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India and the Gulf War

The Mahabharata as a Study of the Problem of Evil

A.N. Moorthy Rao

Uncertainties of a Democratic Age

Leszek Kolakowski

After the Fall

Mihir Sinha

Stalin's Indian Apologists

A.G. Modak



TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CANDIDATE

Election time is job-seeking time. The job-seekers are the thousands of candidates aspiring to membership of the Lok Sabha or State assemblies

They, or their agents will visit us, and with folded hands and practised grin, ask us for our 'invaluable vote'. They may perhaps leave an impressive 'biodata' and pages full of promises. Generally these promises are not worth the paper they are printed on. Their biodata do not say much, for much is left unsaid.

Let us use the opportunity to subject them to a test. After all, even a Lower Division Clerk (LDC) has to satisfy certain minimum qualifications. How much more important it is for our law-makers to be qualified.

Here are some model questions. *You should add to them depending on local circumstances.*

1. How old are you?
2. Where do you live? In this constituency or outside? If outside this constituency why did you or your party choose you to represent us?
3. What are your educational qualifications?
4. Are you married?
5. What is your wife doing? Is she a housewife or is employed or in business. If so where or what business?
6. How many children do you have? If they are not school/college going then they must be employed or in business. Please give details.
7. Are you a full-time politician? If yes, then how do you support your family and yourself.
8. What are your assets. Have you declared them? Are you a tax-payer?
9. Have you been a member of any other party or parties other than the present one? If yes then please give reasons for changing in each case – confine your answer to the last ten years.
10. What were you doing before entering politics? If you were in a different profession are you still capable of returning to that profession to earn a living? If not, what will you do when you are no longer a member of parliament or legislative assembly.
11. If you are seeking re-election what has been your contribution as a member of the last Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha? Tell us briefly the various bills/legislation you supported or opposed.
12. As a member of a legislative body is your loyalty to the people of your constituency or to your party?
13. Do you believe in keeping in touch with your constituency? How? What has been your past record?
14. Are you in touch with what is going on outside India? What are your views on the Gulf War, the developments in Eastern Europe, South Africa etc.
15. The Indian economy is in trouble. Do agree?
16. If you do would you agree that government must de-regulate and go in the direction of a market economy. Will you support measures for privatisation?
17. If a loss-making company employing say 5000 people has to be shut down would you agree? Or would you want it to be declared a 'sick unit' and taken over by government.
18. Everybody knows how much wastage there is in government expenditure. Would you support measures to reduce such wastage? If so what are your specific proposals.
19. If you belong to a party that promises 10 million jobs a year, how many jobs will you generate in your constituency. How?
20. Your party is in favour of Reservation. Has your party filled the quota of reserved seats. If not will you consider stepping down in favour of a quota candidate?

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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India's response to the war in the Gulf satisfied no one. The so called "Leftists" were critical of the fact that India had not been forthright in its support for Iraq (and conversely in condemning 'American imperialism'). In this they had the support of an unlikely ally — the fundamentalist muslims.

On the other side were the critics of Indian foreign policy — those who opined that it was time to abandon the apron strings of the Soviet Union and, of course, let go of that dead horse NAM.

To discuss these and other aspects the Freedom First Foundation organised a seminar on the impact of the Gulf war on India. The main feature of this issue is based on a report of the proceedings.

As is to be expected in a gathering of liberal-minded individuals there were differences of view. But on one issue there was a clear consensus: Indian response to developments abroad needed to change. There had to be much greater emphasis on national self-interest. Ideological predilections had to be abandoned.

From Saddam Hussein we take a leap back into time for an analysis of the Kauravas! We are fortunate to have had a distinguished scholar like Prof. Moorthy Rao to study the problem of evil in the Mahabharata. A problem for which the great Epic had no real answers.

We carry more than the normal quota of book reviews. There are two reasons for this. The number of reviews awaiting publication was increasing so fast that we had to catch up (such are the problems of a quarterly). The second reason was that the books reviewed deal with important and interesting subjects and we were anxious to share them with you.

Once again we acknowledge with thanks *The Statesman's* permission to use Mr. Masani's column.

Finally a word of apology. The April-June issue has been delayed due to a combination of circumstances beyond our control. We hope we have made up for it by giving you much food for thought.

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WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep moans round with many voices. Come, my friends
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world" — Tennyson

The only gimmick a poor man can appreciate is the one that puts a square meal on his plate. And, after 40 years of planning there are more poor men in India than anywhere else.

Jay Dubashi, *The Sunday Observer*, January 6, 1991

Sociological surveys have shown that (the Soviet people) prefer lines and ration cards to rising prices. After decades of living in a non-market situation our population has developed a different psychology.

Nikolai Petrokov, *Fortune*, January 28, 1991

Full of sound and fury the guardians of India's foreign policy strut and fret before imaginary audiences.

Rajiv Desai, *The Sunday Observer*, February 3, 1991

Governments in the Middle East have a habit of declaring holy war at the drop of a hat.

The Economist, January 26, 1991

We call it the 3-D Committee: disinvest, denationalise, deregulate.

Saeed Qadir, Chairman of a Pakistan Committee on Privatisation, *The Times of India*, March 1, 1991

It is not the government's business to make bread and cakes.

Saeed Qadir, *The Times of India*, March 1, 1991

Dialectical materialism was over; mail order materialism has taken its place. Eastern Europe had discovered the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie.

Jonathan Sacks, *The Listener*, November 15, 1990

India's image abroad has taken a nose dive.

Inderjit, *The Economic Times*, January 29, 1991

Like every good word introduced into political language by the Communist Party, Perestroika has only one sure and settled meaning — the perpetuation of communist power.

Salisbury Review, June, 1990

Every country in the world would prosper with the exception of Britain, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, whose policy-makers were either students of or inspired by the London School of Economics.

A distinguished economist quoted in *The Hindu*, April 11, 1991

Delhi is a political city. It is not a place where normal human beings live.

Dr. Horni Sethna, *The Times of India*, March 23, 1991

I have a love-hate relationship with Morarji and my judgment is that he is not only a fool but also a hypocrite

J.R.D. Tata, *The Times of India*, April 14, 1991

If Vaishnavite Saint Ramanuja were alive today, he would have converted all Brahmins to scheduled castes, to avail more benefits from the government.

Arjun Parthasarathy, *Aside*, April 15, 1991

The US is looking at Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. The European Community is looking at East Europe and the Soviet Union. Japan's looking at China and South Asia. And India is looking more and more like Myanmar.

India Today, December 31, 1990

The masjidisation of India's foreign policy may well make a mess out of its economy.

N.V. Subramanian, *Sunday*, March 3, 1991

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

"the time has come," the
walrus said,
"to talk of many things:
of shoes-and ships-
and sealing wax-
of cabbages -
and kings-"

- Lewis Carroll



The Decline of our Parliamentarians

Our national political festival which will arrive next month will cost the country Rs.135 crores; the earlier election cost us Rs.110 crores. An extremely disillusioned public will by and large, be casting its vote for people for whom it little cares. And we will see those elected return to the Lok Sabha. Will this be a different House than what assembled a few months ago? Shri Rajeev Dhavan has written a perceptive article in *The Hindu* of 10 April 1991 which has very many matters of interest to the reader of *Freedom First*.

The most significant development has been the gradual rise in the educational qualifications of the members. Those who did not clear their matriculation examination and who got returned to the 9th Lok Sabha were a mere 6.8% — those who had a college education 74.22%. With women members too, a similar trend is apparent — while only 6.8% appeared to be non-matriculate, 61.3% have had a college education. A paradoxical development is that the increase in the number of members with higher education also coincides with the rise of agriculturists in the Lok Sabha. A little more than 40% of our members belong to this profession.

The professions are clearly on the decline — including that of lawyers which is indeed surprising; for they form but 15%. The medical profession has a miniscule 1.9%; personnel from the Defence 1.7%; journalists 3.1%; teachers 8.7%; Traders and professions too have declined to 4.3%.

Professionally informed debate has been steadily declining and it will be

more so in the present Lok Sabha. Also equally on the decline are those who have had previous experience in the Lok Sabha — this plummeted more than 50%. One half of the members in the last Lok Sabha had no exposure at all to the culture of parliament! Also those with experience in regional or state politics have steadily declined, and they have come in because of the blessings of those at the top. They have no constituency to represent except being beholden to their benefactors.

It has been pointed out that there has been a transition in the sense of the vocation of the members. Once it was a calling almost a holy one — now it is a crass pursuit of power and pelf. From Mrs Gandhi's time the parliament had declined partly because of the calibre of the members; also she used her enormous hold over her party to steadily de-legitimize parliament. It declined to an acclamatory institution and many of the new entrants reduced it to a bazaar. Many time-honoured institutions such as privilege motions lost their savour. There has been a "movement away from middle class interest"; the scheduled castes and tribes members have yet to develop general interest, interests other than those involving their immediate circles.

Members were prepared to pass legislation that they have not read properly because it had been introduced and debated the same day. They did not partake of parliamentary discussion with discourse but in the main with threats and protests. It is true that amongst the reasons for this is the fact that they received no political training as such.

One cannot do better than conclude by quoting Rajeev Dhavan for he does

summarize the dominant mood of the land: "As we proceed to the election — in some anticipation of terror — a great deal of democracy is lost. The issues are blurred and the candidates foisted on to us posing undiscerning choices and the politics of power faces us in a frightening array to eclipse conflicts over issues".

RS

The Listener Bows Out

The brief editorial in the *The Listener* of 3 January, 1991 begins: "It is with immense sadness that we must tell our readers that this is to be the last issue of *The Listener*." With this matter of fact statement in typically British manner, is recorded the finale of one of the most successful educational experiments of the century.

For a mere 25 paise (four annas as it was then) you could buy an issue of *The Times Literary Supplement* or *The Listener* in the railway book stalls — of course at a time when four annas bought you almost half a meal!

Many have picked up their education and kept it up through the pages of this unique weekly, though one must confess that the quality of reading matter as well as the articles began to gradually slip. In its last years *The Listener* was not a patch of what it was in the fifties when you could read the texts of the Reith Lectures, (E.H. Carr's, *What is History* or the chapters that formed the autobiography of Gilbert Murray) and the writings of anyone who mattered in the world of the mind in England.

Effortlessly and with great civility many of us who were young ignora-

muses were led gently by the hand and educated in many things; and one must confess that we got better education in its pages and reviews than from the lecture notes that one scribbled in the colleges or contained in the text books prescribed then. Our half literate functionaries who currently head the Departments of Distant Education in our Universities (which remain one of the most scandalous frauds of our higher education) could do well to pull out one of the old issues of the journal and compare it with the junk mail that they post to their captive students as lessons to be studied. Reading the *The Listener* was liberal education and it opened up vistas and perspectives for individual mental betterment.

In fact *The Listener*, could be regarded as partially the culmination of a movement of adult education that began in the last century in the industrialized nations where people who had missed out their education were given opportunities to pursue it at their lei-

sure. These were formalised in the beginning of this century with the Workers' Education Association and several inexpensive publishing ventures. These were a testament to the great potentialities that could develop in a developing economy. It made life meaningful to many who would otherwise have been confined to a life of ignorance and narrowness.

The closing down of *The Listener* also testifies to a type of educational venture which unfortunately is compelled to take a back seat through no fault of its own. Educationists have yet to prove finally that TV and video are better media than the wireless. But technological progress being inevitable the idiot box and similar ventures increasingly will take a larger slice of the leisure of people — leaving more TV zombies than is good for any community.

Encounter also closed down recently. This is something to be sorry about.

Many of us graduated to reading it in the sixties and the full length articles were exhilarating. The fact that it was financed by dubious sources did not matter at all — where else for a rupee could you buy a journal which had no peers for what it gave us month after month. To read Raymond Aron, Berlin or Popper, Ayer, Russell, or many others was to make one feel privileged. One felt that one was coming to grips with social, literary, and intellectual issues of the first magnitude. Generally, we did not take the contemporary articles seriously, what mattered were the general articles and these never failed to educate or have one wanting to know more about a subject discussed.

Journals of the likes of *The Listener* and the *Encounter* now belong to a past era and we are in a different age.

RS



J.R.D. Tata: The Good Citizen Retires

The retirement of Mr. J.R.D. Tata as Chairman of Tata Sons constitutes a watershed in the history of Indian industry, enterprise and philanthropy. Actually, with the abolition of the Managing Agency System by the Union government in the early days of independence, the House of Tata should have ceased to exist. But the presence of Mr. J.R.D. Tata as Chairman of Tata Sons and Tata Industries ensured that for all practical purposes the House of Tata has continued to function as an Unit. It has undoubtedly been the most prestigious of Indian enterprises in the company of the House of Godrej and others.

I have had the pleasure of working with Tatas for seventeen years from 1940 to 1957. The last two and a half years I had the pleasure of working closely with Mr. J.R.D. Tata as Executive Head of the Chairman's Office. It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet. I was an exception as Mr. Tata's intellectual valet and I ended my association with him with as high an admiration for him as when I joined.

Mr. Tata is very conscious that owing to conscription in the French army he never went to an University, but he has been none the poorer by this as he made up for it by intellectual curiosity and a desire for excellence which, apart from kindness, are his notable qualities.

Mr. Tata has been the soul of honest and open dealing. An example of this is his conduct on the establishment of the Swatantra Party of which I was the General Secretary in 1959. When the 1962 Parliamentary Elections came along and I appealed for help from Tatas, which I had left in 1957, Mr. Tata sent for me and asked whether I preferred that Tatas gave no money to either the Congress Party or the Swatantra Party or that they should contribute to these parties in the ratio of 2:1 in favour of the Congress Party. I promptly replied that I prefer the latter alternative, since the Congress Party would put up 500 candidates for Parliament and we would put up only one hundred. The *pro rata* contribution would be more helpful to our party.

Never one to do anything secretly or under the counter, Mr. Tata wrote to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister telling him of what Tatas would be doing. Mr. Nehru wrote back saying that Mr. Tata was welcome to waste his money if he felt like it! This was a rather silly reply because the Swatantra Party won 21 seats at the first push and Pandit Nehru was driven to explain in a public statement that while people voted for the Congress Party's policies, in the case of the Swatantra Party they voted for personalities! My response to this was to say that what is sauce for the Congress goose was sauce for the Swatantra gander. The point of this incident is that many people thought that Mr. Tata's action in writing to Mr. Nehru was indiscreet. But Mr. Tata acted as a good citizen in a real democracy.

I am glad that Mr. Tata will continue to be the Chairman Emeritus of Tatas. He is like the Emperor whose country has become a republic but the old Emperor still carries a lot of weight.

Minoo Masani

India and the Gulf War

This is a report based on the proceedings of a seminar organised by the Freedom First Foundation, in Bombay on March 16, 1991.

It is now a fact of history that if Saddam Hussein had not invaded and occupied Kuwait, a sovereign state and a member of the United Nations, there would have been no war in the Gulf.

After swallowing his neighbour, the Iraqi dictator proclaimed Kuwait, Iraq's 19th province. Perhaps Saddam Hussein wanted to turn the clock of history back to the 1960s when as a British Protectorate Kuwait was once attached to the province of Basra. Kuwait was granted independence in 1962.

Kuwait appealed for help to the United Nations. And the United Nations in a show of near unanimity never before seen, asked Iraq to withdraw. The Security Council passed as many as twelve resolutions in the five and half months between Kuwait's annexation and the outbreak of war.

Saddam Hussein treated these resolutions with contempt. Perhaps he failed to appreciate the fact that in the Security Council even his friends — the Soviet Union and Communist China — did not use the veto which they could have as permanent members of the Council. While the Soviet Union supported the resolutions, China abstained. India a non-permanent member supported most of the resolutions. Barring Cuba and Yemen he had no friends. Yet he seemed to be confident of one of two things: either the US and its allies would never attack or even if they did he had a powerful army which could meet the challenge. He probably thought that a war with him would prove to be another Vietnam for the Americans.

Economic sanctions had little effect and he was plainly playing for time.

Could the new world take such a blatant act of aggression lying down?

