

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

*"Water is fluid, soft, and yielding. But water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. This is another paradox: what is soft is strong."*

*-- Lao Tzu*

For most experts in International Relations, USA is the archetypal exponent of soft power. The fact is that the US is the home of Boeing and Intel, Google and the I-Pod, Microsoft and MTV, Hollywood and Disneyland, McDonald's and Starbucks – in short, most of the major products that dominate daily life around our globe. **The attractiveness of these assets, and of the American lifestyle of which they are emblematic, is that they permit the US to persuade others to adopt the agenda of the US, rather than it having to rely purely on the dissuasive or coercive 'hard power' of military force.**

In his book, *The Paradox of American Power*, Nye took the analysis of soft power beyond the US; other nations too, he suggested, could acquire it. In today's information era, he wrote, three types of countries are likely to gain soft power and thus succeed: "those whose dominant cultures and ideals are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, autonomy); those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed; and those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance."

And India has all the ingredients to be able to exert that soft power. She has done it in the past. Soft power is all about attraction. Every conqueror who came to India was pulled by its soft power. From Ghazni to the British, every ruler of India was seduced by its stories. They did not know what was India till they came here. And once they came here, they never wanted to go back. But over the last two centuries, India lost this space of soft power. The capability to set her own agenda which the other countries accept of their own accord rather than use hard power.

The roots of India's soft power run deep. India's is a civilization that, over millennia, has offered refuge and, more importantly, religious and cultural freedom, to Jews, Parsis, several varieties of Christians, and Muslims.

In this age of media, internet and IT, countries have to occupy the mind space of the citizens and other countries. The occupation of this mind space is largely done through mass media. And Bollywood with its 1200 films a year is a huge medium of occupying that mind space. The occupation of minds leads to a soft tug, a seductive pull and moulding of an opinion without coercion through which an actor A becomes willing to surrender to give to B at a lesser cost. Bollywood can exert this soft power for India which can result in huge benefits for a growing economic power house like India.

India has capabilities in terms of culture, politics and governance in order to expand its soft power. But utilization of the elements of soft power is really less

than what the Americans or the British do. Interestingly, though American culture is popular, it is not as rich as India.

**The world of the 21st century will increasingly be a world in which the use of hard power carries with it the odium of mass global public disapproval, whereas the blossoming of soft power, which lends itself more easily to the information era, will constitute a country's principal asset.** Soft power is not about conquering others, but about being yourself. Increasingly, countries are judged by the soft-power elements they project onto the global consciousness – either deliberately (through the export of cultural products, the cultivation of foreign publics or even international propaganda) or unwittingly (through the ways in which they are perceived as a result of news stories about them in the global mass media). (Tharoor:2012)

In the information age, Joseph Nye has argued, **it is often the side which has the better story that wins. India must remain the 'land of the better story.'**

As a society with a free press and a thriving mass media, with a people whose creative energies are daily encouraged to express themselves in a variety of appealing ways, India has an extraordinary ability to tell stories that are more persuasive and attractive than those of its rivals. This is not about propaganda; indeed, it will not work if it is directed from above, least of all by government. But its impact, though intangible, can be huge

**And the best story teller for conveying the India story is its films – Bollywood.** India produces various kinds of culture, notably the most powerful

amongst those forms is the films of Bollywood, now reaching ever-wider international audiences. The triumph of *Slumdog Millionaire* at the 2009 Oscars both reflects and reinforces this trend. Bollywood is bringing its brand of glitzy entertainment not just to the Indian diaspora in the US, UK or Canada, but around the globe, to the screens of Syrians and Senegalese alike. It is time the policy proletariat took note of it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### What We Have Done So Far

Several initiatives have been launched to capitalize and build the soft power of India by the government. Efforts have been on to push India to the forefront of the international community. The steps taken are:-

- Creation in 2006 of a public diplomacy division within the Ministry of External Affairs.
- The worldwide expansion of cultural centres in various countries through Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) where activities ranging from film festivals to book fairs and dances are held to show case India.
- The Ministry of Tourism's "Incredible India" campaign, and the work of the Ministry for Overseas Indians.
- The government has taken few initiatives like increasing FDI limit in TV distribution platforms, TV news channels and radio.
- Clearance for new TV channels has been expedited and security clearance requirement from Ministry of Home Affairs abolished for MSOs.