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Board: Air Marshal Ajit Shankarrao Bhonsle

Alma Mater: IIT Kharagpur, Integrated M.Sc Economics

Home State: Uttar Pradesh

Optional: Economics

Hobbies/Interest: Chess and Political Economy

*4<sup>th</sup> to go, Chairman greets with a smile and starts his monologue*

CM: It's always quite refreshing to have a candidate from Humanities background (Me: Thank you sir (smiling)) Ok Mr X let me point out that we have 30 min. with you and in this we will judge you from end to end (me: anxiously smiles), I want to put it out quite clearly that I want a direct answer and would not like if you beat around the bush (me: I keep that into mind sir). You have a pen and a pad in front of you, if you have any doubts you can write it down there and then form your answer, but be crisp in your reply (me: Sure sir (anxious smile continues))

CM: Business of Government is not business, do you agree with this proposition

Me: Sir this could be said so for certain developed economies but with respect to India this cannot be accepted end to end because we have to balance economic justice with social justice.

CM: What is the current scenario in this regard?

Me: Sir Government is trying to make a paradigm shift from market based intervention in the form of PSUs towards an efficient regulatory framework in current scenario.

CM: How could that be said?

Me: This could be said sir by analysing the recent policy shift in government where it is trying to push reforms towards ease of doing business, contemplating strategic disinvestment in various PSUs and in the meantime it is strengthen its regulatory framework, for instance sir, Bankruptcy code has been brought in, Prompt corrective action guidelines by RBI has been updated.

CM: Recently it was pointed out that GST is not just a radical tax reform but it is also a transformative tax policy. Do you agree?

Me: Yes Sir I agree. The reason for this is Sir that implementation of GST will decrease cascading of taxes thereby resulting in improved efficiency of business in India, this would directly feed into competitiveness of Indian industries thereby resulting in enhanced cost advantage of Indian products, thus it can also be considered a transformative tax policy sir. (Smile on CM face and butterflies in mine stomach)

Now members begin

M1: You have done B.Sc and M.Sc economics from IIT Kharagpur?

Me: Yes sir

M1: Are these two different courses?

Me: Now sir my course was an integrated Masters programme.

M1: Ok Ok I get it, So what were the objectives of Demonetisation? And what has been its outcomes vis-à-vis its objectives?

Me: Sir Demonetisation was a radical governance and social engineering measure of GoI, Its objectives were four fold: Stop corruption, Curb black money, Stop terror financing and Stop counterfeiting of currency. Sir according to me the outcomes of demonetisation have been positive were behavioural aspect of the economy is concerned for instance sir cashless transactions have increased in India, moreover, disruption caused due to demonetisation have exposed certain corrupt businesses in India. However sir, I think we should wait for data on demonetisation to first come up before reaching an empirical conclusion.

M1: That all very good but what's your opinion regarding let's say effect of demonetisation on terror financing

Me: Sir I think we have got mixed results regarding this particular policy objective as was evident when new 2000rs currency notes were found with terrorists last year in J&K, however, this policy measure have been quite effective in naxal areas as various reports are coming from ground that naxal operations are facing credit crunch due to demonetisation.

M1: You must be aware of attack in Sukma

Me: Yes sir

M1: What else could be done apart from development initiatives in Left Wing Extremism affected areas to curb the problem of naxalism?

Me: Sir I believe that to attain a long term viable solution we need to work on perception management of state. To put the idea into perspective sir naxalism or such type of local rebellion only thrives when there is active support from local masses, as we can see from recent attack in Sukma. To do so we have to work on multiple folds sir, for instance, we should effectively implement PESA in letter and spirit moreover SOP of paramilitary forces should be updated to inculcate the ideas of coordinating and winning trust of local people. Recent incidence like the report by NCW that paramilitary forces were involved in raping of 12 women in chattisgarh could well be avoided.

M2: Ok Mr. X coming back to the ques. Of disinvestment, would be support exit of government from the market based economy

Me: Sir we have to analyse this on a case to case basis as it is imperative to maintain economic growth with social justice.

M2: Ok then in which industries would you not support exit of government?

Me: Sir I think defence is one such industry were government should always maintain its presence given its strategic dimensions, (interrupted by M2)

M2: Ok tell me do you support privatisation of Air India?

Me: Yes sir I do because aviation market in India is quite vibrant and I think government should not have a prominent role anymore in this sector, moreover, financial losses of Air India have also become quite unsustainable.

M2: But then don't you think that private airlines would not be interested in providing air services to let say north eastern areas, moreover, in case of emergency such as evacuation from war torn areas like Syria and Yemen could not be carried out by private airlines?

Me: Sir I think we should provide market based incentives to private airline companies so that they start considering North Eastern states as economically viable, recent policy initiative of GoI UDAN is one such step. Regarding emergency evacuation exercises sir I believe that our air force and naval capabilities have increased substantially in last two decades to take care of such emergency situations, for instance, we now have world class airforce platforms like CJ-130 Super Hercules (CM smiling away to glory) to accomplish such tasks.