Many reasons have been advanced for the decision to enforce the UN resolution and throw Saddam out of

Kuwait.

The first was Oil. If Saddam wanted Kuwait for its oil revenue and control 40% of the world's supply of oil, the USA and its allies could not let this vital resource be in the hands of a military dictator.

The second was an issue of principle — one member of the United Nations could not be permitted to annex a fellow member.

The third was the right of a people to live in freedom and not be at the mercy of a powerful neighbour.

If the USA had not intervened militarily, Saddam's next stop would have been Riyadh followed by Bahrain, Qatar and so on. Allowing Saddam Hussein to get away with aggression would have been like signing their own death warrants.

On a more philosophical plane it was a choice between peace at any price and liberty. Such a peace would have been the peace of the graveyard.

But why did the USA which was least dependent on Middle East oil rush to Kuwait's aid by organising the largest movement of military men and hardware since the second world war?

Was it altruism? A strong belief in the right of people to be free? Or was it to shake off the ghost of Vietnam? Or again did it view this as an opportunity to test its high-tech weapons in actual combat?

Whatever the reason the fact remains that one man's megalomania led to a war that resulted in the death of thousands; the destruction of property valued at billions of dollars and has left a continuing hazard to the health of millions of people with the oil wells on fire and an oil slick, the biggest ever, endangering marine ecology. The war also liberated Kuwait. A maniac was driven back. But he has now turned on his own people. But that is another sad story.

Participants at the Freedom First Foundation Seminar on India and the Gulf War, Bombay, March 16, 1991.

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Indian Ambivalence

The five and half month economic embargo on Iraq and Iraq-occupied Kuwait affected India in more ways than one. Shortages of oil hurt transport and industry. Oil prices were hiked when prices shot up in the world market leading to a cascading effect on the prices of other goods and commodities. Our foreign exchange reserves dwindled. The balance of payments position touched alarmingly low levels.

Indian labour from the highly skilled to the unskilled returned home in their thousands, straining in the process not only their purse strings but that of the Government of India which organised the most massive airlift in recent history at a cost of around Rs.250 crores. NRI remittances dwindled to a trickle. Indian businessmen lost contracts or did not get paid for their deliveries. Many must have been ruined.

With the war over, Indian expatriates who fled Kuwait are waiting expectantly to be called back. They may have a long wait — if at all. The Kuwaitis have rewarded the Americans, the British, the French and others for their support with huge contracts for the reconstruction of Kuwait. What about India? Maybe a few crumbs here or a few sub-contracts there. But it will add up to precious little.

The blame for this sorry state of affairs can be squarely laid at the door of our politicians — perhaps the stupidest in the world except where their personal interests are concerned.

At the United Nations Security Council we voted in favour of the resolution permitting the use of force. And then we had the spectacle of India's then foreign minister embracing Saddam Hussein in Baghdad! It is true that thousands of Indians trapped in Kuwait wanted to be out and were fleeing across inhospitable deserts. Maybe our foreign minister thought that the embrace would make it easier for our people to return home. But was it necessary to be so effusive? Is it suggested, even in retrospect, that anything less would have endangered the lives of the thousands of Indians in Kuwait? Could we not have maintained our dignity as a nation that had opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

India has had a cosy relationship with Iraq for two decades. This is largely because Iraq represents secularism and modernity in a region dominated by Muslim fundamentalists and feudal monarchies who have always sympathised with Pakistan. Some of these countries have given Pakistan military aid, and may have been the source of arms sent through Pakistan to terrorists in India. At the last meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Iraq was the only country to support India's position on Kashmir. On the economic front, Iraq provided credits for the Mathura refinery and occasionally sold oil on concessional terms to India in the 1970s. Indian contracts bagged Iraqi contracts totalling around Rs. 5,000 crores over the years.

This impressive list of plus points needs qualification. It is gratifying to have an OIC member on our side but even if we did not it would make little difference to the situation in Kashmir. Neither the continuance nor exit of Saddam will make much difference to the flow of arms through Pakistan to militants in India.

On the economic side, Iraq's financial assistance ended in the 1970s and Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been bigger donors to India. Our exports to Iraq in 1989-90 totalled only Rs. 125 crores against Rs. 198 crores to Kuwait, Rs. 428 crores to Saudi Arabia and Rs. 740 crores to the UAE. As for remittances from the Gulf, there are usually only 20,000 Indian workers in Iraq against 1.3 million in other Gulf countries. The contracts bagged in Iraq do not translate into exports from India — the construction equipment and machinery are purchased almost exclusively from other countries. The main benefit to India is in the form of remittances from contract labourers, who number only a few thousands.

Finally, Iraq has failed to pay India's contractors on time right through the 1980s, with the result that it now owes them more than Rs. 900 crores. This sum represents credits India has been obliged to give Iraq. A poor oil-importing country has, in contravention of contract terms, been forced to finance a much richer oil exporter.

In sum, the value of the Saddam regime to India is much less than is popularly believed, and its end will not have major adverse effects. On the other hand India could gain enormously from the end of the regime most likely to cartelise oil in the years ahead. India will have problems, perhaps serious ones, with the emerging Pax Americana. But this will be preferable to the Pax Saddam that would have resulted if the Iraqi President had succeeded in keeping Kuwait.

From an article by Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar
The Times of India, Jan 21.

But the damage had been done. We sent out confusing signals to the Arabs. India may have been popular with Arab

processionists on the streets of Amman or Cairo but to the people of Kuwait and to Arab governments fighting Saddam the message appeared to be: India wants the best of both worlds.

Then came the refuelling issue blown out of proportion by none other than Mr. R.Gandhi and his coterie whose main preoccupation was to embarrass the Government they themselves had brought into existence and this issue was as good as any. The Chandrashekar government had taken a very sensible stand by allowing US military transport planes to refuel. But he was put on the defensive. His instincts told him he was doing the right thing but his political survival depended on the foolish men of the Congress(I). So he made contradictory statements obviously buying time. The Americans rescued him from his embarrassment by announcing they did not wish to create problems for the Indian government. The Sri Lankans stepped in to take on the chore.

Interpreting the reluctance of India's politicians as not being the act of a friend the Kuwaitis have been studiously indifferent to Indian offers of cooperation. We therefore find ourselves at the end of the queue to receive their favours. Employment hopes, business deals, constructions contracts may pass us by.

On the other hand we can expect little or nothing from Iraq. Saddam is bankrupt and we may have to wait a long time before we get business orders from Iraq not to mention unrecovered dues for work already executed before the war.

The ambivalence of Indian policy has been ascribed to the fact that between August 1990 and March 1991 we had two governments and three foreign ministers. Is this a valid reason? Politicians may come and go but don't we have a continuing foreign service establishment?

Another reason advanced for our confused response is the fact that though we supported Security Council resolutions and took the position that the annexation of Kuwait was wrong our attitude began to change in favour of Iraq because of the terrible bombardment of civilian areas in Iraq. It was one of fear, despair and sympathy for a suffering people paying for the mistakes of a dictator.

Iraq's foreign ministry today criticised New Delhi for granting refuelling facilities to American military aircraft and ridiculed the suggestion that it was being done on humanitarian grounds.

A communique read over Baghdad Radio said that this arrangement went against the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which India is a founding member.

The Sunday Observer, Feb. 3

Nehru's legacy

To make matters worse was the attitude of India's politicians who, with an eye on the Muslim vote bank, subordinated the country's economic interests for short term political considerations.

And then there was that all important fact that the allied forces that beat Iraq were led by the wicked Americans.

Right from the days of Pandit J. Nehru we have gone out of our way to keep our distance from the United States. Nehru did not make any special effort to conceal his personal dislikes. It may be recalled that when J. Stalin died Nehru described him on the floor of parliament as a 'man of peace' — the man who according to Soviet sources themselves is credited with the murder of over three million Russians in cold blood. The Soviet Union could do no wrong. The Americans could never be right. This was the crux of Nehru's foreign policy.

Thanks to the Nehruvian legacy India's foreign policy lacks direction because it has become too personalised. Hence we continue to support the Palestinians right or wrong; accorded diplomatic recognition to the PLO but continue to avoid diplomatic relations with Israel.

The buzzword in Indian foreign policy was non-alignment and now it is NAM. We are still in its shadow. Despite superpower rivalry having faded out and the cold war ended our policy makers have yet to appreciate that NAM has lost its clout.

This is not to say that genuine non-alignment has lost its relevance. Even if America has come out very well in this war and even if much of our economic interests are aligned with that of the US we should not simply fall in line with the US. This also means that we need a foreign policy that takes care of our national interests particularly our economic interests.

While Nehru's bias made our policy instinctively anti-American one important reason that perhaps helped sell this anti-Americanism to the Indian people was the US arming of Pakistan. But today when the US is trying to distance itself from Pakistan should we not undertake a review of our foreign policy perceptions?

We need also to consider if we need a new identity, an Asian identity. We need to think of getting closer to Pakistan and Bangladesh in terms of a wider union.

It's really sad to read that US airforce planes are being refuelled in India during Gulf war, that too at the expense of our own domestic consumption. By allowing this India is not only breaking its neutrality but also straining its relations with Iraq. Let us not forget that Iraq was the only country supporting us on the Kashmir issue against Pakistan. The present government by blaming the previous government cannot escape censure for this irresponsible act. India might lose many major developmental contracts in Iraq if this refuelling facility is not reviewed seriously and immediately.

M. Khuthbuddin, Bombay

Perhaps we also need to be more reserved in offering unsolicited opinions and learn to react selectively to world events. To begin with we can stop sermonising to all and sundry and stop making ourselves a laughing stock abroad. Perhaps we need to give less importance to world affairs and more to improving our country economically. Unless we have a strong base in our own home how can we carry conviction abroad.

If the government's policies were ambivalent and confused the attitude of many of our intellectuals including some well-known journalists and columnists was, to say the least, most peculiar.

Some called it a war against Muslims; others, as an attack on the third world. Some sought to justify Saddam's annexation of Kuwait on the ground that it was indeed Iraq's 19th province even comparing Saddam's action to India's liberation of Goa from the Portuguese.

They expressed much concern for the victims of US bombing raids. No such expression of concern was forth-

coming from these journalists and intellectuals for casualties on the other side.

A letter signed by a number of such 'intellectuals' and published in the press scaled the heights of absurdity. It condemned one side without recognising that the other side too had made mistakes. These men denounced America for warring against civilisation. But none of them said anything during the five and half months when Saddam was in occupation of Kuwait; his use of foreigners as a human shield; his threat to use chemical weapons against Israel which was not even a party to the war and even worse when Saddam used chemical weapons against his own people.

They even propagated the ingenious lie that the war was a very devious way of American imperialism luring Sad-

On issue after issue — on Afghanistan, on Cambodia — did we not behave as a client-state, as a lackey? Did this not finish whatever residual regard we may have commanded among the non-aligned? Did such espousal not disable us from performing even the traditional role, that of a mediator? Was that the way to help the people of these countries? In the end, did it even help the Soviet Union any more than a testimonial from Bulgaria did?

We lionised the PLO. And today we bemoan the terrorists here? Did that lionising not rule us out of the role we had sought to play — of mediators? Did it not encourage the PLO into a unsustainable intransigence? And who has that helped in the end.

Read the letter again that was sent to Bush and Saddam Hussein at that penultimate hour. Avoid war... the horrors of it... Peace is imperative... the benedictions of it... Is there a single practical idea in it? And yet so much of our intervention is just this — an urging of the desirables. "A negotiated settlement" — we chant that whether the issue is Kuwait or the Ram Janambhoomi, and make believe that in doing so we are saying something that is not only profound but also specific and useful. To think anew, to be candid, even more so to discover the ways to overcome the problems that dog us, we have to realise that today there is little that we have to teach the world, there is, in any case, nothing the world sees us fit enough to teach it; but that there are a myriad things the rest of the world has to teach us.

Arun Shourie,

MID-DAY, Feb. 4

dam into invading Kuwait. When Saddam Hussein confided to the American Ambassador in Baghdad that he planned to walk into Kuwait, the lady Ambassador reportedly told him it was none of America's business. Why? Because the US could then fight Saddam Hussein and have an opportunity to test its high tech weapons!

Comments by many of our columnists on the Gulf conflict are intellectually dishonest. For about four months, but to a greater degree during the six weeks of the war these journalists took mendacious and dishonest positions. There were a few, a mere handful, who were honest enough to point out that on moral grounds, on the basis of international law and in India's own self-interest it would have been better for India to have unequivocally condemned Iraqi aggression. But these were exceptions.

Over the past three weeks it has become more and more obvious that the West underrated the resilience of the Iraqi people. It assumed all too readily that, revolted by their repressive regime, the people would greet the US-led offensive as a harbinger of their salvation. What the West chose to ignore was the respect and even affection President Saddam has earned despite his iron-fisted rule thanks to the extraordinary efforts he had deployed to emancipate Iraqi women, to spread education to all segments of the population and to keep prices of essential commodities within the reach of the poorest. The West also seems to have taken for granted the low morale of Iraq's armed forces. It reckoned that after the long-drawn-out bloody war with Iran the forces would have turned war weary; in fact they were better steeled for battle than the forces of alliance. Finally, in what appears in retrospect to have been a monumental failure of intelligence, the West did not quite reckon with the meticulous manner in which Iraq prepared itself to face the most formidable challenge to its survival. Taken together, all these developments and hindsight also tend to expose the chinks in the West's imposing armour: the nagging, even obdurate, refusal of the leaders of the multinational alliance to view a challenge to their interests in a historical perspective and with the requisite sensitivity to nationalist, cultural and religious sentiments for the people of the developing world. Indeed nationalism, culture and religion function as bulwarks against assaults by superior economic strength, overbearing propaganda and daunting technology. This is the dismal shape the war in the Gulf has taken a little more than three weeks after the start of Operation Desert Storm.

From an editorial in The Times of India, Feb. 11

The initial Arab reaction to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's statement on the Gulf issue has been one of gratitude and encouragement. Gratitude that a large and weighty country has repeated Arab accusations that the coalition has exceeded its so-called U.N. mandate and encouragement because he backed the demand that the U.N./U.S./U.K. role should be discussed at a meeting of the security council.

Arab observers are recalling the prominent role that India under Nehru played in the 1956 Suez crisis, with one Arab observer commenting that Mr. Gandhi's statement "Has the Nehru touch".

The rapidly growing anger against the U.S./U.K. is also being directed at the U.N. The secretary-general, in his usual lethargic way, has not yet responded to an Iraqi request for an impartial commission to observe and report on the coalition airforce attacks on civilian targets in Iraq.

On the political front, there is also an increasing appreciation in this area that "the root of all evil" is security council resolution 678 which disposed of the principle of collective security.

India could soon find itself in the same boat as Jordan, depending on how vindictive the U.S. would be. Washington is putting the financial squeeze on Jordan because of King Hussein's last angry and accusatory speech. India has put in a request to the International Monetary Fund for a \$ 1.5 billion loan, perhaps rising to \$ 3 billion or even \$ 5 billion, which the U.S. could block or scale down.

If a squeeze is applied to India, that would make clear that the so-called international agencies are really instruments of the U.S. policy (which has been evident for some time) and if India does not bow to that pressure it would teach the U.S. the lesson that vindictiveness does not pay and could be counterproductive.

G. H. Jansen

The Sunday Times of India, Feb. 10

Why the Anti-Americanism?

One journalist asserted that historically and morally Kuwait belonged to Iraq. He added that it was shameful that Muslims assisted by foreigners were killing fellow Muslims! In other words it was alright for Muslims to kill other Muslims so long as they were not assisted by foreigners.

Then there was the editor who wrote that there are hundreds of very important archaeological and historical areas in Iraq and this horrible war fuelled by America and the West was going to destroy these sites. Why? Because adjoining these sites were armament factories or military installations! He did not consider it necessary to ask why Saddam Hussein had, in the first place,

placed these factories or installations next to these sites.

Later, when it was factually being established that the Iraqi army in retreat went about destroying archaeological and other monuments in Kuwait this self-same writer was silent.

Yet another journalist pointed out that the Americans were afraid of a land war and hence the carpet bombing!

