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About Myself

A few residential quarters of a princely estate named Balarampur in Lucknow were rented out to a few *baboo*s (mostly) of UP Government. Every morning I would sit down on a small rug in the veranda of our one-room tenement to do the home work allotted to me by my mother and watch school children pass through our lane. DAV college was close by and ours was the connecting lane passing through the colony constructed on both sides of the road. Much of it has now changed but a few houses still stand out reminding me of the reminiscence of a melting past.

My father was a small employee in UP Government. Behind our one-room tenement where we lived with a family of seven, was a huge open garbage compound. Around this compound dwelt hundreds of families comprising scavengers, sweepers, shoe shiners, rickshaw pullers, milkmen, daily wagers, domestics and their kind. I watched them and often played with their children. My childhood has therefore witnessed poverty closely. I had a question in my young mind even then – ‘Is our country not very poor?’ I had an inkling even then that something was wrong, and whatever was happening was not good. We could surely be better. And now when I look back it indeed was the truth.

I am one of those who didn’t go to school in their early childhood. I started my schooling from class six. Thanks to my school drop-out mother who taught me at home. She also imbibed in me a rich culture, a sense of understanding and respect and consideration for others. It was her teaching at home that got me admission in a primary school in class six. I was an ordinary student all through my schooling. But an unfortunate incident proved a blessing in disguise and changed my life’s course. I was debarred for two years in class XII by the UP Education Board, for helping another child in copying, which I confessed before the enquiry commission. Two years later this incident proved to be a blessing and since I was still too young it didn’t matter. I continued going to school and studied the same subjects for three consecutive years. This helped me memorise most of my books by heart. After

three years I knew my subjects so well that I stood meritorious in the Board exams. This got me a direct admission to the engineering college at BHU, Varanasi in the second year.

My analysis of what we are and why we are in such a condition has its roots in my childhood. And then I have first hand experience of working with various government and semi-government organisations, academies, multinationals and PSUs. I have observed closely others working and then I ran my own industries for 24 years, employing more than 400 persons. All this has given me tremendous exposure and an analytical bent of mind to search out for solutions to varied problems.

I started my career as an Assistant Engineer with UP State Electricity Board (UPSEB), Lucknow and watched the deterioration and degeneration of our power sector (also see Section 8.6). Now most of the power stations in the country under government control are sick, under high debts, operate at low to very low PLFs (Plant Load Factors) and are a picture of despondency and despair and we wish our villages electrified and a strong industrial base flourish, while at homes in cities we look desperately when the power comes and stays for a while.

I left the Board after a year and joined Government Polytechnic, Lucknow (UP Government Technical Institute) as a lecturer, where I had a first-hand experience of the erosion and dishonour of our educational system. This too I left after two years. When I left the Polytechnic, I was so frustrated with the education system that I sent a 35 page typed note to the Director of Technical Education, Minister of Education and Chief Minister of UP. What happened to my note I have never known, for I left Lucknow and came to Delhi and never followed up with them. It was in the year 1968/69. Then I worked for NGEF, a Government of Mysore undertaking in collaboration with AEG (West Germany) that manufactured excellent products (motors, transformers, generators and switchgears). I shall always remember having marketed their products. At that time the Technical Directors and the Production Incharges were all Germans but the Chairman was a bureaucrat who would change every one or two years. Even today, as was then, it is the same strange practice of our government to run its establishments in this manner. This is how they make sure that none of the bureaucrats is ever responsible for the well-being and successful functioning of such establishments. It is not surprising that with time all such public sector undertakings (PSUs) gradually became sick and gave rise to perennial inflation, unabated corruption, lethargy, unaccountability and arrogance. Even engineers and managers relented and this style of government's

working became order of the day. This culture permeated to the entire workforce. The Government units that were supposed to support the industrial and economic base of the country soon required financial support to meet their expenses. Like others NGEF too has become sick and is now up for sale.

After leaving NGEF, I set up my own industry and I ran it for 24 years against many odds and uncertainties. Today it seems to be a nightmare. I had to slog for long hours just to keep the factory going. Due to meagre finances I had to fight with my bankers who would always despise me. Visiting them every day was a routine, as if I was a culprit on parole required to report at the police station every day. Besides this, I had to encounter with dozens of inspectors and their regular policing and fleecing like hungry wolves and also regular unrest and abuse by labour besides the market adversities. It was a great frustration, not possible to narrate in words (see also Chapter 10). Thus I have direct experience of degeneration of power sector, deterioration of education system, destruction of PSUs and an overall destruction of our industrial base and the economy of the country as such.

I am therefore not simply an author but also a victim of the system just as everyone else is. What I have analysed and expressed is not only my experience but the experience and suffering of most of us over the years, at the hands of a system that is barbaric, insensitive, callous and incompetent and has assumed enormous powers and authority in its stride. It has trampled the people of this land like insects and ants. My studies and research on the problems afflicting our country and its people have shown me ways as to how we can come out of our sombre past and build a nation of our dreams. Dear Countrymen, please give me your wholehearted support and let us together construct our tomorrow with fragrance of prosperity and happiness for all.