

BASHING THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION: SHANTONU SEN

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Its a good thing to make fun, criticize and down play. We are a country that likes to poke fun at objects, organizations, individuals who are otherwise venerated and deified. Our literature and music is replete with couplets, expressions, jokes that make fun and are critical of our gods, politicians and others who are in authority. However these expressions and antics have a 'lakshman rekha' which is rarely crossed. We have an inherent respect for those we laugh with even at, joke about but are aware that without them we will be very much the losers. The bashing that the bureau is contending is now no longer a joke.

In the last ten years the loss of the sheen that the bureau once boasted has been quite devastating not only for those who man the bureau but also for the fight against corruption in the country. The country never had anything remotely close to taking on corrupt activities in the country till we were half way through the Second World War. The English men that were sent to this country were corrupt to the core. Like Warren Hastings or the earlier Robert Clive the followers that came believed in looting the 'sone ke chidhya' that India was. Only when the war efforts were impeded by the corrupt practices of the suppliers hand in glove with the 'babus' of India a organization , Special Police Establishment was created to investigate the black market and quality of war material. It proved an effective deterrent with in months of it coming into being. In 1947 Prevention Corruption Act was brought into define corruption extensively. This Act under went changes in 1964 and 1988 tightening anti-corruption laws. First Special Police Establishment and from 1st April 1963 the Central Bureau of Investigation investigated the corrupt in the Govt. of India freely and fearlessly. The States followed suit. Each of them set up an Anti-Corruption Bureau. These agencies worked in close coordination. They met biannually to streamline their methods and learn from each other how to tackle corruption. The country had leaders who boasted of high integrity and the bureaucracy lean and feline was more or less above corruption. The corrupt were deftly cornered and sent behind bars. A few instances, a Minister in Rewa State, an Indian Civil Service Officer in the Central Government, a press magnate, a scam that defrauded the public sector and the nationalized banks, terrorists, mafia from corrupt politicians to corrupt public servants and from economic criminals to international mafia and state grown terrorist fell to this organization's fell swoop.

All this changed in the nineties. Two land mark investigations ended by sullyng its reputation. One ended by C B I providing protection to politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen named in the Hawala Diaries and the other ended shielding Prime Minister Narshima Rao's family in the Urea Scam. Both nicked the organization badly. Since then despite good work its

credibility is suspect. How bad it is, came to the fore when no less than the Supreme Court allowed a Visitor Diary purported to be maintained at the C B I Director's residence to be entertained and to C B I Director's dismay the media, electronic and the print was permitted to go gung ho in pillorying the Director of C B I. The organization has been singed badly. Is its image so bad that the Apex Court decided that without an accompanying affidavit and the whistle blowers name on the records of the Registry, this alleged diary could be treated as authentic because any thing adverse against the C B I or its Director has to be correct? That any thing goes when C B I or its Director is under attack can now be challenged. That the Visitor;s Diary is not an official document and vast majority of the entries are fake will be easy to establish. Who is behind it all needs to come out. That will be the difficult task but it must be known.