Today India enjoys just slightly more credibility in the community of nations than Rwanda, Burundi or any of the nations of sub-Saharan Africa. In a belated initiative, South Block mandarins tried to carve out an Indian role in defusing the Gulf war. It was dismissed with the contempt it deserved.

Perhaps a few bumpkins in rural India are fooled into thinking their government is out in front, shaping world events. In the cities, their antics may spark a few laughs. But outside India, nobody knows or cares what the czars of South Block think or do.

Thus, the trip by foreign minister V C Shukla to Yugoslavia and his deputy to Algeria found no mention in the mainline world media. It's a safe guess the media in those two countries also ignored them. Compare that to the coverage on Door-darshan, All-India Radio and the Indian press. You got the feeling that finally a peaceful solution to the Gulf war was at hand: India is on the job.

It's time to expose this absurd charade. We need to look afresh at the sources of our foreign policy conduct: Clear the confusion that is caused by the smoke-and-mirrors view of the world; recognize that non-alignment was an extension of the nationalist movement against the British Raj; and that at its root is a gigantic inferiority complex, which affected our rulers' dealings with the West, a legacy of colonial subjugation.

Like the Mahalanobis madness, which crippled our economy, non-alignment robbed us of flexibility in foreign affairs. Both spring from the anti-western chip on the shoulders of the Indian privileged class: The nexus of bureaucrats, politicians and intellectuals.

Both doctrines may have served a purpose, though it is debatable whether they were ever intended to do much more than bestow privileges on the brown sahibs, who took over from the British. In any case, we must jettison them now for they are holding a throbbing, pulsating nation to ransom, robbing our people of their vitality.

The Gulf war offers an excellent opportunity to review our foreign policy. Instead the debate is being hijacked by vested interests who believe equivocation is the best response. To this end, the privileged class has launched an all out offensive to persuade people that the old yardsticks apply to the present situation.

The Sunday Observer, Feb. 3

They were scared of facing the "mother of all battles."

And there was this other press pundit who warned that if Saddam lost, fundamentalist forces in India like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad would become stronger because Muslims would be demoralised. Therefore Saddam Hussein had to win if India had to have communal harmony.

These 'intellectuals' and journalists made out Saddam to be a martyr with a cause. True he was being battered by the Americans but he was a courageous fighter who would ultimately teach the Americans a lesson.

Why were these intellectuals so confused? Why were so many of them pro-Saddam, anti-American and anti-West?

Among the reasons is perhaps an element of racism in reverse. The criticism that it is an attack on a third world country is an example of this kind of reverse racialism. Does it mean that countries in the third world are free to aggress against one another? It is a case of 'Brown' versus 'White' — The Brown man right or wrong.

Perhaps our anti-white, anti-Americanism has a deeper reason. The democratic systems existing in the West are a threat to those in power in the country. Even the antagonism to the English language can be explained by the fact that English opens windows to democratic values such as accountability.

I was not always successful in encouraging other nations to condemn Soviet aggression.

When Indira Gandhi was re-elected as Prime Minister of India, I called to congratulate her and to ask for her views regarding our hostages in Iran and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. She was polite but cool. It was obvious that she did not wish to discuss anything of substance. Within a few days I learned why. The Indian Representative's speech in the United Nations was as strongly supportive of the Soviet invasion as were those of Czechoslovakia and Viet Nam. Even Cuba was more reticent in its praise than India.

Jimmy Carter
Memoirs of a President

Or was the intellectuals' support for Saddam the natural support that normally goes to the underdog? Was it this kind of an emotional response which influenced intellectual perceptions? If this is the case then why was not Kuwait perceived as the underdog? Was it because events moved so quickly that the conflict was seen not as an Iraq-Kuwait dispute but as a US-Iraq one?

Our intellectuals from the extreme left to the extreme right are all influenced by the West — all are creations and children of the West. Leftist intellectuals know this and seek to assert their intellectual independence. Should not one feel sorry for them rather than attack them?

If this is so then aren't our intellectuals who wish to assert their indepen-

dence no more than children daring their elders. Should we then take them seriously at all?

If Saddam was perceived as the underdog was he an underdog when he invaded Kuwait on August 2? For five and half months thereafter the murder, rape, torture and systematic looting of Kuwait by the underdog, did not make these children-intellectuals *feel* for Kuwait. But the moment this corrupt dictator started getting pounded our intellectual adolescents *feel* for the underdog. Such is the warped perspective of some of our so-called intellectuals.

Or is it that we have still not shed the colonial hangover and therefore tend to automatically oppose any stand that America or the West takes?

By calling it *Jihad* or holy war Saddam Hussein, who until then was a secularist among Islamic fundamentalists, sought to mobilise Arab and Muslim support. Arab countries that opposed him were denounced as *kafirs* (non-believers or infidels). This attempt to give the war the colouring of a crusade with Saddam Hussein as a modern-day Saladin would have been laughed out of court were it not for the fact that his ploy worked not only among most Arabs in the Middle East but also among large numbers of Muslims in other parts of the world demonstrating the successful selling of a lie.

The US led war in the Gulf is daily becoming more horrendous and inhuman. The earlier limited objectives proposed of 'defending' Saudi Arabia and then 'liberating' Kuwait have now been swamped in a patently imperialist design to destroy Iraq and Iraqi society and disable the country from functioning normally for any number of years.

The UN Resolution No 678, which itself is a violation of the UN Charter, has been cold-bloodedly hijacked towards this purpose. The UN system has shamelessly abdicated any semblance of its role in what has become one of the most critical conflict zones in the international arena in modern history.

It is also depressing to note that both the Soviet Union and China have remained almost passive spectators to this dangerous development.

All this has serious implications for people outside the Western alliance.

A major Third World country finds itself alone facing the combined onslaught of more than 25 nations. All norms of ethical

and civilized conduct have been set aside, enabling a hideous exhibition of technological barbarism on a scale that far exceeds the US ecological devastation of Vietnam.

The Vietnam war eventually generated enormous protest not only from Third World countries but also from within the Western societies themselves. The Gulf war has also raised massive protests which are being sedulously ignored by the media. We want concerned citizens and groups every where to redouble their protests so as to prevail on their governments to call a halt to the multinational destruction of Iraq.

The assault on the people of Iraq should now be seen as an attack on the people of the Third World as a whole. We suffer in sympathy the pain caused to the citizens of the beleaguered country.

It causes us shame and anguish that the Government of India has continued to maintain a position of neutrality in these circumstances. By adopting such a stand, the government is guilty of condoning, if not conniving with, the war crimes being

perpetrated by the US-led multinational forces. Distancing ourselves from such a stand, we declare:

That the war against Iraq has now become a war against civilised people all over the planet;

That the gross, barbaric attacks on civilian centres, especially on women and children, be declared as war crimes;

That all Third World nations come forward to denounce the US-led assault on Iraq, generate movements of solidarity in favour of Iraq's right to survive as a nation;

That the position of neutrality adopted by the Indian government is unacceptable to us;

That the Indian government forthwith cancel all facilities granted to US aircraft at Indian installations and airports.

Signed by Rajni Kothari, Nikhil Chakravorty, V.R. Krishna Iyer, Ashis Nandy, Claude Alvares, Indira Jaising, Shastri Ramchandran and 160 other concerned citizens

The Independent, February 18, 1991

There is much about this war that has very frightening implications for not just us but the whole world. The Americans have a cowboys and Indians (goodies and baddies) approach to life that is naive and dangerous. In their zeal to try and stabilize the region that provides most of the world's oil they could end up destabilizing it for good. We are also not the only ones who are horrified by the fact that the bombing of the Baghdad has been dehumanized to the point that it has seemed mainly like some high-tech video game. But, surely, our concerns about these things, our voice in the world, will be paid much more attention to if we are seen to be fair.

We have every right to condemn in the strongest possible terms the bombing of the air raid shelter in Baghdad. We have every right to be sickened by the stories of wounded children in Baghdad's hospitals. But why were we so silent when Saddam Hussein used poison gas on Kurdish villagers. The world Press was full of pictures of dead women and children huddled

together, in desperate, last minute attempts to escape the gas, but in the Indian Press there were hardly any condemnatory editorials, nor even any first-hand news reports. We need to ask ourselves why. Our political leaders also ignored what was happening and there wasn't so much as half a demonstration of protest. Again we need to ask ourselves why. Even now, while the Gulf War has been on, the Soviet Union has been having its own little private sideshow in the Baltic republics. Our government has not made much noise about innocent, unarmed people being mowed down by Russian tanks, nor have any of our other political leaders. Is it preoccupation with the Gulf War or only our usual double standards?

So swept away have we been by our third-worldism that we have actually turned Saddam Hussein into a hero. We have conveniently forgotten that this is the same man who had built a reputation worldwide for being a ruthless dictator, a man who executed people for daring to

speak against him. Amnesty International have given us any number of reports which provide details of children who have been tortured and executed in Baghdad's jails and even of infants who have been deliberately starved in front of their parents to extract confessions. Yet, Saddam's pictures, these days, grace the homes of many an Indian Muslim.

Polls indicate that this passion for Saddam is not shared by most Hindus and in Ghaziabad this divide recently resulted in riots. It was a pro-Saddam procession that caused the trouble because Hindus saw it as an attempt to disrupt a more patriotic function celebrating Republic Day.

The Hindus said, afterwards, that it annoyed them that Muslims were always aligning themselves with foreign Muslim causes instead of thinking about what was going on here. The Muslims, for their part, pointed out that they were only following 'the path shown by our country's leaders'.

From Taveen Singh's column in the Indian Express, February 24, 1991

Intellectuals Response

A Muslim member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly declared at a public meeting that the war was not a religious issue and observed that one did not win a war with the blessings of Allah. One needed weapons. He was actually trying to pinpoint Saddam's difficult military position. This speech so infuriated local Muslims that his effigies were burnt at a number of places!

Allah or God was, in fact, invoked by Saddam, Saudi Arabia, and even Bush who invoked the Lord's blessings. Indeed God must have been placed in an embarrassing position.

While the Indian intellectual (largely of the leftist variety) either prevaricated or supported Saddam, the ordinary Indian's response was more intelligent and sensible.

According to him, Prime Minister Chandrashekar did two skillful things: he allowed the refuelling of US military planes and he submitted his resignation catching everyone by surprise.

The ordinary man is sorry for Saddam who was perceived as a friend of India. Did he not always support the Indian position on Kashmir? But he miscalculated and did not use the many opportunities he had to get out of Kuwait before it was too late. He could well have avoided so much death and destruction.

The average Indian laughs at Rajiv

Gandhi's trip to Moscow to make peace in the Gulf and of V.C. Shukla the then foreign minister doing the same at Teheran. Until now, says the common man, only outsiders laughed at our sense of self-importance. Now we too cannot help but laugh.

There is much anger that government's policies have resulted in our losing a great and profitable opportunity to participate in the rebuilding of Kuwait. So many Indians who fled Kuwait may not get the chance to return.

The ordinary man is now better informed. In a sense Doordarshan has already lost its monopoly. Thanks to dish antennas, satellite TV, cable TV networks and video news cassettes the ordinary folk living in the towns and cities of India no longer have to depend on Government radio and TV for news — mostly one-sided. As a result he, more than the politician, has appreciated what has happened in Eastern Europe and wonders why we are more loyal than Russia or China to the cause of 'progressivism'. Why, he asks, should India hold that Flag as though India is the last bastion of socialism.

In all this, the dissatisfaction of the younger generation is very obvious. Most young men have approved the manner in which Saddam was brought to heel. Some even wonder why the

West Bengal's Marxists are turning cheer-leaders for President Saddam Hussein. By rooting for the Iraqi supreme, who is now engaged in a far away war, the Marxists think they can divert popular attention from the political and economic issues confronting them in the State.

Mr. Saddam Hussein's current popularity in the leftist circles in the State has much to do with three factors. First, campaigns in favour of Iraq, an Islamic nation, in the leftist calculations, will help in exercising greater control on the minorities who are important for winning any election. They will be doubly so in the coming Lok Sabha election where communalism would most certainly play a vital role. Second, with the Gulf war claiming an over-riding priority over all Saddam-related campaigns, by highlighting the USA as an international villain, the shrewd Marxists knows that all anti-Marxist programmes would now lose their sting.

In fact, the Marxists' public airing of concern for Mr. Hussein being demonstrated in rallies, processions and demonstrations has forced the Congress (I) to put all its anti-left front campaigns in limbo. Congressmen know well that criticisms against Mr. Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal Chief Minister and the front would not cut much ice with the people who, in a display of Third World solidarity are all in favour of President Saddam Hussein.

Malabika Bhattacharya
Indian Express, Jan 22



For India, the situation is not fundamentally dissimilar to that which prevailed in the aftermath of the defeat of the Ottoman empire in 1918. The Sultan of Turkey, Mohammed Ali had then argued, is the vice-regent of God himself, an emperor and Pope in one, and combining in himself as the successor or Caliph of our Prophet... the two-fold function which is the logical sequence of the most rational abhorrence that Islam has for any lacerating separation between things temporal and things spiritual... Mahatma Gandhi, it may also be recalled, endorsed the Khilafat movement on the ground that the alliance would secure Mohammedan friendship for the Hindus and thereby internal peace also...

The disastrous consequences of this movement for Indian nationalism are well known. Far from cementing communal amity, the Khilafat movement provided legitimacy to the most regressive trends in Indian Islam. Despite the implicit belief among non-Muslim nationalists that the Khilafat issue would not materially affect Indian politics, since the country was in no real position to determine the terms of the treaty of Sevres, the movement established the religious underpinnings of Muslim mobilisation.

The same Muslim radicals who entered into an understanding with the Congress during the non-co-operation movement were later to champion separatism on the ground that secular nationalism no longer offered anything specific for Muslims. Equally significant, the Khilafat movement gave sanctity to latent pan-Islamic tendencies and legitimised the principle of extra-territoriality. In short, it subverted composite Indian nationalism.

Today, short-sighted politicians with an eye to the Muslim vote are repeating the Mahatma's Himalayan blunder. Iraq and Palestine are rapidly becoming symbols of the new Khilafat, and the Arabisation of Indian Islam. The consequences for the country are frightening.

From an article by Swapan Dasgupta
The Times of India, Jan 30.

Americans stopped short of Baghdad leaving the business incomplete.

Most Indians would like to see a restoration of India's national pride instead of being the laughing-stock that our politicians have reduced us to.

It is easy to be wise after the event. Very few expected the war to be what it turned out to be. Nor did many expect its rather anti-climatic end.

When the USA transported its troops from across thousands of miles and assembled its state-of-the-art weaponry snide comments bordering on ridicule were made by columnists. Remember, they said, Saddam's troops are battle hardened after their 8-year war with Iran. Look at the US soldiers on the other hand. They are kids who would never be able to withstand the rigours of desert warfare. This was the tone in most press reports.

Then came the bombing raids. The skies were curiously free of Iraqi jets and helicopters. CNN's coverage showed what push button warfare was all about.

The carpet bombing of Iraqi cities came in for much criticism, even condemnation. Despite the precision bombing of military targets in an effort to destroy the Iraqi war machine, bombs did stray off course and hit civilian areas. The bunker in Baghdad which was hit and resulted in large civilian casualties was the instance most highlighted of US inhumanity. The US claim (which has yet to be proved) that the bunker was in military use and that they were surprised that it was occupied by civilians met with derision. On the other hand the press had little to say of Saddam's deployment of Scud missiles aimed at random at Riyadh, Dahran, Tel Aviv etc which resulted in casualties and damage to buildings in residential areas.

It is not very intelligent or logical to say that US missiles were deliberately aimed at civilian targets. These are expensive systems that cost crores of rupees. It does not help the war effort which was to destroy Iraq's armed capability.

Viewers of Doordarshan were educated on the impregnable barriers set up by the Iraqis on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border to prevent enemy troops marching in. And even if the allies managed to negotiate the barrier there

The Iraqi leader's pictures have been selling like hot cakes at Rs. 6 each, even as many shops in central Bombay have put up pro-Saddam slogans. One Urdu journalist claims that people will not buy a newspaper which says Iraq is losing, even as one editor admits that his paper does not want to demoralise readers by highlighting Iraq's losses.

