

VIMARSHA : CHINA : Cope, not just Lament

VIMARSHA ON CHINA AT VKI

Cope, not just lament-Amb T.C.A. Rangachary.

✉ Vimarsh, the monthly discussion session of Vivekananda Kendra International, was held in its premises at 6.30 pm on 24th July 09. Sri Ajit Doval, the honorary director of VKI introduced the topic and the speakers, Sri T.C.A Rangachari and General J.F Jacob. General Jacob initiated the discussion and gave a brief account of his experiences with the Chinese.

Sri.T.C.A. Rangachari started his talk by calling the attention of the audience into a tricky situation that India is in, with two contradictory neighbourhood conditions. There are many small neighbours with enough anxiety about their security and on the other hand, there is a big neighbour with unsatisfied territorial ambitions. He nicely portrayed this dilemma where we have to assure friendly intentions to the smaller neighbours so as to win their cooperation and at the same time to remain prepared to face any threat from the larger. We should show our military capabilities as not overpowering to the smaller neighbours but deterrent enough to the larger neighbour. The equations get complicated as we may not be able to fulfil the high expectations of the smaller neighbours all the time which gives the larger neighbour an opportunity to rally them against us.

He expounded on the phenomenal growth of China in military prowess, scientific and technological innovations, agricultural production, and foreign exchange reserves. The Chinese have put a man in the earth's orbit, are working on a manned moon mission, have developed anti-missile capability and are capable of exercising their military mettle far beyond their borders. The GDP of China has shown a gigantic increase from 364.5 billion Yuan in 1978 to 24.95 trillion dollars in 2007, with an average growth rate of 9.8 %, which is more than 3 times of the world's average during the same period. During the period from 1978 to 2007, the volume of their foreign trade increased from 20.6 billion dollars to 2.17 trillion dollars.. The average annual income of farmers has risen from 343 Yuan in 1978 to 13786 Yuan in 2007, thus having shown an increase of 6.5 times. The people in China are richer, have better food, house, clothes and transportation services. In 1980, China had embarked on a mission of doubling its GDP IN 20 years, by 2000. But they achieved that target in 15 years.

Sri. Rangachary, expressed that he is not trying to tell that China is ten feet tall. China has a large number of contradictions and issues like weak independent innovations, low social production, gap between material and cultural needs, weak agriculture, large rural ? urban disparity, huge and poor rural population, low growth in employment etc. He highlighted that one of the most important issue faced by China is the issues in handling minorities and it is very interesting to see that it is similar to the situation in other countries like India, US etc. But the policy they have adopted is totally different from India, US etc. where diversity is celebrated.

He encouraged India to learn many a great lessons from our biggest neighbour. The way the Chinese defence was modernized with the help of Russian scientists and Russian defence manufacturers, no use in just lamenting, we have to learn. The situation was that the Russians were not in a position to do anything to stop China from using Russian resources. He remembered how China exhorted not just its people, but its enemies as well by espousing slogans of ?Be red and be expert?, lean but fit army etc. China, even at its very bad times had the diplomatic prowess to make other nations like US open themselves to accommodate its sensitivities and even take positions against India.

Ambassador Rangacahary went on to explicate the mindset of the Indians as a result of China constantly working

against the interests of India, Viz - 1961 war, territorial aggressions in Arunachal Pradesh, halting our efforts to get sanctions waived off, more recently opposition in the ADB etc. It is more important now that China being realized as the great economic power, may be able to become important decision maker in major financial institutions like IMF, ADB etc. It is a big challenge to cope with the reality that it can make any kind of implications on the interests of India. China has constructed an elaborate network of railways and roads in Tibet, connecting it with the mainland China so that the abundant mineral wealth of Tibet can be easily exploited. It has another dimension as India doesn't have any comparable roads or railways towards the border, it can't utilize the opportunity to evolve trade with China, but will get into a more difficult situation in regard to security. Sri. Rangachary took the occasion to cast the important question of coping with all these realities. We have to rethink again and again about all our past actions and learn much from the Chinese in a very soon instead of lamenting over insufficient infrastructure. It was really an eye opener when Sri. Rangachary reminded us how India did not utilize the Mahakali agreement with Nepal to produce hydro-electric power and how China can enter this area of sharing power ? thermal, hydro and nuclear, with Nepal now. He made it very clear that we have to carry along with us, smaller neighbours like Bangladesh and Pakistan on the issues of water sharing of the big rivers flowing from China into the subcontinent and then find measures to cope up with the reality that we are facing serious challenges posed by our biggest neighbour.

General Jacob in his concluding remarks warned against the growing military power of China which is too eager to devour various parts of India like Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim etc. He recalled how during the 1971 Bangladesh war USSR deterred China from attacking India by moving its troops near Xinjiang and submarines near Chinese territorial waters. He recalled how the Chinese had justified their attack on India in 1962 as an attempt to acquire their land which they claimed as theirs on the basis of the maps dated to 1937. He reminded us that it is our duty to protect Bhutan from the predatory designs of China. He explained how China was converting Tibet into a military base and mobilising a large number of troops, missiles and men there. He further explained that we have to upgrade our defence equipments for successfully countering any onslaught by China.

The speeches were followed by a question-answer interaction. Sri Vijay Kapoor asked about the anti-Chinese feeling in Mongolia. Sri Rangachari explained the situation that after the collapse of Soviet Union, the attitude of Mongolia towards China and Russia has got modified. China imports huge quantity of Pashmina wool from Mongolia and exports fruits and vegetables to it. Thus the power of China and the economic dependence has made Mongolia accommodate itself according to Chinese interests. Sri M.D Diwan remarked that in the name of coping do we need to think that China is an insurmountable challenge to our territorial sovereignty. It was an eye-opening remark from Sri Ajit Doval that China will concentrate on its economic development till 2025 and hence the possibility of a war with India is minimal. By then India should also boost her economy to make it so strong that it becomes indispensable for China. He added that India was superior to China in innovative abilities in the manufacture and handling of the weapon systems, in gathering intelligence and various other avenues. Admiral Raman Puri commented that when we had all the available technological capabilities available to have an indigenous military power, why are we importing 75 to 80 % of our hardware at such a high cost; why are we not developing our own LCA and preferring to upgrade mirage aircraft at a stupendous expenditure of Rs.150 crores each? why after having successfully destroyed a ballistic missile with an interceptor missile, we are hesitating to develop the anti-missile satellite technology. Sri Ajit Dovalji agreed with the views of Admiral Raman Puri and replied that economy and technology are the two areas on which India has to concentrate for surpassing the Chinese. In response to a question about the state of affairs about the human life and values in China, Sri Rangachari replied that although the materialistic level of the Chinese was high, the individual liberty enjoyed by them was much less than their counterparts in India. The Chinese have sufficient economic rights, but the cultural rights enjoyed by them were quite poor.

Sri Ajit Doval gave the vote of thanks. He expressed his gratitude to Sri.T.C.A Rangachari, General J.F Jacob and all the audience for having attended the Vimarsha. The Vimarsha concluded with the chanting of the Shanti Mantra.

