singh said that the Left was not opposed to the deal, it wants a debate in the Parliament. As far as this writer's memory serves him there was no debate on the Left's opposition of opening up of the insurance sector, the privatization of airports and PSU disinvestments, increasing the FDI stake, pension reforms. These have been carefully sidelined.

Traverse into the Deccan Plateau and the son of a son of the soil is lamenting pulling out of the JD (S)-BJP coalition in Karnataka. H.D.Kumaraswamy was a decent leader who led the government deftly in these 20 months, what with his Janata Darshan initiative, staying with the destitutes in their shacks, providing land holdings to the poor. But an already agreed pact with BJP came to a grinding halt because of the intervention of Deve Gowda who felt his party's secular tag is taking a beating. No one had the gumption to ask him why he suddenly felt this when he had the entire 20 months to ponder upon. This move of Deve Gowda will prove costly to Kumaraswamy because his party has lost its credibility.

This analogy has a common loser. The BJP. Advani was asking his cadres to get ready for snap polls and Yediyurappa was already passing orders as the de facto Chief Minister. Alas, filial relations are terribly strong.

Run of the mill

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Big brother is watching...still

The United States continues to play big bully on the Iraqi playground

AYESHA ALEEM

The world watched when US invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 — the war had officially begun. In the wake of the cataclysmic 9/11 attacks in New York, everyone was curious to see how the world's super power would react. But no one could have possibly been prepared for this. The reason for the invasion as put down by the President of the United States, George W. Bush, which was later unfounded, was that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction which was a threat to world peace. His exact quote was, "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people." — Wikipedia.

The ongoing imbroglio that involves the countries of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Poland, and Denmark, which later went on to include more countries in its later stages was opposed by some traditional U.S. allies such as France and Germany. Initially, at the onset of the invasion, the world was mute

—silent spectators to the saga that unfolded before them. Many agreed that it was the right move — everyone was looking for a target to vent their fury on after the historical attack on the World Trade Centre. The fact that Iraq was an Islamic country made it a suitable candidate. It really did seem as a measure to keep world terrorism under check. However, further into war, people began to see the futility of it all. That a war is baseless, no matter how pragmatic the reason may seem on paper. It is a criminal loss of precious civilian lives, property and resources. This war in particular was not even backed by a theoretically correct reason. Therefore, it's futility was pronounced.

The question does arise though, as to why America had to step up and behave like the older brother who was out to protect the rest of the world. Every country has its own defense system. It seems plausible that in today's times most countries are capable of protecting their interests on their own or by

depending on one of the international bodies set up for this purpose. But the United States took this sole initiative. Ironically, major countries blindly went along with the move. Almost like a herd of cattle.

At the core of the matter, we all want terrorism to stop. We don't want to see another 9/11, 7/11, Madrid or Bali. Actually, we're not sure we can handle it. The after effects have been too severe the first time round. But we're also adults. We're capable of making our own decisions and do not need someone to hold our hand and lead us through the big bad world. Besides, it makes sense to guard your own space rather than poke around in another's. So please, America. Stop policing the rest of the world. We know right from wrong. We do not need you pointing it out. We'll take it from here. It's time for you to get off the swing in the playground that you claim to be holding for the rest of us and letting each one of us have our own go on it. I'm sure even Iraq would agree.

Smile! You're on candid camera

SHILPA KRISHNAN

It's a lazy Sunday morning. You are sitting in front of your LG Flatron with a steaming cup of coffee. The images on the television are grainy. You can just about make out that it is a five-star hotel of sorts. You wonder why it looks vaguely familiar. But your mind is too groggy to recognize it. The camera zooms into a well-manicured hand. The nails are painted with your favourite shade of Elle 18 nail paint—turquoise blue. The hand is twitching.

Scene 1. You see a face - not the whole of it, but just the lower half. The hand reaches up and the turquoise blue painted fingernail discreetly enters the right nostril. It searches for the elusive treasure of gold hidden near the olfactory gland. Bingo! The hand has struck a gold mine. Just as discreetly as

before, the gold is extracted and safely deposited on the underside of the dining table.

Next scene. The guests at the table have finally devoured their meals. It's time to shake hands and bid sweet adieu. The camera traces the handshakes of the well-manicured hand. Finally, the camera pans out and the face comes into focus. At this very moment, you suffer your first ever cardiac arrest. The face staring at you is the same face that you so lovingly admire every morning in your bathroom mirror. You are the gold-digger. You get a flash back of the days when you sorely hoped for your fifteen minutes of fame. Little did you imagine it would turn out to be fifteen minutes of shame.

Welcome to EN TV— We provide you Entertaining News. Every news bulletin is in fact a compilation of riveting candid

camera sequences. It could be your neighbour today. You could be the star tomorrow.

Last evening, were you the one offering your homage to Mother Nature (read peeing into the lake)? Ahem, it must have been too dark for you to notice the camera hidden in the bushes. But worry not for tomorrow, the whole nation will gleefully witness the momentous occasion.

Did I hear you murmur about invasion of privacy? Didn't you know that privacy is now a redundant term? Everyone is a public figure and your singing in the precincts of your bathroom could make for breaking news. So what if you are more nasal than Himesh Reshamiyya.

All ye propounders of privacy protection, brace yourselves. Enter an era where the coriander stuck between your teeth could well be today's headlines.

Globalisation – dream or disaster?

ADITI SONI

What is globalisation? Is it to expand global connectivity in terms of just economy and politics, or is it to equally contribute in the betterment of a completely ignored rural sector?

In the last 10 years, the world's total income has increased by average of 2.5 % a year. Sadly, we cannot deny that the number of poor has also increased by 10 million. This means that the top one percent of the world has the same combined income as the bottom 57% and this disparity is still growing.

New development projects every other day might prove that we are moving ahead in technology, yet mask the fact that privatisation and labor reforms are pushing people

off their lands and out of their jobs. Building up fantastic images of elite dreams is as easy as it is difficult to perceive the plight of those struggling to scrape up a daily square meal.

We are definitely getting globalised. As against the soldier of yesterday, Bill Gates is today's dream. Aspirations are never bad, but one should always balance real and virtual worlds. Perhaps, even after 60 years of independence, there is still so much to be worked upon. Is every person independent in real sense? The answer is 'no' and yet, we are so busy fighting for a nuclear deal just to be called 'globalised'.

The young person is becoming the dictator. They want to rule their own world. Although confidence

and dynamism is really good, they should remain grounded irrespective of their achievements. Perhaps that's the reason why free press, free elections, and independent judiciary hold little meaning. Every thing today is being commercialized. One has to cut the figure as per the norms of our 'modern' society.

We are spending crores of rupees for peace treaties. Have we ever given a thought to how much is being spent on the masses fighting hunger, thirst, and violation of dignity? No matter how globalised or modernised we become, the Indian spirit has to be kept alive. Many people work 24/7 to see our country progressing. If each one contributes a little of our heart, we can make a difference.