Indeed, editorial comments on Mr. Hussein have undergone a perceptible shift in Urdu newspapers over the past few months. When the invasion of Kuwait first took place, all Urdu newspapers unequivocally condemned the Iraqi leader. The moment the Americans deployed a vast military force in the Gulf, and Mr. Hussein raised the Palestine question, it was an entirely different ball game.

Rajdeep Sardesai

The Times of India, Jan 24

lay in wait the elite Republican Guard — the pride of Saddam's army. When the US Army and its allies started rolling into Kuwait we waited with bated breath for the "mother of all battles" to begin. It turned out to be a battle that never was.

In the wave of sympathy for the "underdog" that is sweeping across the Third World, including India, the criminality of Saddam Hussein's action in annexing Kuwait appears to have been totally forgotten. That, of course, is not altogether surprising given the amnesia the public periodically suffers from. What is alarming, however, is that among sections of the Saddamites there is hardly any recognition of the fact that the Iraqi dictator is now a party to the liquidation of his own people. His stubborn refusal to withdraw from Kuwait and his continued delusions of ultimately bloodying Uncle Sam's nose have combined to threaten Iraq's pulverisation. One of the world's oldest civilisations, Iraq is under threat of being almost obliterated from the face of the earth by the time the war ends. The Iraqi dictator has always prided himself of his native cunning and fabled wiles. Surely, he is not blind, at least not now, to the reality that Iraq simply cannot win the war?

To put the onus for peace on Iraq is not to suggest that the American war aims are draped in impeccable honour. The US, quite clearly, wishes to destroy Iraq, probably even divide it, and establish hegemony over the world's oil supplies. In a unipolar world, this could have dangerous implications. There is no doubt that in time the rest of the world will resist the US acquisition of hegemony. But Saddam must realise that by his dogged refusal to respond to voices of reason, he is making the American task that much easier, not more difficult.

Editorial in

The Sunday Observer, Feb 10.

Has Saddam Hussein's willingness to take on all comers courted demographic disaster? Perhaps Iraq can rebuild its economic base with petro-dollars after its eight-year war with Iran and its battle now with the most powerful armies of the world. But the loss of population that accompanied Iraq's defeat will add a bitter demographic pill to the hard medicine that his hapless country must now swallow.

Iraq, with a total of about 19 million people, simply does not have a large population to begin with. An estimated half million Iraqi troops were deployed in the Kuwait area alone. About half of Iraqi males age 18 to 45 had been inducted into Saddam's army, a huge proportion by any standard. Press reports that Saddam had been driven to induct 17-year-olds indicate both that Saddam was already feeling a population pinch — and that he was indifferent to it.

Although the loss in Iraqi life would surely have been much greater if, as Saddam expected, the coalition had waged a frontal attack — and if the Iraqis had not retreated — the war may still inflict a significant demographic shock. The number of Iraqi males in their twenties is estimated by the World Bank to be about 1.5 million, so that the number of killed and seriously wounded — thought now to be as high as 100,000 and potentially many more — is a proportion that looms large indeed. To the physically injured must be added an additional, perhaps very large, number of

"shell-shocked" veterans who will have great difficulty re-entering society.

In the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, both sides suffered. But Iran could better withstand 300,000 dead on its population base of over 50 million than Iraq could its estimated loss of 120,000. The combined casualties of two recent wars have taken a deep bite out of Iraq's demographic profile. Indeed, Iraqi war mortality in the 1980s was bad enough to lower average life expectancy for males substantially. From just 1980 to 1982, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates life expectancy for Iraqi males dropped 10 full years, from 60 to 50, and did not fully recover until 1989.

Before hostilities, Iraq had one of the highest population growth rates in the world, almost 4 percent, a rate fueled by one of the highest birth rates. Absent war mortality, demographers expected Iraq's population to reach more than 50 million by 2020. Presumably, Iraqi leaders see expansive population growth as a way to enhance the country's influence in the Gulf region.

The grievous toll from Iraq's two recent wars could have unforeseen regional political consequences...

...While one's view might be that a smaller population is actually better in the long run, that probably was not Saddam's intention for today's Iraq.

Carl Haub, Director of Information and Education, Population Reference Bureau.

Guardian Weekly March 10, 91

When the rout began Saddam Hussein suddenly proclaimed his decision to withdraw from Kuwait. That was the signal for a chorus in the Press demanding that the US must stop the war now that Saddam had agreed to leave Kuwait.

Wars are fought by Generals not politicians. Wars have their own momentum. An enemy on the run has to be defeated decisively and not allowed to re-group. Saddam's soldiers had not surrendered. They were on the run. They were chased, annihilated and their armour destroyed.

Then there was another outburst of criticism when the US Army entered Iraq in a flanking manoeuvre to seal off the retreat of the Republican Guards. By doing this, said these critics, the US had gone beyond the UN mandate which was limited to restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty.

Was this reasonable criticism? The issue was no longer confined to the restoration of Kuwait sovereignty. It was to ensure that Saddam would cease being a threat to his neighbours.

The impact of this high-tech war on the Soviet military has been profound.

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Precision targetting, the interception of the Soviet-supplied Scud missiles by American Patriot missiles and the manner in which American planes could fly at will evading Soviet's supplied radar and other electronic devices have convinced the Soviet military establishment that they are two generations behind the Americans.

This will result in pressure on Gorbachev for greater spending on armaments. If the Soviet President yields to this pressure it would introduce a new element in the international situation.

Regardless of its success or otherwise in the Gulf, America's gigantic war effort has claimed a casualty outside the battle zone: the idea of a strong, independent Europe. Washington's Western allies do not seem to be altogether comfortable with the war, despite the declining popular hostility to it as reflected in opinion polls.

The war is best seen as a powerful attempt by the U.S. to establish full hegemony over its allies, reverse its decline and regain its political-economic pre-eminence by military means. Only the naive will believe that the rise of Japan and Germany as economic powers is tantamount to the arrival of even half a superpower. Despite its decline, the U.S. remains the largest economy in the West in output and resource endowment and exceeds the whole of NATO Europe in size. Besides, the economic correlates of superpower status must not be confused with its basic character. "Imperial overstretch" can itself stretch for decades. The U.S. may not succeed in its search for unalloyed supremacy. But the search is a reality.

From an article by Pratul Bidwal in
The Times of India, Feb. 7

The other remarkable achievement of the United States was the superb logistics management involving the movement of five hundred thousand men and thousands of tons of equipment across thousands of miles and their effective deployment.

We also saw the management of an electronic war and the policy of controlled escalation — where force is used but always under control.

And finally the manner in which the USA conducted its overall policy in coordination with 38 nations pulling in different directions, by the use of a variety of techniques from outright arm-twisting to literally buying support, was in itself a great achievement.

Who made Saddam Hussein militarily so strong as to be able to feel that he could hold out against a superpower

and its allies? None other than the superpower and its allies!

Iraq's army was the fourth largest in the world. The Scud missiles were supplied by the Soviet Union — and improved upon by the French. All the land mines which were so liberally scattered across the desert and in Kuwait were bought from the United States. Germany built the plants that manufactured chemical and biological weapons. The bunkers were built with German and Japanese technology.

Is not the USA guilty of double-standards in its international relations? It was quick to go to war with Iraq to enforce UN resolutions but has not displayed the same concern when Israel has repeatedly defied UN resolutions to vacate the territories it has occupied in the West Bank.

On the other hand, without condoning Israel, is there not a qualitative difference — Israel fights for her right to survive as a nation whereas Saddam's Iraq had imperialist ambitions.

But US action against Iraq has now provided the UN with a precedent to put pressure on Israel to vacate the lands it has occupied.

Then there is the other example of double-standard: When Khomeini took US diplomats as hostage the US took Iran to the World Court charging Iran with violation of international law. But when Nicaragua complained of the mining of Managua harbour by the US Navy and the World Court ruled against the US it refused to accept the World Court's verdict.

While Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank is indefensible it should be remembered that when Israel was created in 1948, 53% of Palestine was given to the Jews and 47% to the Arabs. Israel accepted the UN Award but under Nasser's instigation the Arabs did not and attacked Israel as a result of which the Arabs lost their land.

Thus the Palestinian problem was complicated by the Arabs themselves.

It may also be recalled that for 19 years the territories now occupied by Israel were in the hands of the Palestinians. But they did not establish a State there.

Even today the Palestinians keep saying that the establishment of the Palestinian State is the beginning —

not the end. The end is to drive Israel into the sea.

In the Gulf War Yasser Arafat and his PLO chose Saddam Hussein who, for his own purposes, proclaimed himself as the champion of the Palestinian cause. Yet, for the last thirty years the PLO was liberally financed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Arab countries.

The flip flop West Asia policy of the United States helped Iraq acquire hi-tech from American firms that either did not know or did not care about the military implications of the technology they were selling to Baghdad.

After a 17-year stand-off that officially ended in 1984, the Reagan and Bush administrations regarded Saddam Hussein's regime as a bulwark against neighbouring Iran's Islamic fundamentalism till the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait on August 2. This policy of embracing Iraq did not change even after Mr. Hussein's bellicose postures since the beginning of this year.

America's current West Asian *bête noire*, consequently had unlimited access to dual-use technology that is civilian equipment with potential military applications, that it used to develop its ultra-modern Saad 16 aircraft complex and build its mustard gas capacity.

"It was U.S. policy to support commercial trade with Iraq," Dennis Kloske, the Bush team's Under-Secretary for Export Administration, told *The Wall Street Journal* in a recent interview.

The honeymoon, in fact, dated back to August 1982 when the CIA established a Washington-Baghdad link to provide Iraqis with better and faster intelligence from US satellites during the high noon of the Iran-Iraq war. The then CIA director, William Casey, met senior Iraqi officials to ensure the new channel was functioning and to encourage more attacks on Iran, especially on economic targets, according to the guru of investigative journalism, *The Washington Post's* Bob Woodward.

In his bestselling book, *VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987*, Woodward points to the CIA hand in the surprise mid-August 1982 bomb attack on the Iranian oil terminal at Sirri Island, which had been considered immune from Iraqi raids because of the distance.

Western media reports suggest that from the mid-1980s to the eve of Kuwait's occupation the U.S. Commerce Department approved more than 600 licences for \$1.5 billion worth of high-tech exports, most of which are now believed to have been diverted to Iraq's missile, chemical and nuclear weapons development program. The Defence Department approved a significant proportion of the sales.

Sourish Bhattacharyya
Indian Express, Jan 22

Washington — The Persian Gulf War has been an environmental catastrophe that has poisoned the air, land, and sea and could threaten the health of millions of people, according to scientists and environmental specialists. Hundreds of uncontrolled oil fires are spewing toxic smoke that has obscured the sun and plunged the area into semi-darkness.

Vast oil slicks that are killing gulf marine life, water pollution from raw sewage and the devastation of the fragile desert ecology by tanks, trucks and soldiers all could have serious long-term consequences.

In addition, unknown amounts of poisonous chemicals from bombed Iraqi factories and weapon stockpiles, and of carcinogenic uranium slivers from armor-piercing allied shells, may have been released into the atmosphere. Tens of thousands of unexploded Iraqi land mines could threaten humans and livestock for decades. Millions of tons of rubble from blasted buildings and many thousands of wrecked trucks, tanks and cars are expected to be dumped into the desert.

In the worst case, several experts said, the fires raging at more than 500 Kuwaiti oil wells will burn for years, blackening the sky with sulfurous gases and toxic particles and threatening crops and water supplies as far away as Pakistan...

"The Persian Gulf War may turn out to be the most environmentally destructive conflict in the history of warfare," Christopher Flavin, vice president for research at the Worldwatch Institute, said at a news conference. His colleague Michael Renner, a research scientist, called it "an unprecedented atmospheric disaster... an enormous unplanned experiment in the atmosphere."

Taken together, the several oil spills in the Persian Gulf are among the biggest ever and apparently have wiped out Saudi Arabian shrimp beds and inflicted heavy damage on sea birds, turtles and coral reefs.

All 950 of Kuwait's wells were set afire or otherwise sabotaged by the Iraqis.

What concerns the environmental analysts is that some of the fires could burn for months or even years because of the sheer number of them. They have an uninterrupted supply of fuel in the subterranean oil pushed to the surface by natural pressure, experts said. The fires also emit heat and toxic gases that make it dangerous to suppress the blazes, and are located many miles from sources of water needed to cool equipment.

Thomas W. Uppmann *Guardian Weekly*, March 10, 1991

Decline of National Sovereignty

In other words the Palestinians have allowed themselves to be used as pawns in the Middle East power games. The Arab States in the Middle East were not interested in the settle-

ment of the Palestinian Question. This is similar to the situation obtaining in Kashmir: Politicians on both sides of the border are interested in keeping the dispute alive. It is a pawn in their internal power struggles.

The concept of national sovereignty is getting out of date. The changes that are taking place are due in great measure to the advance in technology and communications.

This has happened before. In the Middle Ages the barons in France and England oppressed the people. At that time people outside the fiefdoms said it was an internal matter. In time the oppression became so intolerable that the king became the protector of the people. The king opposed the barons and the people backed the king. The barons were beaten leading to the birth of nation states.

We now have Saddam Hussein bombing his own people. And world leaders including America say it is an internal affair in which they will not interfere. It is for the people of Iraq to settle their internal differences. And so the world watches on helplessly while dictator stamps down ruthlessly on his own people with chemical weapons and napalm bombs.

Behind the fear of US intervention to prevent the genocide against Kurdish and Shiite rebels is the false fear of American hegemony in a 'unipolar world'. This is a false fear because even if a world government comes about there are countries like Japan, Germany and others who are economically and commercially strong and technologically advanced.

In fact in the last twenty years the world is moving towards multi-polar centres with several power centres — not necessarily in military terms. To now say that because the US emerged dominant in the Gulf War the world is retreating towards a unipolar world is to misread a factual situation.

National sovereignty is on the decline as transnational forces are growing in a variety of ways but perhaps it is a little premature to assert that the nation state has already become obsolete. We must support and reinforce those elements where transnational loyalties are seen as loyalties cutting across parochial, caste and language loyalties of the past in a historical sense. If loyalty to one's com-

When I appeared before the Sarkaria Commission the Chairman of the Commission Justice Sarkaria asked me: 'Do I understand you to say that the happiness of the Indian people is more important than unity and integrity?'. I said, 'Sir you are absolutely right. The unity and integrity of India are meaningless. They are only a means towards an end. The end is the happiness and well being of the people.'

Minoo Masani

munity is parochial in the national sense, loyalty to the nation is parochial in the international sense. We have to progress towards a world order in stages.

In this process of change the United Nations has a crucial role to play.

In the Gulf crisis the UN acted for the first time with near unanimity. Quite unlike the week-kneed reaction of its predecessor, the League of Nations. Its failure to prevent Hitler resulted in World War II. The US has been charged with hijacking the UN to claim legitimacy for its leadership of the war. But the fact remains that President Bush has shown that the UN can enforce the rule of law. To this extent the UN has taken a step forward and marks the beginning of world government.

The media and the so-called protagonists of non-alignment seem to lionise Mr. Hussein. Who is Mr. Hussein? He is not an elected leader of a democratic country. He is a dictator who has hardly cared for the sufferings of millions of people including our own compatriots who were trapped in Kuwait after August 2. With the Gulf war raging, more will suffer. This is the man who used nerve gas on a section of his own people. When Hitler was conquering Europe and killing Jews in gas chambers, there were many in those days in India who considered him a hero, only because of their hatred for Britain. Britain was then an occupying power, which the U.S. is not. The U.S. was called for help by the Saudis. And the U.S. is not waging its own war. It is a U.N. approach. The fight is for recovering the sovereignty of Kuwait and liberating its people from the tyranny of a backward regime.

It will be a great service to our country if the media and the politicians realise where our long term national interests lie. Those who support Saddam should realise that he is not going to help us with cheap oil or provide more jobs to our people if he wins.

