

**‘Four Revolutions and India’s Future’**  
**5:00 pm-6:30 pm September 1, 2011**  
**WWF Auditorium, 172-B, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi**

A session on *‘Four Revolutions and India’s Future’*, with Prof. Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations and Professor of Political Science, Indiana University was organized by Aspen Institute India. The panel also included Dr. Michael McRobbie, President, Indiana University and Mr. N.K Singh, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha.



Prof. Ganguly has held a variety of distinguished positions in his career which includes serving as a visiting fellow at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis. Prof. Ganguly is also a political author with around thirty books to his credit including his recent book ‘India since 1980’. Prof. Ganguly is also a recipient of Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award from the Government of India in 2009.

Dr. McRobbie opened this session with an introduction of Prof. Sumit Ganguly.

Prof. Ganguly started the lecture by explaining the four components which he has pin-pointed as the four revolutions:

1. Transformation of India’s foreign policy at the end of the cold war.
2. Transformation of India’s economy since 1991.
3. The notion of ‘silent revolution’ that is underway in India, namely, mobilisation of India’s poor and how this is transforming India’s democracy and also
4. The Indian polity which has a remarkable way of thwarting Rights and confounding us and that is the question of the future of Indian secularism.

Starting with transformation of foreign policy, Prof. Ganguly explained that it is indeed a remarkable dexterity that the Indian policy-makers demonstrated at the end of cold war and managed to re-adjust India’s foreign policy to a vastly different world order that had emerged at the end of cold war. It is astonishing thing as to how India managed to adopt after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and moved quickly to improve its relations with United States, South-East Asia, and Western

Europe etc. India focussed much more in a fairly direct fashion on furtherance of its own national interest instead of trying to be an example to the world. Prof. Ganguly said “India adopted a much more pragmatic foreign policy which benefited the country significantly”.

On the economic transformation, Prof. Ganguly stressed that there has been a significant decline in poverty since liberalisation but it also may have contributed to greater inequality. Prof. Ganguly said that he does not believe in the cult of ‘growth’ but does believe in what the Prime Minister of India refers to as ‘inclusive growth’. Prof. Ganguly explained that without growth, you cannot make a significant dent in poverty reduction. Without the emphasis on growth and continuous opening of economy, India’s ability to lift significant segment of its population from the curse of grinding poverty will simply not come about. He also added that indeed India has witnessed a revolution not only in material terms but also in ideational terms. He said “we have seen steady acceptance of the notion of markets as an important phenomenon for generating and sustaining growth

Explaining the silent revolution, Prof. Ganguly said that there was a fundamental transformation of social order in southern India in the 60’s and what was remarkable was that this was done primarily through ballot box. Today, India is witnessing a repetition of southern revolution in North India with the rise and mobilisation of lower class and also the reflection thereof in state legislatures. He said that “democracy does not guarantee you outcomes but only guarantees process”. This revolution is largely taking place through the ballot box but it is going to be turbulent as all revolutions are. Prof. Ganguly said that “it is my belief that it is (revolution) going to produce a democracy that is genuinely representative”.

Prof. Ganguly also added that India has already faced multiple challenges for secularism. He added that the rise of ‘Hindu nationalism’ is receding. The multi religious societies if wish to remain liberal democracy, have to recognize that regardless of one’s sectarian background everyone must be treated (at least in constitutional terms) as equal citizens. He also added that minorities also have to realise that they cannot constantly claim privileges that are distinctive to them. “If we wish to have a liberal democracy, individuals must be treated as simply citizens with certain rights and responsibilities. Your ethnicity should not be more important than your citizenship” he said.

In conclusion Prof. Ganguly explained why these four issues are pivotal to India’s future? He said that transformation of economy is pivotal to India’s future largely because one has to extend the benefits of economic growth much widely. Shift in ideation of foreign policy is important because India needs to move forward with dexterity to respond to global changes. And finally, Prof. Ganguly added that the silent dimension obviously matters because it is going to make Indian democracy much more representative.

The video can be watched here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/aspeninstituteindia?feature=mhee#p/search/0/zXXcl3cuUZE>