

Annual Krishnaswamy Memorial Lecture by Shri Brajesh Mishra

His Excellency, the Governor of West Bengal, Shri MK Narayanan, Shri Jawhar Sircar, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Admiral PJ Jacob, Chairman, Global India Foundation and Prof Omprakash Mishra, Member Secretary, Global India Foundation. So much has already been said about Mr. Subrahmanyam that I feel a little defeated in adding to the remarks that have already been made. Subbu and I met on 1st of May, 1951 at Metcalfe House in Old Delhi. We were only 27 probationers and one of them was a lady. Although I was there only for about 5 months and we used to meet occasionally. Our contacts became more intimate after I returned to Delhi in 1987 and we used to talk a lot. He was a very large hearted man. I will give you two examples.

First, when the National Security Advisor's post came up and I was made National Security Advisor while continuing to be the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Subbu was critical of that, and he said this is a bad idea. Two days later I called him and I said to him that I am going to set up a National Security Advisory Board and I want you to be the chairman of that. Subbu was taken aback. I had so much confidence in his ability to do what I wanted him to do that did not hesitate to tell him that I needed two things; the draft nuclear doctrine and the first strategic defence review. And I must say that both the pieces were master pieces. We adopted the draft nuclear doctrine with some changes, and the strategic defence review was useful in later committee meetings which went into the defence ministry setup. He accepted my invitation despite having criticized me and the fact that he didn't like me holding both the posts.

Second, about 2 years ago we had a discussion in the Saturday Club of IIC. During the course of the discussion he said: You know I think you were right in combining the two posts. I was overwhelmed. He said that the Prime Minister should have only one advisor who should bifurcate the functions. I was very happy and I told him thank you very much for agreeing with me. Subbu as you have all said was the doyen of strategic thinkers. His writings never lacked substance and they never lacked the indication of a direction to be followed by the government. I have rarely come across a person with so many ideas, so much thought given to our national security, and I hope one of these day, his writings are collected and that they are published. So Mrs. Subrahmanyam, he was a great friend and he was a very large hearted man.

The subject given to me today is India in global affairs. Since the demise of the Soviet Union and the lapse of the Indo-Soviet treaty, India found itself more or less friendless. The US was not very keen on having better relations with India. When Mr. Clinton was the President he was much more attracted to China. Mr. Narsimha Rao went to the US and met President Clinton. Nothing came out of it. So what has changed? We had to find a place for ourselves in the new global order and therefore Pokhran II happened. Pokhran II had two purposes. One was to test the nuclear devices which had been built, and the armed forces never accepted it till a lot of tests had been done. And second was to firmly establish India as nuclear weapons power and enter the

new world order. During the Kargil War, President Clinton played a very useful role by persuading Nawaz Sharif that Pakistan had to withdraw from the area beyond the line of control. I will tell you something which will give you an indication of the change in President Clinton's attitude. He telephoned Prime Minister Vajpayee at 1 o'clock in the morning. He said: I have just broken off a meeting with Mr Nawaz Sharif and we will be meeting again in about half an hour or so, but I wanted to tell you what I had told him and what I was hoping to get from him. Then of course as you know he came to India in the year 2000 and things followed. George W.0 Bush came. But my worry was we should not be looking only at US. We have to look at other countries. ASEAN was very important and as you know Mr. Narsimha Rao had started the Look-East policy. But we pursued it very vigorously and there was the 1st Indo-ASEAN Summit in Bali in 2003. At the same time we were talking to EU and wanted to have relations with EU apart from the countries which were a part of EU. We had the first Indo-EU summit in Portugal along the same time. So we were trying to become a part of the new global order and we thought we had a lot to contribute with the economy being reformed and with good connections with US, Europe, and Asia including Japan. We thought we had become a part of the new world order. And this was also helped by President Chirac who had hosted the G8 summit where he had invited India and some other developing countries. This became the group of 20 later on.

