

Sri Krishna's Leaks - The Story

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The mystery of the Chapter 8 in the Sri Krishna Committee (SKC) Report has only partly been solved by Justice L Narasimha Reddy's path breaking judgment of 23rd March 2011. The Judgment reveals the whole sorry affair and comments adversely on the personalities concerned and procedure adopted to subvert its own Report by excluding a significant chapter for public scrutiny and discussions. Like an iceberg, which floats only 10% above the sea surface and has 90% hidden below the surface, the SKC Report has only the 10% showing in the public eye with 90% hidden like a thief in the night. As the extracts quoted in the Judgment indicate, most of that that 90% is now exposed not only to judicial scrutiny but also to public debate.

Yet the question is why? If the SKC felt as strong as the secret note implies, why did it not say so in the text openly and boldly? Why the patent dishonesty and lack of integrity in preparing a 505 page report? Is there a logical explanation for how it happened?

The probable story – and readers are reminded that this is only a possible explanation for the mess the SKC has created. It is not an excuse for what SKC has done - which is in excusable.

Justice Sri Krishna is reported to have told his Committee members and the extensive Committee staff that he is determined to complete and submit the report by the due date December 31, 2010. He seems to have been stung by criticism of the long period he took over the Mumbai riots. He also told them that if they cannot meet the deadline, they were to say so and he would write the report himself single-handed. Oh, how he must wish he had done that!

The Committee members and staff then allocated work amongst themselves and the hired consultants and others to write the rest and proceeded with the report writing.

As the report got drafted, each person's personal views entered into the exercise. Data was ignored, other data invented, facts recognized or forgotten etc. The Report became a set of chapters, each of which read idiosyncratically and revealed only the bias and view of its particular author rather than a combined, considered and careful view of the whole Committee. It is obvious that there has been no application of mind even in consolidating the Report and checking the numbers and other "facts"

Added to the confusion there was apparently some unofficial "consultants" who "helped" draft some of the chapters and provide data to justify the approach and results already determined before hand.

The Committee seems to have considered the entire report only on its 32nd meeting held on 29th December, 2010. At that stage three of the members (thought to be Justice Sri Krishna, Dr. Abusaleh Shariff and Prof. Dr. (Mrs.) Ravinder Kaur) objected to Chapter 8 as being not part of the Terms of Reference of the Committee - and likely to cause trouble. Apart from that they refused to accept the views expressed therein – views largely of V K Duggal, IAS (retired) former Home Secretary to Government of India, whose reputation – such as it - is well known in New Delhi circles. As a result and due to Duggal's insistence and his invocation of Home Minister Chidambaram's authority, they seem to have agreed to separate the Chapter and send it to the Home Ministry in a sealed cover with every page marked "secret".

Compromise over principles has since got them into deep trouble as it will anybody foolish enough to do the same.

Thus Chapter 8 said

"A note on the above covering all aspects has been prepared and is being submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs in a separate cover along with this Report. The Committee has kept these dimensions in view while discussing various options included in Chapter 9 of the Report, i.e., "The Way Forward". "

The Chapter then became a `note' while the Report still called it a chapter. Thereafter, Duggal seems to have added a "supplementary note" telling the Gol how to handle the post-Report situation. He also recalled that he had conversations as early as September 2010 with the Home Minister, Chidambaram and Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee to appoint a Telangana man as CM which he said was "done". This has reference to the rumor that Mr. Jaipal Reddy would come as CM - which due to his good political sense he did not accept the offer made. To quote:

"There is also a need for providing strong and firm political leadership and placement of representatives of Telangana in key positions (may be CM / Dy.CM (Since done. This aspect was discussed with FM & HM in September, 2010)." This indicated that this part was written before November 25th 2010 when Kiran Kumar Reddy was appointed CM. Did Duggal forget to correct it or he had already sent the note by then? Another small mystery!

We now we need to consider what affect this unholy compromise of secreting Chapter 8 had on the SKC report itself.

First, due to multiple authors, unknown interventions, faulty and incorrect data, bad grammar etc., the Report was already flawed at birth. It is now obvious that it was set up to reverse the Government of India's decision of 9th December 2009 to grant statehood to Telangana. Further the eleven-month exercise was meant to waste time and ensure that tempers and emotions die down in Telangana. This would allow the Government to do as its financial backers wanted, rather than fulfill the wishes of 40 million Telangana citizens to whom it had promised statehood. The Sri Krishna Committee Report, therefore, is misconceived, resulting in unnatural delivery and death at birth.

Second, since there was no overall editorial control, no one person was appointed to clean up the contradictions, inconsistencies etc. As Chairman, this would have been Justice Sri Krishna's job and he did not do it at all.

Third, though Chapter 8 became secret, the title page "Law & Order and Internal Security Implications" and 52 words were left to explain who wrote it and how it got there and where it was sent. This meant everyone knew there was a secret and where it was hidden!! The Report, and even Chapter 8 itself, said that Chapter 8 guided the SKC in its deliberations.

Fourth, the Report referred many times to the now secret Chapter. Moreover in referring to three Options, the SKC said Chapter 8 guided them. So the fundamental basis of the SKC Report was hidden from public view. The fat was in the fire and, as they say, "rest is history". The Judgment on the Writ Petition to force the Government of India to publish it, revealed the conspiracy for what it is. In the words of the Judge: "If one has any doubt about the hidden opposition of the Committee for formation of Telangana, that stands removed with this note."

Sixth, who takes the rap now? Duggal, Sri Krishna, and all the other three members have participated in an effort which is may be seen by some to amount a conspiracy to silence themselves or one of them (Duggal). They ended up awakening the conscience of the judiciary and consolidating the will of the Telengana people for separate state. This is historically the third attempt to trick and fool the Telangana people – first in 1956, then in 1969 and now. Third time unlucky should be the slogan now for the Seemandhra supporters.

What follows? What follows is that any further discussion on SKC is a joke and a farce. Will they discuss the secret Chapter 8? No self-respecting politician can participate in this black comedy of errors. It amounts to discussing a dead and rotting carcass. The only thing to do is to give it a decent burial – though some even think a charge of criminal conspiracy to deceive the citizens of India can be laid at the door of the SKC.

It is well that the SKC were not clever enough to simply delete the Chapter 8 altogether and erase references in the Report to it and keep mum. No one would have known and they would have got way with their trick played on the 40 million Telangana people and the billion or more Indian taxpayers. We must thank God that they are a foolish and incompetent lot – only to be pitied as they go down in history as the sorriest gang of "eminent "personalities.

For the country the only thing this SKC has done is to confirm the case for Telengana. This is the silver lining in the SKC dark cloud. Let us be satisfied that finally "Satyam eva te" and that always " maunum satyam visistate" (truth is superior to silence). And finally, a "hi-hip hooray" for the judiciary. May it always support the weak and stand for right – for it is all we have left.

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