Anjali Narayan, Bombay

The Soviet Union which had hitherto resisted any changes to the UN charter has itself now called for changes to give the UN more teeth.

Indian foreign policy has to reckon with these developments. We need to reorient our policy in terms of a willing acceptance of world government instead of chauvinistically talking about the dignity of the nation and the unity and integrity of India. What is important is the happiness of our people — the nation in geographic terms is only a means towards that end.

There was a large measure of agreement on the following at the March 16 seminar:

1. Reject the fashionable view that we are entering a unipolar world.

2. The United Nations must be strengthened and the Security Council reconstructed. The Gulf War has strengthened the UN as never before.
3. Review the policy of non-alignment and at any rate not allow non-alignment to degenerate into an anti-American forum.
4. Concentrate on SAARC and emulate the ECM countries with a similar arrangement encompassing Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand etc. to counter the US if it threatens to dominate.
5. Stop taking a one-sided view of the Palestine issue and establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

S.V. RAJU

Three of the participants at the seminar submitted written presentations of their point of view. Extracts from their papers follow.

Strengthen the United Nations

To criticise those who uncritically supported Saddam in the Gulf War is not to condone the United States and its role in the war. The claim of the US that the war was fought for the sole purpose of freeing Kuwait is difficult to digest. The US helped Saddam build his war machine so long as he was convenient in their feud against Iran. He later became a menace to the maintenance of the balance of power in the Middle East.

It is suggested in some quarters including *The Economist* (London) that Saddam walked over Kuwait with the knowledge and/or connivance of the US. It is also suggested in some other quarters that Saddam realised his folly after August 2 and sent several feelers to the United States for withdrawing from Kuwait if some concessions were given to Iraq such as sufficient access to the Gulf for exporting its oil.

Whether there is truth in these suggestions or not, one thing is certain that

the Gulf War was fought not for peace but for oil. Saddam invaded Kuwait in order to acquire command over more oil wells. This was a challenge to the other Arab countries in the OPEC like Saudi Arabia. The interests (oil supply) of the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy and other western countries as well as those of the developing countries was in grave jeopardy due to the rising power of Saddam. It is this interest and dependence on oil as the principal source of energy that persuaded almost all members of the Security Council including India to support the United States' moves in the Security Council. The four other permanent members of the Security Council — the USSR, U.K. France and China did not exercise their power of veto. The war against Iraq was therefore with the consent of all members of the Security Council, except Cuba and Yemen.

The United States has benefited immensely from the Gulf War. On the excuse of freeing Kuwait from Iraq, Saddam and his formidable war

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machine have been destroyed with the help of the armed forces of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. No part of the costs incurred for fighting the Gulf War and prior to it since August 2, 1990 will be borne by the US. According to *Time Magazine* of March 11, 1991 the total contributions made and promised by Germany, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Arab allies will exceed actual costs incurred.

The United States has earned the gratitude of Saudi Arabia and other oil producing Arab countries and has thus guaranteed supply of oil to its industries for years to come. Almost all the contracts for rebuilding Kuwait have been cornered by American companies.

The American war industry, which was in the doldrums due to the unilateral steps taken by Gorbachev in ending the cold war, has now revived. There will be a great demand from several countries including those in the third world for Patriot guided missiles and other sophisticated weaponry. The Soviet Union is not in a position to challenge the US any more. The only power that can emerge as rivals are the Europeans.

The international community should therefore become aware of this danger and act unitedly to curb it. It is a happy augury that the United Nations intervened for the first time when a country like Iraq committed aggression against Kuwait. The same logic should be applied to Israel's acts of aggression against Palestinian territories. It is a hopeful sign that President Bush has declared that Israel should pay heed to this demand. The hands of all those who demand that Israel should vacate its aggression are now strengthened. Hereafter if any war is to be waged against any country committing aggression, the war must be waged not by any individual member but under the auspices and control of the United Nations. The United Nations should emerge as the real arbiter of disputes between nations and function as an effective keeper of world peace.

M.A. Rane

Rethinking India's Foreign Policy

India has long prided itself as being the self appointed conscience keeper of international peace and morality. Such a role was neither supported by economic clout nor military muscle. India's pontifications for peace were generally ignored and at times, even treated with contempt. We overplayed the word 'peace' so much that the word has lost all meaning.

India never geared itself politically, militarily or economically to play the role demanded by its geo-political status. Nehru's foreign policy with non-alignment loaded in favour of the Soviet Union reduced India to the position of a voluntary satellite of the USSR. The Indo Soviet Treaty destroyed the pretence of non-alignment. Today, the non-aligned movement has lost its relevance following the collapse of Eastern Europe's communist regimes and the defreezing of the cold war.

India's emerging role as a regional Power in the post cold war era was becoming clearly acceptable to the Superpowers. Our military intervention in Sri Lanka, disastrous though it was, and the successful military operation to squash an attempted coup in the Maldives had the tacit approval of the United States and the world at large. The changing attitude of the US and the West on Kashmir were clear signals for India to respond.

Unfortunately Indian foreign policy 'pundits' saw the occupation of Kuwait through the blinkered views of NAM. This accounts for the manner in which the US and its allies in the Gulf all but ignored India. There was not even the normal diplomatic courtesy on the part of either the Allies or Iraq to send notes to the Indian Government updating India on their respective stands. Only the PLO responded to India's 'peace initiative'. What more evidence is needed to demonstrate India's pathetic position in international politics?

Rajiv Gandhi's antics in inviting himself to meet diplomats and undertaking an unsolicited tour for peace in the Gulf may have been an act of one-upmanship against Prime Minister Chandrashekhar but it only reflected the former Prime Minister's immaturity or his sense of self-importance. His peace initiative was at best only a com-

ic relief in the grim scenario of the Gulf War.

The Muslims in India were caught on the horns of dilemma. For them Saddam Hussein symbolised Islamic militancy and defiance. The fact that Saudi Arabia, custodian of Islam's most venerated holy sites, had sought the protection of non-Muslim US made Saddam a hero among the Muslim masses in India who, like the people of Pakistan, openly supported him. At a Muslim rally in Bangalore the US action was dubbed as an "international conspiracy to weaken the Muslims". The rally addressed by the Congress (I), Muslim League and Janata Dal leaders surprisingly did not evoke any reaction from the otherwise 'secular politicians'.

Another factor that swung Indian Government support for Saddam Hussein, was Israel. Supporting the liberation of Kuwait would in the reckoning of our policy-makers be tantamount to indirectly supporting Israel. That major Islamic Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Morocco had aligned themselves with the US was not considered significant. However it must be said to the credit of Prime Minister Chandrashekhar he refused to link the Palestinian issue to the Kuwaiti crisis. Even on the refuelling issue Chandrashekhar held out till the last. His restraint and statesmanship during the Gulf crisis was exemplary considering the political situation in which he was placed.

The fact however remains that a golden opportunity to wean the US away from Pakistan has been lost. Indian politicians failed to realise that the political turmoil that has gripped the Soviet Union has cast a shadow of uncertainty over its attitude towards India. That despite a friendship treaty with Iraq much like the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty, the Soviet Union chose to support (or at least not oppose) the USA ought to have been an eye opener to us.

Post-war developments require that India seriously rethink her foreign policy priorities. We have to liberate ourselves from the shackles of NAM. India's failure to adopt an independent stand based on national interests and self

respect has naturally failed to inspire confidence among the nations of South and South east Asia.

India should pay more attention to developing the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and take the initiative in transforming it into something akin to the European Economic Community. SAARC, in turn, should forge a close link with the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN).

India must establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. Egypt has already recognised Israel and there is the likelihood of Kuwait following suit. Israel's commendable restraint and the PLO's pro-Saddam role is already changing West Asian politics. If India fails to alter its West Asian policy in the light of the changing power equations there we will find ourselves on a limb.

Nitin G. Raut

Sir do you think that India can still play a significant role in ending this conflict?

Yes, I think India can. We had given four basic points which would be, I'd say, instrumental. Now, this is not a four-point programme, it's not a formula for a solution, it is an area into which you must look and find formulas from there, perhaps in more detail, perhaps in sequence in different ways.

Hostilities must cease, the multinational force must be replaced by a UN force. It doesn't mean that every individual has to be changed, but a command must be changed and it must be seen that it's the UN action and not some individual countries carrying out the operation. Iraq must be out of Kuwait and the Palestinian problem addressed.

Rajiv Gandhi

There has been some criticism from certain quarters about your government's reaction to the Gulf crisis. Your critics say that you have made India take a back seat in the geo-political arena. Would you please comment on this?

I don't know. It is always... one should try to take a back seat, but an effective seat. Some people think that international politics or diplomacy is just trying to occupy the front seat. When I was a student, my teacher told me to always take the back seat. If you deserve a front seat people will come and ask you one day to occupy it. We should not suffer from these types of complexes and certain types of illusions.

Chandrasekhar

Feb 10

NAM has a Role to Play

Articles and editorials, in certain sections of the Indian press during the Gulf war were written under exceptional circumstances. *The Times of India* editorial "Pax Americana" appeared on the first day of the war. But the way the US conducted itself during the war, consulting its allies and constraining its action at every stage, has changed the whole picture. When we criticise *The Times of India* editorial, we are doing it with the help of hindsight.

There are different scenarios on how international relations in the post cold war period will be conducted. Some say it is a unipolar world, some say it is a condominium of a group of powers which will manage international relations. One can honestly agree or disagree with these scenarios.

It is a sorry state of affairs to see NAM not take any initiative in safeguarding the world's oil resources. NAM is politically dead, but it has a role to play in rearranging international economic relations. The countries of NAM have been talking about a New International Economic Order for a long time now and an initiative from them in setting up an international agency or

commission with the support of like minded countries to provide security and equitable exploitation and distribution of oil in the Gulf would have been in order. The oil resource is a gift of God. God has not seen whether it is safely located at place X or not so securely at place Y. Therefore, a country which cannot adequately defend such an important resource located in its territory, should have an international arrangement to protect oil and also ensure its equitable exploitation and distribution.

If NAM leaders had taken the initiative in this regard, their hands would have been immensely strengthened in bringing about a rearrangement of international economic relations. But they have lost a good opportunity. The West is proposing a regional security arrangement to safeguard oil, as an alternative to an international arrangement under the UN or NAM. Such a regional security arrangement as proposed by the US is not likely to ensure the safety of oil resources. It is indeed a sad commentary that we and NAM are totally silent in this regard.

V.S. Sheth

There was a certain image of Saddam before the war. It was frankly, not a very high profile image. Those who followed the politics of the Arab world, knew of Saddam as a very good friend of India; the leader of the most secular state in the region. No doubt, there is the rough side as well. Iraq is a dictatorial state and terror is part of its politics. But then, not too many states in the region are run on democratic lines. All this is secondary to the post-war image of Saddam.

Today he has become a household name. Because he has shown the courage to confront the world's superpower on the battlefield. There is a great deal of sympathy in this country for anyone who stands up to imperialism; it's a sympathy born out of our freedom struggle. We, as a people, instinctively understand what such a struggle means. Our thinking has been fashioned by 40 years of a foreign policy enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru.

And here I would like to answer those who have turned this issue into a Hindu-Muslim one. What nonsense. Suddenly Saddam is a Muslim fundamentalist, while the Saudi fieldom is okay. We can so easily become victims of western propaganda. We will so easily accept the lies of VOA and BBC. At least some of us will.

M. I. Shikhar

The Sunday Observer Feb.3

What's the information and Broadcasting Ministry doing these days? Watching CNN, of course.

The ubiquitous Cable News Network has found its way into Shastri Bhavan. As of Wednesday, a dozen privileged offices in the Ministry have access to it.

These include those of the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, the Secretary, I&B, the Secretary, Culture, the External Affairs Ministry's spokesman, the additional secretary and Joint Secretaries in the I&B Ministry, and the odd Deputy Secretary as well.

The Prime Minister, who heads this Ministry, has already had a dish antenna installed at 7, Race Course Road, and has been receiving the network for the past few days.

There is some irony in this entire exercise since the government, led by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, is currently in the process of examining the legality of purchasing dish antennae for the purpose of receiving CNN.

Indian Express, Feb.7

Headless India

A country that could be Asia's greatest economic miracle is being crippled by its politicians

The only sense being talked in India's parliament this week was uttered by the head of the Communist Party: "The country is going to rack and ruin. No one is discussing the economic crisis... We spend all our time on how to make and unmake governments." The government unmade on Wednesday (March 6), that of Chandra Shekhar, was just four months old. Whoever succeeds him will become India's fourth prime minister in 18 months, likelier than not presiding, as Mr Shekhar did, over a precarious government whose only real concern is survival. This state of affairs is a product less of the electoral system than of politicians whose recent performance has been even more dismal than usual.

Mr Shekhar's fall was a farce. He controlled only a tenth of the seats in parliament, but he was backed by the largest group there, Mr Gandhi's Congress Party. Mr Gandhi missed no opportunity to snipe at his puppet, on issues ranging from a state government in the south (which he forced Mr Shekhar to sack) to the refuelling of American transport aircraft bound for the Gulf (which, Mr Gandhi bleated, was wrong). Even so, it was assumed that he did not want to risk an election by bringing Mr Shekhar down. Then it emerged that two policemen from the state of Haryana, which is run by a rogue ally of Mr Shekhar called Devi Lal, had been put on Mr Gandhi's tail. After they were nabbed outside his house ineffectually trying to spy on it, the Congress Party walked out of parliament in protest. Next day Mr Shekhar gave up.

The only difference between this and the general run of Indian politics over the past three years is that a higher degree of ludicrousness has now been attained. The last year of Mr. Gandhi's government consisted of little more than manoeuvring for electoral position. The 11-month coalition of V.P. Singh, Mr Shekhar's predecessor, was plagued throughout by the scheming of "allies" such as the leader of its Hindu nationalist component, the Bharatiya Janata Party, by Mr Devi Lal and by Mr Shekhar himself, all of whom

thought they would make a better prime minister than Mr Singh.

Nowhere in all this was a whiff of attention given to what policies the government might pursue. This is not just an insult to India's sturdy and admirable democracy. The country faces divisive questions of caste and religion that at times in the past year have seemed capable of tearing the union apart. On top of this, two economic problems, one urgent, the other colossal, are crying out for political leadership.

The urgent difficulty is that several years of budgetary indiscipline on the government's part have brought India's economy to the brink. Unless policies change, a budget deficit equal to nearly 8.5% of GDP is projected for the financial year that begins in April. Inflation, which has usually been in single figures, is running at more than 12%, a doubling in a year. Before an emergency transfusion from the IMF, foreign-exchange reserves had fallen in January to a mere fortnight's worth of imports. Persistent current-account deficits have built up a foreign debt of more than \$70 billion; servicing it takes a third of export earnings.

Paradise lost

In exchange for a commitment to reduce the projected budget deficit to around 6% of GDP, the IMF has been ready to grant \$2 billion stand-by credit; but the Shekhar government was so feeble that it had put off the budget debate from this week until May. It is a dangerous delay. Yet whoever is in office then will be forced by the imbalance of payments to take at least a step down the road to fiscal responsibility.

No one will be forced to take the more radical step of freeing India's trussed-up economy, though 850m Indians would be forever grateful if someone did. The socialist and protectionist dogma fastened on the country in the 1950s has kept it far poorer than it should be. India sparkles with entrepreneurial and commercial verve. It generates savings (20% of GDP in the 1980s) and invests them (gross capital formation was 22% of GDP last dec-

ade) at rates that outstrip the performance of almost all other poor countries and most rich ones. Yet a thick swaddling of red tape strangles the economy. Today India's share of world exports is a fifth of what it was 40 years ago, its share of poor-country exports less than a quarter of what it was then. China's economy, itself held back by communism, has nonetheless grown three times as fast as India's during the past quarter-century.

An opportunity is here that the leaders of other countries can only dream of. The thoughts of India's leaders dwell instead on which colleagues' backs can be most conveniently stabbed at the smallest risk of exposing their own. Until that changes, India cannot prosper.