Today it seems we have no place in the world order. We have two enemies on our borders and both of them are trying very hard to see that we keep ourselves engaged and embroiled in South Asia so that we don't have any one outside. And with the US policy relating to Pakistan and Afghanistan we have the same problem as we have with China as both the countries are giving arms and material to Pakistan which can only be used against us. So as long as we keep ourselves embroiled here and we don't break out, we will have a limited role to play as far as the politics and the security of the world is concerned. On the economic side, there have been reforms, but today it seems as if we just stopped mid way. The manufacturing sector as we all know has gone down. The main contributor to the GDP, the service sector, is an uncertain sector; it can be good today, it can be bad tomorrow. So the economy which we had hoped would go to 9% or 10% (I don't know what percentage it would have in 2011-12) is certainly not optimistic. This reduces the possibility of our engagement in the world order and in the economic sphere. What is the contribution that we can make today? Unfortunately in India today there is a sense in the middle class, a sense of non-governance. Nothing is being done. There is no movement forward. Even the civil nuclear deal as far as the US is concerned is not going anywhere. So what is it that we can do to change this situation? How can we get the government to be more active internationally? If I may say so, that contrary to all pacifists, India's role in world affairs depends upon economic reforms and the military support. These two are two sides of the same coin. One side is the economic reforms and development and the other is the national security. They are so dependent on each other that you can't do one without the other. If we were to do that, our position in the world order will change. It will gradually go up. Today what do we see? I am sorry if there are any diplomats present here who may have served in these countries, but I am known to be a very blunt man. What has happened to our Indians in Australia? What has happened to our two Sikhs in Milan, Italy? What has happened to our relationship with Sri

Lanka? So much support was given to Sri Lanka when they were trying to suppress the LTTE; naval support, aerial support, material support, and today when you want to talk about Tamilians in Sri Lanka; you are told that this is not your problem. So what kind of governance do we have? If we continue in this way surely no one is going to bother about us internationally. As I have said earlier, we will continue to engage in South Asia and not be able to contribute internationally. We have much to contribute to global affairs and we are placed strategically within geography. We have security interests from Aden to the Malacca Straits. In Asia, China is trying to make sure that in any multilateral firm it is the biggest player and no one else. Japan and some other countries wanted India to join the group of ASEAN plus 3, which are Japan, South Korea and China and form a group of 4. But China refused it. I speak to my friends. Why is it that you are treated with so much contempt by China? Is it rivalry? We don't want to take their place anywhere. How do we deal with this? This can be dealt with only by strengthening our defence. China and Pakistan are not merely all-weather friends. They are military allies and in 4 to 5 years or maybe less we may face a situation where we may have to defend ourselves on two fronts. Our procedure for acquiring latest technology and material for our armed forces are 19th century procedures. Suppose we want to get arms tomorrow, they will take 10 years to reach India, and by that time they will become obsolete. So we have to change that. It seems to me that the government is still carrying Bofors on its shoulders. The NDA government started doing business with Bofors. How long will we keep on worrying about the personal integrity and not about the country and its national interest? We have to acquire these things quickly. And while they are still not obsolete.

Today everyone praises India's democracy, free market etc but when it comes to doing business everyone goes to China. When president Obama came here, one government official told me that it was a transaction visit. How much agreement could you sign on trade etc? So my friends, I am sorry but I am a little skeptical about India's role. I also feel that it can be reversed and we can become a very important player in global affairs. There is a place where it can focus. We have to work to get there. What are global affairs? They are different from the economic aspect. They create a situation where peace prevails. That is our objective and that must be our objective. Today you see that there are attempts to have a new world order where we may not find place, a new world order where US may not be the only supreme power and where US needs the support of other countries for its agenda to be followed. How do we establish ourselves today? During the recent visit of Hillary Clinton I tried to read it in every paper the summary substance of her visit? And this was supposed to be a strategic dialogue between the two countries. I couldn't find an answer. Only later on she said India has a vital role to play in South East Asia. I wish I had some good news for you on the international front. I am not being pessimistic in order to create a feeling of fear; I am being pessimistic in order to urge you to get out of this and to work for the two things that we are talking about- economic development and national security.