M3: Why is there a rise in protectionist policies across the globe?

Me: Sir I believe that this is due to backlash against the distributive outcomes of globalisation.

M3: Hmmmm.... What do you think will be the effect of USA President's policies with respect to H1B visa for Indian IT companies?

Me: Sir I think there would be a short term negative effect on our IT companies but in medium to long term I think our IT industries would overcome such aberrations. I am basing my reasoning on the business model of our IT companies sir which are propelled by taking advantage of wage differentials in USA and India, changes suggested by USA president would undermine this advantage of wage differential resulting in fall in short term profits of our companies. However sir I believe that our IT industries are capable enough to reorient their business models to overcome such issues in medium to long term.

M3: What will be its effect of USA?

Me: Sir in short term USA might be well off through such policies but it will lose out in long term given that such policies will effect cost competitiveness of USA exports.

M3: You must have heard about Brexit?

Me: Yes sir

M3: Recent events in EU shows its future is not quite bright, do you think there is any future of EU at all?

Me: Sir EU is a customs union with common market this creates internal frictions in the economic policy setup because though the monetary policies are coordinated the fiscal policies are not. This results in biased economic outcomes. For instance sir Euro is overvalued for countries like PIGS though it is undervalued for Germany, therefore, Germany benefits at the cost of PIGS in exports. These issues should be fixed to make EU project viable and equitable in long run sir.

M3: It seems you know your subject well, let us change the topic now

Me: Sure sir

M3: Name some World Heritage Sites in UP apart from Taj Mahal?

Me: Sir Agra Red Fort (everyone laughs)

M3: Ok... any other?

Me: Sorry sir I am unable to recollect

M3: It's fine

M4( Lady Member) : You had done your internship in Rakshak foundation na.

Me: Yes mam

M4: What was your area of research in Rakshak?

Me: It was Universal Healthcare mam

M4: How can we improve healthcare of senior citizens?

Me: Mam we need to develop a vibrant Geriatric healthcare ecosystem in India.

M4: Ok what else?

Me: Mam we can work on multiple dimensions in this regard for instance if we are able to provide financial independence to senior citizens it would be very helpful for this we can increase the age of retirement of extent social security benefits like universal pensions to senior citizens.

M4: Anything else?

Me: Mam government should either itself develop Old age homes or incentivise private players to do so, this will help in bla bla bla (in hindsight in think she was asking about how children treat their parents)

M4: So you have studied Economics in a technical university, so what were the challenges that you faced? And how did you overcome these challenges?

Me: Mam there were two major challenges that I faced. Firstly, there was an issue that not many people knew that economics is offered in IIT and in my initial years in IIT I had to explain this to almost everyone, moreover, I lost many good opportunities of internships and projects due to lack of awareness about economics in IIT in other institutions. Secondly mam, I had to take up minor and these were mostly offered in other departments which were in engineering domain, thereby, making it difficult for me to link my major with minor courses. I was greatly helped by my professor (M4 smiles for the first time) and my seniors to overcome these trivial issues mam. They were the ones who guided me in my academic endeavours and in my project, moreover, with time being acquainted with other departments of IIT I was able to choose my minor wisely with my professors always lending me a helping hand.

M4: Very good very good (smiling to glory). So Mr. X suppose if you are made DM of Lucknow (my hometown) what will you do to boost business in the city?

Me: Mam as a DM my top priority would be to upgrade infrastructural facilities of existing business centres in Lucknow, for instance mam, areas like Chowk, Aminabad, Alambad in Lucknow are big business centers but physical infra in these areas is relic of past, my first priority would therefore be to improve infrastructure in these areas (M4 has a big smile, seems she was familiar with topography of lucknow). Next mam to boost exports I would like to ensure forward linkages for surrounding areas of Lucknow with respect to business, for instance mam, Mangoes of Malhiabad have huge economic potential but due to lack to agro industries this remains untapped, similarly glassware of firozabad could be linked to lucknow to provide it with increased market opportunity. This would help develop a vibrant MSME industry areas around Lucknow and business activity in Lucknow could be increased.

Chairman: Ok Mr. X your interview is over.

Me: Thankyou sir

Chairman: Thankyou

Me about to get up

***Most interesting part of interview***

CM: Ok what are you planning to do this afternoon?

Me: Sir I am going to watch a movie with my friends

CM: Which one?

Me: Bahubali: The Conclusion

CM: It is not that good you know. Have you seen Bahubali part 1?

Me: Yes sir

CM: I'll recommend you to see it again, it was much better.

ME: I'll take your suggestion into account sir

CM: (Cunning smile) That means you will not accept my advice! (everyone laughs out)

Me: (Smiling) No no sir this is not what I meant sir but actually I am going out with my friends sir who are waiting outside so I would first propose your suggestion to them and then I'll see what decision is taken by the group.

CM: So you are a democratic person

Me: (Smiling) yes sir

CM: Its good, a civil servant should always be democratic. Ok Thank you Mr. X

Me: Thank you sir

*The end*