COURTESY: *The Economist*,
March 9, 1991

The Economist containing the editorial reproduced above was detained by the Customs authorities because Devi Lal is called a 'rogue-ally'. We would welcome comments from our readers on the validity of the criticism levelled against India's politicians.

"All censorship" wrote George Bernard Shaw "is bad". How right he was! Indian censorship is particularly bad.

During the "Emergency" declared in 1975, copies of my son's biography of Mrs. Indira Gandhi were blocked in Bombay Harbour until the Finance Minister of the Janata Government removed the ban two years later. Stupid, because it was a friendly biography!

Now we have committed another gaffe. The Bombay Customs blocked the entry into India of copies of the prestigious London *Economist* dated March 9-15, later released, because forsooth, the editorial in that journal referred to Mr. Devi Lal "as the rogue-ally" of Mr. Chandrashekhar. Most people in India would agree that the description is an accurate one and certainly not one to be banned.

In fact the editorial's so good that I would like it to be made compulsory reading for Members of the Lok Sabha, if it has not been mercifully dissolved by now.

Minoo Masani

Every thinking person must agree that the need is great for a keener and more widespread sense of duty than prevails now among educated men. A sense of true values as distinguished from material and selfish values is the basic requirement for an improvement of the national situation.

Rajaji



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The Mahabharata as a Study of the Problem of Evil

A.N. Moorthy Rao

By and large it must be admitted that the atmosphere in the Mahabharata is dense with evil. Evil is widespread; it is found in the most unlikely places; it bends even virtue to its will, and it generates evil in others

V.S. Sukthankar, one of the leading authorities on the Mahabharata, considers the Mahabharata under three heads: the story on (1) the mundane plane; (2) the ethical plane and (3) the metaphysical plane. I shall leave the metaphysical severely alone and concern myself with the mundane. In the Mahabharata the mundane, while not ceasing to be mundane, throws out tentacles to grip the ethical. To me, this work is a document about human nature, showing good and evil struggling for mastery within it. In this Epic there is a runaway excess of disquisitions on *Dharma*. So, concentrating attention on the mundane has this advantage: We can take in just as much of the ethical as is relevant.

There is almost no one in the Mahabharata — Vidura is the one prominent exception — who does not, on some occasion or other, lapse into evil. The Kaurava quartet — Duryodhana, Dussasana, Sakuni and Karna — are all steeped in evil. I propose now to consider how the main characters in the Epic deal with evil. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say "how evil deals with them". In our Epic, evil seems to have the initiative; good is surprisingly, though not totally, passive.

The Kuru Race

There is a history of evil in the Kuru race. In the early stages, it was a history of excessive sexual passion and naked unashamed selfishness. We need not dwell on the former. The Mahabharata age was not over-prudish in matters of sex. It took, for example, the Parasara-Matsyagandhi episode in its stride and highlighted not Parasara's lapse but the genius of Vyasa who was the product of that irregular union. In the atmosphere of the Mahabharata Parasara does not figure as a man who has fallen from grace.

But the love of women is one thing and the pursuit of that love at the expense of the legitimate happiness of others is another and a quite different thing. In Yayati's case the "others" happen to be his own offspring. At an age when he should derive happiness from seeing young people happy, Yayati has no qualms about asking his sons to give him their youth! And when they refuse, he can find it in his heart to curse them!

Santanu has inherited this weakness. For fear of losing his love-life with Ganga, he witnesses without protest the deliberate drowning of seven of his children by their own mother. In his later life he is an improvement on Yayati. He did not demand any sacrifice from his son. But he accepted it when it was volunteered. What Devavrata (Bhishma) renounced was not only the throne. He renounced his love-life so that his old father might have it. The father accepted the sacrifice! This

weakness seems to have worked itself out in Vichitravirya who died an early death because of it.

Bhishma's Sacrifice

Except Krishna whose divinity gives him a place apart, Bhishma is far and away the greatest character in the Mahabharata. He had killed in himself the desire for worldly greatness, power and prestige; and what is infinitely more difficult to kill — the desire for the happiness and mellowing influence of love, the love of women and of children. The sacrifice does not make him bitter. Even after the renunciation, his interest in the affairs of the kingdom does not wane.

And yet it is this man, flawless in character, strong in will, wise, full of concern for others who (unwittingly) brought about the destruction of the Kuru race. It is not from anything evil in him that destruction flows. It is the good and gracious in him, the strength



of the good in him, that is responsible for the disaster that overtook the Kuru race. It is as though the Spirit of Evil sat unconcerned, fingers crossed and a cynical smile on his face, telling himself: "For the destruction of this race I need not exert myself, the forces of good will do the job for me". It is not that the Spirit of Evil took possession of 'the good' and used it for its own purposes. The good was just allowed to do the job of evil.

A little reflection will make this clear. But for his sacrifice, Bhishma himself would have been the king of Hastinapura. He was alive even after the crowning of Yudhishtira; and he was in full possession of his mental faculties. The war would not have taken place if he had not renounced kingship, and he would not have been lying helpless on his bed of arrows. If, instead of the weak, and at times even perfidious Dhritarashtra, Bhishma had ruled the kingdom, the Mahabharata saga would have been one long paean of joy. What Bhishma sacrificed at the altar of Santanu's love-life was really the very existence of the Kauravas.

The Problem of Dharma

The effect of Bhishma's sacrifice on his own self is worth noting. Once Dhritarashtra was crowned king, Bhishma stood aloof. He gave advice, but never actively interfered in the affairs of the kingdom. That is as it should be. But why did he do nothing to stop Dussasana when he (Dussasana) was trying to pull off Draupadi's saree? Let us recall that terrible scene: Draupadi has been dragged by her hair into the midst of an assembly of princes. Insults have been heaped upon her, and but for a miracle she would have had to stand naked in full view of an all-male assembly. In answer to her heart-rending appeal all that Bhishma has to say is a few words about the intricacy of the problem of *Dharma* — a problem which he left to Yudhishtira to solve. Granted that Draupadi was a slave. What niceties of *Dharma* can put the stamp of approval on the attempt to disrobe her in public? Instead of indulging in talk about *Dharma*, Bhishma should have leaped up and felled Dussasana to the ground!

Again, consistently with what he believed to be just, Bhishma should have gone over to the Pandavas. If he did not like defection he could at least

have remained neutral. But he actually accepts the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurava forces! Well, right or wrong, after doing that he should have been faithful to the Kauravas. It is treachery to the Kauravas (whose champion he has agreed to be) to instruct the Pandavas as to the best way of eliminating him.

Clearly Bhishma is a man whom we are meant to respect; and yet his lapses are stressed — deliberately, it would seem — again and again. Was it Vyasa's intention to show how unpredictable the workings of the human mind are? Or is he in effect telling us that when a man, however great, lives a life without any responsibility, there will be a dulling of his moral perception.

Drona and Aswatthama need not take much of our time. There is a vein of pettiness in the former, and of heartless cruelty in the latter which makes it difficult for them to live up to the greatness thrust upon them.

The 'Gang of Four'

The most devoted of the henchmen of Evil are the 'Gang of Four' (Duryodhana, Sakuni, Dussasana and Karna) of which Duryodhana is the head. Sakuni is the evil genius behind all Duryodhana's plans. Dussasana has no personality worth speaking of; he is ever ready to execute Sakuni's plans however heinous they may be. In Karna's favour it must be remembered that he is acutely conscious of the fact that he is despised as a man of inferior birth, and that he is grateful to Duryodhana for giving him a status in life. His inferiority complex gives an edge to his arrogance, envy, and where the Pandavas are concerned — even heartlessness. But we get the impression that the evil was there to be given an edge to! It is part and parcel of his nature.

Duryodhana is almost the personification of evil. Even his friendship for Karna — which is genuine — is not unmixed with a pragmatic awareness that, in the event of war, Karna is the only man who can stand up to Arjuna. Duryodhana was born vicious; we are told there were portents of evil at the time of his birth. The extermination of the Pandavas is the one aim of his life, and he would do anything to attain that end. Poison, drowning, burning them alive, letting serpents loose upon them — nothing is too mean or too treacherous for him. Even when the hand of

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death is already upon him there is no trace of repentance in him.

In Dhritarashtra there is a constant struggle between what he knows to be right and parental affection. It is the latter that wins. He is a consenting party to most of his son's evil deeds.

The Pandavas

In comparison with the depths to which the Kauravas sink, the evil in the Pandavas pales into insignificance. But it is there. They do swerve from the path of righteousness on a few occasions. Arjuna killed Karna when the latter was trying to raise his chariot from the mire; Bhima hit Duryodhana in the thigh; Yudhishtira uttered what was in effect, a lie. But in comparison with the perfidy of the Kauravas the lapses of the Pandavas are little more than cheating at cards!

By and large, it must be admitted that the atmosphere in the Mahabharata is dense with evil. Evil is widespread; it is found in the most unlikely places; it bends even virtue to its will, and it generates evil in others.

The Good is Passive

As opposed to this there is some good. Vidura, Yudhishtira and Krishna are its chief repositories. Special mention must be made of Gandhari. When Duryodhana, just before going to the battlefield, touches her feet, and asks for her blessings, instead of wishing him victory, she says, 'Victory goes with *Dharma*'. It takes exceptional nobility of character to say that to her son — in effect she has refused to give him her blessing!

But on the whole goodness is ineffective in the Mahabharata. Vidura is not a man of action; Bhishma and Yudhishtira actually play into the hands of evil. Bhima's impulse to oppose evil is restrained by Yudhishtira. Good is passive. It has the courage and strength to endure, but it is not dynamic. Its very goodness forbids dynamism. Krishna did his best to stem the tide of evil, and he failed. Evil ran its course, and in the process destroyed its own votaries along with those in the opposite camp.

What are we to make of the struggle between these two forces? Does the Mahabharata hold out any hope for mankind? It seems to do so — at first sight. The words of hope occur in the *Bhagawad Gita*. The spokesman is no less a person than the great stage-

manager of the universe, the '*Kapata-nataka suthradhari*' *Gita*charya Krishna.

Before quoting the words of hope I would like to mention one strange thing about the *Gita*. It does not give a direct, unequivocal answer to the doubts that trouble Arjuna. Arjuna cannot bring himself to kill, for selfish ends, his preceptors and his own flesh and blood. The direct answer to Arjuna's doubts would be this: "Whether you like it or not, war has already been declared. This is not merely a war between you and your cousins. It is a war between good and evil. It is your duty to fight against evil."

But what Krishna says is something very different: As a Kshatriya it is your duty to fight. (He does not say specifically that the duty is to fight against evil). What you are killing is not the person but his body which is only, the habitation of the soul. The soul cannot be killed; it knows neither birth nor death. So, fight! If you die you go to '*Virswarga*', and if you win, you gain a kingdom.

Would not this argument exonerate Hitler and Stalin? Granted that the soul is immortal and quits one body to get into another. It chooses its own time for doing so; or destiny fixes the time. Have we the right to force that soul to quit at a time of our choosing? That is the crux of the problem.

The real answer may be inferred from two of Krishna's statements in different parts of the *Gita*:

- "I am born in age after age to protect the righteous and to destroy the wicked".
- "Be thou the instrument of the Lord".

The destruction of evil and the establishment of *Dharma* — that is the *raison d'être* of Krishna's *avatar*. He promises to do the job and he wants Arjuna to be his instrument. The responsibility is taken off the shoulders of Arjuna.

Let us now see if Krishna kept his promise.

*Even after reading what Sukthankar has to say about the *Bhagwad Gita*, I cannot help thinking that it is an interpolation.

Who Wins in the Mahabharata?

One of the titles to the Mahabharata is '*Jaya*' — Victory. Whatever the explanation given for this title, the common man may be forgiven for suspecting irony in it. Of the galaxy of warriors on both sides, but seven were left alive on the Pandava side; and of the Kaurava warriors but three survived the war. Who won the victory!

Did Krishna, who promised to protect the righteous, make sure that no good man was killed in the war? Without pausing for an answer let me ask another question: Was Evil destroyed? The evil-doers who bore arms at Kurukshetra were destroyed, we know. But was Evil destroyed? We can picture to ourselves the fiendish grin on the face of the Spirit of Evil at the time Dhritarashtra was planning to crush Bhima to death while pretending to embrace him — Evil was very much alive!

It is alive in Bhima too. Consider: Dhritarashtra has paid for his sins. He and Gandhari — once King and Queen — are shorn of their glory and are now dependent on those whom their son had wronged, those whose hands had dealt death to their sons. They have nothing to look forward to except futile self-reproach. They deserve only pity now. But Bhima — in their hearing — slaps his arms and boasts: "With these arms I killed the sons of this blind fool!" That is Evil speaking.

Kurukshetra and Hastinapura are not all the world. Let us travel a few hundred miles and see what is happening in Krishna's own Dwaraka. The Vrishnis have earned a curse and are fighting among themselves. No great cause is involved — it is just drink and the devil! The clan destroyed itself. Krishna himself went berserk and participated in the slaughter. He was later shot by a hunter called Jara, and died where there was none to shed a tear for him!

Hope amidst Despair

May we take it that in the destruction of the Vrishni clan we have witnessed the end of evil? No. We find that Arjuna, who was escorting the Vrishni women and children to safety was attacked by robber hordes. The great archer found it difficult to lift his Gandiva (bow), and his arrows lacked speed and power. The robbers had their way. That is the plight in which we see Arjuna — Arjuna

who was to be the instrument of the Lord in destroying Evil!

Dharmasamsthapana — installing Dharma on the throne — was part of the task which Krishna undertook. If it was installed anywhere it certainly did not survive the *Dwapara* era. If the Supreme Spirit gets incarnated again in our era, it will not have to face unemployment. Its old job is still there, waiting!

Towards the end of the Epic there are two scenes which I often recall to my mind:

As Arjuna and the remnants of the Yadava clan receded from Dwaraka the waters of the sea flowed in. Where there was the song and dance and laughter (and, alas, the strife) of life there was now only the incessant roar of the waves. It is symbolic of the end of an era. The President of the Immortals — as Aeschylus of the Greeks and Thomas Hardy of England called him — had tried a great experiment with humanity. The experiment had failed and he wrote it off!

The second scene, almost the last in the Epic: Yudhishtira goes to heaven and sees Duryodhana resplendent on a

royal throne. Even Yudhishtira who is forgiveness incarnate is roused to anger and protest! I wouldn't like to see anybody, not even Duryodhana roasting in Hell. But was it necessary to reward him! I am sure Vyasa intended the irony, when, reacting to Yudhishtira's protest, Narada says "there is no such thing as hatred in heaven". Yudhishtira does not care to discuss the matter. He changes the subject.

And now we close the book and lay it down. What are we left with? It is said that the *rasa* of the Mahabharata is *Santha* — peace. I am against thrusting the final impression of a work of art into a category by main force. But if we do accept the nine *rasas*, can we assign the *Santha* rasa to the Mahabharata?

We need peace — *Santi* — all right. But is that what we get? What we are left with is, I think, a deep inwardness, a mood of profound reflection regarding the mystery of life. The Mahabharata is an answer to the *Gayatri* prayer: Our minds are quickened to grasp the mystery of life. Vyasa does not seek refuge in any cheap optimism. But with Yudhishtira, Vidura, Bhishma, and wise

Krishna in our company, our reflection need not end in despair either. We have to be patient, and wait — a million years perhaps! By then *nara* (man) may become *Narayana* (god).

PROF. A.N. MOORTHY RAO, known as the teacher's teacher is well-known wherever people from Karnataka live. He retired from the University of Mysore (1955) after several decades of distinguished service and awakening hundreds of graduates to the sensibilities and nuances of English literature and civilization. Later, he took up the Directorship of the Literature and Culture Department of the State of Mysore.

Mr. Moorthy Rao's translations into Kannada of the 'Dialogues of Plato' relating to the later Socrates and of Moliere's Plays have remained favourites for nearly half a century. Two important books of essays in Kannada, *Hagalu Kanasugalu* and *Alayuva Mana* are popular not only with the general reader but with students too. His travelogue on America, and his serious essays on literature and allied matters cover a vast canvas.

The Sahitya Academy and the Mysore University have honoured him.

Recently he published his autobiography, which recalls the social, cultural and literary developments as they took place in Mysore.



Never say no to life
Raymond's

Encounter's End

I have made no bones about saying that in my opinion the finest magazine in the world is *The Economist*, London. Close on its heels however came *Encounter* which I am sad to see has now closed down publication.

Encounter was for many years in the fifties and sixties the British organ of the Congress For Cultural Freedom in the company of *Der Monat* in Germany, *Preuves* in France, *Quadrant* in Australia and last but not least *Quest* and *Freedom First* in India. When the Congress was scuttled and put to sleep in the early seventies by certain anti-Communists who managed to hijack its apparatus in Paris, only *Encounter*, *Quadrant* and *Freedom First* survived. Now, like the Nine Little Nigger Boys only two survive.

Encounter was edited for some years by Melvyn Laski, former editor of *Der Monat*, along with the poet Stephen Spender. Spender was in due course replaced by Irving Kristol who now edits *Public Interest* in the U.S.A. Melvyn Laski however carried on *Encounter's* championship of freedom by somehow finding donors or 'Angels' to cover the annual deficit. Evidently now the tribe of 'Angels' has dried up.

Melvyn Laski has a brilliant mind and a great sense of humour.

I remember an interesting event in the beginning of 1960 when the Executive Committee of the Congress met in Paris. The Committee had to decide where the next Conference of the Congress to celebrate the completion of 10 years of its fight for liberty and against totalitarian communism should meet in June. The Anglo-Americans and the French suggested Copenhagen. When I asked what was wrong with Berlin where the Congress was founded by the world's intellectuals during the Soviet blockade in 1950, I was shocked to be told that Berlin would not be safe as by summer the Soviets would be in possession of West Berlin! I was so incensed at

what I thought showed a lack of guts that I moved formally that the Congress should meet in Berlin that summer as I had no doubt that Khrushchev's bluff would be called and Berlin would survive as a bastion of freedom.

The only voice to support my view was that of Melvyn Laski. Faced with this challenge the office bearers climbed down and agreed to put off a decision for three months.

On my return to India I met Willy Brandt, the Lord Mayor of Berlin, who was on a visit to Delhi. I told him how some of his Western friends were prepared to sell him out! Willy was both angry and amused. He said on his return to Berlin he would call there the office bearers of the Congress in Paris. He had no doubt that they would climb down and accept his invitation. This is what happened and we had a very successful conference in Berlin attended by my friend Jayaprakash Narayan and myself.

At an official dinner given by the Lord Mayor to the delegates, Willy winked at me and said "I should tell you a secret. This conference was planned neither in Paris nor Berlin but in Delhi."

The Noisiest People in the World

Guess who is referred to in an article which appeared in a local journal entitled "the noisiest people in the world". That is not a very difficult thing to guess because of course the article referred to the people of India. Our love of noise takes many shades and forms. The most notorious is of course the Diwali crackers which drives dogs to cower with fear under beds. But why only Diwali? Throughout the year there is our friend — the old loudspeaker which makes it possible for you to insist that your neighbours should also enjoy the same music as you do.

Then there is of course, the noise pollution in our streets. Silence Zone my foot! There is a motorist fundamental right to sound the horn any-

where at any time, even on an empty road with not a car in sight.

In some offices, though not all, the members of the staff converse with one another at a pitch appropriate to a fish market.

Have you seen Indian children play without shouting? Very rare. It is not their fault. They hear their parents shouting at each other because the poor dears do not know how to talk quietly.

In a long third-class railway compartment in which I used to travel when I was younger I heard two passengers at the other end of the coach discuss intimate details about the income of their families for the edification of all the passengers in the compartment. What is the reason for this weakness of ours? It has been said that the emptiest utensils makes the biggest noise. I hope the cause of our noisiness is not similar.

Helping themselves to Pensions

The President, Mr. R. Venkataraman has, by withholding his approval of the amendments in regard to MP's pensions adopted by the Lok Sabha at its final sitting before dissolution, only done his duty.

This was a disgraceful exhibition of how Members of Parliament are capable of rooking the Indian taxpayer for their personal financial benefits. So far pensions for MP's have been only available for those who served as members of Parliament for a minimum period of five years. As soon as our legislators found however, that the present Lok Sabha was about to be dissolved they changed the rules of the game and tried to make themselves entitled to pensions after a mere one year service.

The record of Members of the Indian Parliament in this connection is not a very savoury one. Some time in the 1960's when my friend Mr. N. Dandekar and I were Members of Parliament, a bill was brought before the House to increase the emoluments of Ministers and MP's. Dande-

ker and I amused ourselves by moving a further amendment which would have increased the emoluments many times over, on condition that neither Ministers nor MP's would enjoy any tax-free benefits or subsidies such as housing, air travel etc. Our amendment was not welcomed by the beneficiaries who soon realized that while they were drawing a small salary, they were in fact costing the country a hell of a lot.

Hung Parliament? So What ?

Minoo Masani

The President's action in dissolving the Lok Sabha, delayed though it was, has given the Indian people an opportunity to have a say in the running of this country.

There are two objections to the holding of elections raised by some people and I would like to deal with them. The first is the childish objection that elections are costly. Surely there are better ways of saving expenditure. Why not abolish elections altogether? If elections are expensive in India, it is because parties and candidates spend large amounts of money with the hope of reimbursing themselves by selling licenses and permits during the life of Parliament. In England and other countries, elections do not cost very much. So the remedy is to abolish the "licence permit quota raj" and not to abolish Democracy.

The second objection is a more serious one that the election in May 1991 is likely to lead to another hung Parliament. Of course it will. So what? In this country there is an ignorant assumption that elections should yield a majority government. Nonsense. The only countries where this happens is England and the United States because of the two party system. In almost all other democratic countries nobody gets a majority. Yet Democracy functions because all these countries have coalition governments which are efficient and stable. We have to learn to adjust ourselves to hung Parliaments for the next few decades.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi claims that his government would provide stability. It depends — stability in what? Just as peace can be the peace of the graveyard as Gandhiji described it, so too stability can be the stability of the graveyard. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's past administration shows it can lead to the utter bankruptcy of the country. We do not want that kind of stability.

Disgraceful

In your comments on the dissolution of the Ninth Lok Sabha in *The Indian Worker* of March 18 you had very rightly damned the passing of the Bill seeking to line the pockets of our parliamentarians, at the fag end of the session, as most disgraceful.

In this regard it will be of interest to recall Shri M.R. Masani's amendment to a Bill seeking to increase the pay and perks of members in August, 1969. The amendment said: "In all walks of life the remuneration of people is always fixed by some one else... The remuneration of government employees, labour, and the highest officials is fixed by some adjudicating body or tribunal... Even the emoluments of the President of the Republic and the judges of the Supreme Court are not fixed by themselves. Now, Sir, is there any reason why we should treat ourselves apart from all others whom we are elected to serve." The amendment was for circulating the proposal for the purpose of eliciting public opinion.

It needs to be noted that the latest Bill did not stop at pensions. The number of free air journeys at the expense of the tax payer was sought to be raised from 16 to 24, which works out to two free jaunts a month.

None of the members even bothered to raise an effective voice against the Government's dilatory handling of the issue of dearness allowance of the employees of central public sector undertakings despite the continuing rise in their cost of living due to unabated price spiral and consequent erosion in real wages. Neither did they show any concern over the pay revision of the officers of the central public sector enterprises. As you had rightly said the parliamentarians had used their right to determine their own remuneration with a vengeance.

The manner in which the item was hustled through and the indecent haste with which it was passed is doubly disgraceful. There is undoubtedly a total deterioration of standards at the highest level. It is time to arouse the people at large to condemn this blatant abuse of power and authority conferred on their elected representatives who are not accountable to any one. Public opinion should be built up against the Bill becoming a law.

Priya Gore

COURTESY: *The Indian Worker*

Our politics will have to move from corrupt wheeling and dealing to adjustments of programmes between two or more parties. This requires that the leaders of different parties should be on speaking and not barking terms. This again involves the process of "dining with the opposition". This is not known in this country. Ministers whom you may criticise instead of inviting you to dinner glare at you when they see you in the lobby.

In the British House of Commons, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had many furious arguments with the Labour leader Mr. Aneurin Bevan. A little while later Churchill and Bevan were seen at the bar of the House, slapping each other on the back and calling each other 'old boy' over a drink. That is the spirit of democracy which India lacks. I found more of this spirit in the British members of the Viceroy's Council during the years 1945-1947 when I was a Congress MP than I have done in the 25 years of independence during which I was a Member of Parliament.

There is of course, one catastrophe that may result from the parliamentary general elections in May and that is Mr. Rajiv Gandhi getting a majority. While trying to avoid an election at almost all costs, he has made a forecast that he will win 300 seats. I don't think he will. But so be it. "Every country gets a government it deserves" and if the Indian electorate is so unwise as to re-elect the worst Prime Minister we have had since independence, it will have to suffer the consequences and learn the lesson the hard way. My own belief is however, that they have learnt the lesson already. I am told by one of his associates that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was shocked when he learnt of his defeat in the 1989 elections. I am afraid he is in for another shock at the end of May 1991.

After the Fall

Mihir Sinha

With apology to my boyhood hero, the author of the heroic vision of *Our India*, Minoo Masani, my reason and my gut feeling still tell me that V.P. Singh (VP) is a rare heroic figure in the field of Indian politics cluttered with too many knaves and fools.

As a whole time and professional watcher of the political scene for a decade, my only front page editorial was on VP's first budget — as Rajiv's minister of finance (1985). Even the venerable teachers of my teachers were flummoxed. In Calcutta papers at least, these acknowledged 'experts' could not decipher the budget. The reactions from various politically inclined quarters were just stereotypes: 'Anti People', 'Pro People', etc.

However, my not belonging to any such camp, a little application of common sense, and some rudimentary economics unravelled the meaning of that usually sterile annual exercise transformed in the hand of a master strategist. VP was simply starting what Gorbachov came to do later: Perestroika or burying the terrible mistake of Stalinist economics or whatever. We had not gone the whole hog, as the Russians had. But, in our pussyfooting manner, we had been going the same self-destructive way since the days of Nehru and Mahalanobis.

Like Gorbachov, VP too had not called a spade a spade. After all, how many ambitious politicians are so luckily positioned as to be able to afford to do that? However, the headline of my editorial was unambiguous: *Sarnaj-tantrabad Mritapraya: Socialism or the doctrine of socialistic pattern in its death-throes*. Only very gradually, the other and senior commentators took the cue.

Later on, VP went on the warpath against our abortions of Capitalists, who are, in the unforgettable words of Ayn Rand in her heroic romance *Atlas Shrugged*, mere 'looters' and 'moochers' manipulating the perverted 'aristocracy of pull' and are not at all 'makers of money'. My appreciative editorial was headlined: *Buddhiman:*

VP: VP the Intelligent One. At that time it was not fashionable to single out VP; Rajiv was the only sun, there were no stars.

The Riddle of VP

Those were my first lessons in reading the riddle of VP. Since then, I have not had to revise my opinion about his political dexterity, vision, and personal incorruptibility. Though I shall not hesitate to criticise him if future developments call for that, I shall be very cautious. For instance, I was mystified at his apparent aversion to be elected the leader of his party in December 1989. But now I wonder. Devi Lal, Chandrasekhar and company did shy away from such a democratic contest when the crunch came late in 1990, preferring to split the party and betraying the people's mandate. The same patriots like Subramaniam Swamy, and reportedly the same money bags were scurrying around in 1989 as in 1990.

Also, I was hurt. I impulsively sent to VP some nonconformist literature advocating low profile planning, logically exposing the fraud of central planning in our country, and outlining a plausible method of planning from district level upward. He had me squarely snubbed by a terse letter from — of all officials — his Petitions Officer! But that was a private hurt.



VP. Singh largely remains an enigma because he is so very different from the political types we have been used to see during the four arid decades under the Nehru dynasty.

People in my circle have been hurt by his failure to stay in power; they had expected so much from him, and the air was so free in Delhi from the reek of graft in high places. I cannot say that people here are not at all caste conscious, or are not communally prejudiced in varying degrees. Yet the Mandal storm could perhaps totally bypass us, if the dissatisfaction with the long Left Front rule were a little less intense, or even if the Left Front cadres were a little less vociferous in (first welcoming Nelson Mandela and then) championing the Mandal cause! Ayodhya was by and large a non-issue in Calcutta.

Paradoxically, the anti-Mandal or pro-BJP sentiments have here been more strident among those very communities who have made the most of the dark opportunities in Bengal's politics of scarcities. Perhaps also paradoxically, these the worst victims of Partition, the Bengalees in general, do appreciate that under the Left Front rule, the politics of communal violence, dating way back from before the holocaust till the end of Congress rule at the state level, has been effectively checked.

Our Young Intellectuals

VP's personal popularity is still high. Though, the ordinary folk have looked in vain to our political analysts for intelligent and intelligible decoding of this remarkably different kind of politician. He largely remains an enigma because he is so very different from the political types we have been used to see during the four arid decades under the Nehru dynasty. A simple analogy would be the general lack of comprehension among the intelligentsia of Calcutta if somebody says that our public sector is the antithesis of social justice.

I may refer to a funny experience. I wrote an article asking our young intellectuals to read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, saying that it was an exhilarating mixture of science fiction, a fantasy built around heroic figures, and an acute commentary on the economic and socio-political scene, many of Miss

Rand's worst nightmares having come true, say, in East Europe or in India, including the violent breakdown of the System. I had apprehended criticism from my life-long friends, the rabid Marxists. But, in language as hysterical as that of Bertram Scudder, the 'journalist' in *Atlas Shrugged*, a personal attack came from one of the senior-most Indian officials employed by the US Government, their high profile cultural commissar in this part of the country. He virulently attacked me for playing up a 'mere piece of science fiction' and for trying to read social messages into it — exactly the kind of closedness of mind that I associate with middle aged middle class Calcutta.

Akin to this is the all pervading conditioning by Congress culture. Those in their thirties and above are deeply conditioned by these two cultures: Congress and Communist. Even when they are 'anti-Congress' or 'anti-Communist', they would more often than not judge current politics in terms of the numbers game in the legislature and/or the more noisy games on the streets.

Those in their twenties or below, on the other hand, can only look back to the terribly wasteful movement of the Naxalites at the most. For them, the watershed was the movement of JP, on whose bandwagon rode in the Marxists. And since then, these young people have known only the Marxist rule in the state. Their conditioning has been radically different from the political analysts and publicists; the generation gap is sharp indeed.

The younger people identify the Establishment — the proximate one — with the CPI(M). And, as a bright young intelligence officer told me recently, at upper levels, the CPI(M) and the Congress maintain close liaison. In other words, there is but one integrated Establishment above our head.

Restoring Democratic Conventions

These young people detest politicians in general. VP is an exception even to the apolitical. And they are upset because he could not keep in power. Pressed into a discussion, they would mention many things which escape the notice of famous editor-commentators: VP made a staunch Congressman the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Made or wanted to make another most loyal Congressman

the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the same gentleman who, during the crucial days in October-November 1990, raucously announced that his sole objective was to remove VP 'the traitor'. In short, the Dynasty's systematic whittling down of the all important conventions of parliamentary democracy was at long last stopped and reversed. Also noted have been the return of decency in high appointments in the armed forces and the judiciary, some exemplary restoration of the ravished Rule of Law, as in the case of the Bofors enquiry. In short, the basic hiatus between the people's will and the parliamentary system was tackled to some extent. A significant token of good faith.

A move towards the original concept of a federal state, cooling down of artificially hotted up relations with several neighbouring countries, the astounding operation of evacuating the refugees from Saddam's aggression, — all were achievements of an ever tottering minority government. While, on the negative side were perceived the failure to hold elections in the Punjab, the strange delay in righting the two most inhuman wrongs perpetrated under the Dynasty: I refer to the Bhopal disaster, and the Sikh pogrom.

Challenging the System

On the whole, VP's image here is positive, and bright, as is that of his (now much leaner) camp. More than that of any other political leader or party. It is also a common perception that he really intends to mount a broader attack on the System, thereby altering the nature and function of Parliament itself. For the time being, these young people are waiting for the inevitable next round, without much caring for what the other political operators are saying about him.

I, as an elderly listener to these young voices, and also as a jaded observer of our shameful politico-social scene, have enjoyed the superb political moves he (and his colleagues) have made, and their breathtaking audacity and timing, without ever actually betraying the people's mandate. Notwithstanding the awesome constraints and compulsions, VP has stumbled less often than the occasions when his enemies have danced to his tune. I can substantiate my statement, though I am not privy to any high

secret as some commentators claim to be.

Most probably he will win, in the humdrum sense too. The great rationalist that Minoo Masani is, he will realise that if a hung Parliament is *desired*, and that too in a society like ours, interludes like the present one can hardly be wished away. The point is where we arrive at the end of the chapter. After Independence, VP has given the strongest challenge to the evil System.

Postscript

I wrote this article in December 1990. Since then I have kept my eyes and ears open. During the apparent suicide of the VP Singh government, the only big surprise that I was looking for was Rajiv Durbār's suddenly waking up to 'political maturity' and trapping VP with a lifeline thrown to him. It would have been difficult for VP to reject it, but really suicidal for him to accept it. But there was no such surprise. And, since the last week of November 1990, (till the penultimate week of February 1991) there has been no big surprise. Not even under the immense impact of Saddam's gigantic misadventure. Compare the journey of VP from his address from the ramparts of the Red Fort till the Janata Dal convention in Puri with the twists and turns of Rajiv, Shekhar, Devi Lal, and even the stalwarts of the BJP. My young friends here will not quite appreciate it, but I have not seen anybody matching Indira Gandhi in sheer political skill. I think that VP is earning that distinction, without the grand inheritance by birth of the daughter of Nehru and grand daughter of Motilal. Yet, the popular perception persists that VP is a clean man.

Language Barrier

Madras: The Tamil Nadu government will not have any truck with the Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh governments if they insist that correspondence between the governments should be only in Hindi, the education minister, Mr. K. Anbazhagan, told the state assembly on Tuesday. He said the state would correspond only in English, either with the Centre or with any state governments.

— *Economic Times*

Uncertainties of a Democratic Age

Leszek Kolakowski

As much as all of us who are committed to liberty welcome the worldwide movement that aims at the restoration of democratic institutions, we had better not imagine that the cause of freedom is now safe and its victory imminent.

Leaving aside the historical vicissitudes of the word *democracy* and all kinds of spurious and fraudulent usages of it ("socialist democracy," "people's democracy," "Islamic democracy"), we may say that this concept, as usually understood, includes three components.

First, we think of a set of institutions aimed at assuring that the power and influence of political elites correspond to the amount of popular support they enjoy.

Second, we have in mind the independence of the legal system from the executive power; the law acts as an autonomous mediating device between individual or corporate interests and the state, and is not an instrument of ruling elites.

Third, we think of enforceable barriers built into the legal system that guarantee both the equality of all citizens before the law and basic personal rights, which (though the list is notoriously contestable) include freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom of association, religious freedom, and freedom to acquire property.

These three components are not necessarily linked; they may exist separately — both conceptually and as a matter of historical experience. The principle of majority rule is insufficient if we are to make a distinction between democracy and ochlocracy, the rule of the mob. The principle of majority rule does not by itself constitute democracy; we know of tyrannical regimes that enjoyed the support of a majority, including Nazi Germany and Iranian theocracy. We do not call democratic a regime in which 51 percent of the population may slaughter the remaining 49 percent with impunity. Neither are the first and second components sufficient without the third, as we can easily

imagine a regime in which enforceable and predictable legal rules operate without assuring either equality or personal rights.

Continuing Threats to Democracy

As much as all of us who are committed to liberty welcome the worldwide movement that aims at the establishment or restoration of democratic institutions in communist countries, in military dictatorships, and in other forms of tyranny, we had better not imagine that the cause of freedom is now safe and its victory imminent. For there are a number of factors that now and in the foreseeable future will continue to threaten democratic institutions.

Sovietism

First among them is the enfeebled, but still living, force of Sovietism. We notice, of course, the deep crisis of totalitarian institutions: the increasing reassertion of civil society in the communist countries; the economic, social and cultural bankruptcy of "real socialism"; and the collapse of the ideological legitimacy of Soviet-type systems. But the time is not yet ripe for the last rites. The accelerated changes, indicating that the rulers themselves have lost confidence in the vitality of their regimes (the clearest symptom of decay), have lasted only for a short time, and their outcome is by no means certain. There are rational grounds to expect that *perestroika* in the Soviet Union will fizzle out, and this might result in a political regression whose character and scope it would be vain to speculate upon. Imperialist expansion has been built into the very ideological foundations of the Soviet regime, and the unambiguous renunciation of this expansion would require an ideological transformation that is

difficult to imagine. The only potential rival of Marxism-Leninism — Great Russian Chauvinism — would bring a mortal danger to the empire if it were established as the official doctrine, as it would inevitably inflame even more all the nationalisms of the non-Russian population. And we do not know what might happen if the ruling party faced a real threat of being removed from power. It is much too early to write the obituary of communism.

Nationalism

A second source of antidemocratic energy is the growth of malignant nationalism all over the world. Patriotic feelings are not in themselves incompatible with a democratic outlook, insofar as they mean a preferential solidarity with one's own nation, the attachment to national cultural heritage and language, and the desire to make one's nation better off and more civilized. (Patriotism wants to make the nation clean; nationalism, to whitewash it, as Chesterton says.) Nationalism is malignant and hostile to civilization when it asserts itself through belief in the natural superiority of one's own tribe and in the hatred of others; if it looks for pretexts, however silly, to expand into others' territories; and above all, if it implies an idolatrous belief in the absolute supremacy of national values when they clash with the rights of persons who make up this very nation. There is no need to prove that this kind of rapacious and potentially totalitarian nationalism is increasing in various parts of our globe.

Religious Intolerance

A third antidemocratic factor is religious intolerance and theocratic aspirations. To be sure, the theocratic tendency, which naturally does away with the separation of the state from

religion and establishes — an ideological despotism, is most clearly and most dangerously active in Islamic countries, where there are reasons to expect that it will grow. Islamic countries, however, make up a large segment of mankind; while none of them is fully democratic in the Western sense, they differ significantly in the degree of intolerance. We also notice an increase in theocratic aspirations among some Israeli Jews. Analogous tendencies in Christianity do not seem strong or dangerous for the time being, but their seeds are quite alive and occasionally display their vitality.

Terrorism and Criminal Violence

A fourth menace to democracy comes from terrorism and criminal violence. The danger is not that terrorists and drug dealers will take over power in civilized states, but that they might compel democratic governments to combat them — presumably with popular consent — through measures that violate democratic rights. Nobody, of course, opposes security checks at airports, and we naturally assume that these are no more than a trivial nuisance, a small price to pay for the relative safety of travel. But strictly speaking, these checks imply that each of us is treated, without any grounds, as a suspected terrorist. What if the efficient fight against terrorists and criminals were to require not only large-scale unwarranted searches but preventive killings, the suspension of the principle, "innocent until proven guilty," the growth of vigilante organizations, and so on? We might accept such measures under duress when we feel they are needed to defend democracy, but we should not pretend that they would leave the health of democracy intact.

Endless Expectations

The fifth, and potentially the most important, danger to democracy might come from the long-term changes that are effecting virtually all parts of our planet. The rapid pace of economic growth during the post war decades has produced — both in the rich and in the poor countries — a mentality of endless expectations. Somehow we have gotten used to the hope that each of us is going to have more and more of everything in the indefinite future and to the firm belief that this is what each of us deserves. But these hopes

are bound to end up in bitter disappointment, at least for the overwhelming majority of the world's people.

Overpopulation, shrinking resources of agricultural land and of water, and ecological catastrophes will certainly compel mankind in the near future to devote more and more effort and money to repairing the damages already inflicted on our environment and to warding off further calamities. This will not only lead to growing restrictions imposed on our freedom of movement and property rights. It will result, above all, in a dampening of our hopes for "more and more" and, indeed, in the demand that we recognize that we have enough, or even that we must manage with less, limit our wants, and accept a more modest life. The amount of frustration, irrational rage, and aggressiveness that these imperatives are going to cause will be enormous, and will affect the poor and the rich alike. For the degree of frustration depends not on the absolute level of satisfaction, but on the distance between this absolute level and our subjective needs, and our needs can and do expand indefinitely along the endless spiral of greed. It is hard to predict what ideological expression or other channels this frustration might find, but in order to tame it and to prevent society from plunging into chaos or falling prey to a lawless tyranny, it is likely that many undemocratic restrictions will be needed.

Widespread misery is fertile ground for the successful demagoguery of totalitarian movements and for the temptation to "solve" social problems by

means of military dictatorship. We have seen this many times, especially in Latin America and in Africa. If the relatively rich countries will be compelled to lower human expectations — even without causing real misery — it can only add to the danger.

This is not to say that the cause of freedom is lost; we have enough evidence to conclude that people need not only security but freedom as well. But we must also never forget that freedom is always vulnerable and its cause never safe.

Born in Poland in 1927, **Leszek Kolakowski** was professor of philosophy at the University of Warsaw from 1950 to 1968. During that period, he emerged as one of the leading internal critics of the Communist regime in Poland and was denounced by Communist Party chief Wladyslaw Gomulka. Following the student unrest of 1968, he was expelled from the university and left Poland for the West. Professor Kolakowski currently divides his academic year between Oxford University, where he is a senior research fellow at All Souls College, and the University of Chicago, where he is a member of the Committee on Social Thought. He has written more than 30 books, including the renowned three-volume study *Main Currents of Marxism* (1978). The recipient of numerous awards, he was chosen in 1986 to deliver the 15th annual Thomas Jefferson Lecture by the National Endowment for the Humanities of the United States.

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Administration — Then and Now

J.M. Lobo Prabhu

It is generally conceded that, before independence, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was the steel frame of the administration. After Independence the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), patterned after its predecessor, was a fairly worthy successor, possibly because the first generation of post-Independence politicians played by the same set of liberal-democratic ground rules. As the political executive changed in quality and character, this was reflected in the permanent executive as well. However, the 'Emergency' and the Sanjay Gandhi era, marked the open appearance of the Great Divide, which turned the steel frame into a bamboo one. It may be argued that a steel frame is too rigid, and a bamboo frame may be more flexible in responding to a wholly transformed social set-up and ethos.

From a Steel Frame to a Bamboo Frame

The conditions of entry into the Civil Service and its functioning then and now, are certainly different. In 1927, at the time the author took the examination, two hundred competed in England, and possibly a smaller number, in India. With exceptions, the Indians were drawn from the upper classes, or they would not have been able even to afford a fare and stay in London prior to offering the examination. Nonetheless (not unlike today's practice), it sometimes happened that poor but gifted boys were financed by parents with a belief in their future, who got them engaged to eligible girls on the tacit or implicit understanding, that they would be committed to marriage after obtaining the initials of "the heaven born"!

The examination for the ICS stressed the Liberal Arts, rather than the Sciences. The interview stage was crucial.

This is in contrast to the present mode of entry. The Civil Services Examinations in 1989 saw approximately 165,000 students appear; 10,000 make it past the 'prelims' to the 'mains', and about 850 after the interview, to the combined Civil Services Group A and B. Those admitted to the IAS/IFS considered the two top Services — were (with 'Reservations') under 200. With the age of entry raised, and extension of Reservations to the Backward Classes, the number of those taking the examinations in 1990 and thereafter, will be truly mind-boggling.

To some extent, the pattern of the examination tends to equalise Arts and non-Arts candidates, through the weightage given to General Studies, covering every conceivable subject under the sun. However, as these are objective-type questions, it is possible to score even by a process of hit-and-miss, so that, despite a poor power of expression, a fair number of candidates can make it to the 'Mains', with its more demanding format of essay-type answers, testing the power of articulating ideas, especially in the Arts subjects. The interview is fairly rigorous, but it is not unknown for influence to be used — whether successfully or not, cannot be decisively stated. Quite a few candidates are the children of serving civilians, but this could also indicate a natural inheritance of aptitude and predilection. An examination held abroad, absolutely precluded the possibility of influence, in any manner whatsoever. Of course, that option is no longer available.

Training Then

On passing the ICS, the candidate was allowed to pursue a year of study in the University of his choice. The author

chose the London School of Economics, at a time when Laski and Lionel Robbins were both lecturing. This was followed (as he was chosen for the Uttar Pradesh Cadre), by a four-month training stint in Moradabad. Thereafter, a trainee was immediately designated Assistant Collector and learnt on-the-job with the Collector, frequently as his house guest. The author's first such posting was to Gorakhpur then headed by Collector Harper, whose kindness and hospitality he still remembers in his prayers. There was also an *esprit de corps*, fostered by institutions like the ICS tie and the annual ICS dinner at Government House. It was not unusual for a Governor even to stopover with a Collector, when he was touring the State. Touring, literally took the *Sarkar* to the people. Camping in field-tents, while hearing cases and disposing of files by the light of hurricane lamps, officers both English and Indian, got a good "feel" of their particular beat. Many became experts on the flora, fauna and social anthropology of their districts. The *Gazetteers* they compiled are still definitive.

Training Now

Training now is a much more formal affair, extending over a period of two years for all Central Services Probationers. Judging from the letters of the author's daughter, a Customs and Excise Probationer, in the SVP Police Academy, Hyderabad, present-day entrants to the Civil Services are certainly nurtured in ideal conditions. The SVP Police Mess, Hyderabad, for example, is a 300 acre campus, with riding stables; gymnasium, and superb facilities for sports. The letter briefing new recruits for their Foundation Course, states the requirement to bring or stitch

Just as the organs of the body are held together by its skeleton, and the outer covering by the skin, so too is the governance of a country supported by the steel frame of its administration. Politicians, like the blood in the body, are constantly in circulation. The bones, though subject to slow processes of change and growth, must support the body at all times. Just as a break in the spinal cord, paralyses the body, the same would be true of the "body-politic", if bureaucrats fail in their primary function: keeping erect the permanent structures of the State.

formal clothes (for men), and mentions the services of a room bearer. These are probably not the conditions they will enjoy in the early years of posting, but still suggest that our administrators in Class I services are regarded and treated by government as the elite.

Today's training is also a continuing one. This may be rather a mixed blessing, as frequent sessions of refresher courses, may have some value for the officer concerned, but often leave a district or department headless, for as long as a month at a time. Touring is done, but in a car, and with a Circuit house, by way of overnight halt. The sense of government going to the people is not so strong anymore.

There is an *esprit de corps*, in the sense that the IAS regards itself as the highest service, though, on probation all start on an equal footing, in terms of salary and allowances. However, as the IAS mans every kind of post — general and technical — opportunities for promotion and diversification are very much more varied. Entrants to other services have less vertical and lateral mobility. Its consciousness as the cream of the cream, is where the IAS sense of *esprit de corps* may end. There appears to be considerable rivalry between the members of the Service.

Different Perceptions

This is a very rough and ready comparison of administration then and now. Both sets of top-level administrators faced different problems. In the ICS it was the quandary of serving as the ruling class, in a country with a nascent freedom movement. Various memoirs of the 'Mandarins' dwell on this aspect. The author personally did not find that this caused painful hassles. He was clear that he served the State, and the State was the people, whose problems were of a perennial nature, irrespective of its white or brown rulers. The former, being alien, were usually just, because they were neutral between all. Today, except for those who rank so high that they can pick and get their home-State Cadre, there is an attempt to distance the administrators from the people, by placing them in other states. However community, and now caste-consciousness is not without its impact on administrative decisions. This appears to have been recognised, if not legitimised by former Prime Minister V.P. Singh when in his speech on Inde-

pendence Day 1990, he opined that Other Backward Classes (OBCs) should have their place in administration, as it is the bureaucracy which is the seat of power — one from which the OBCs are largely excluded. He was stating a fact, though the critical purist may question whether it is the function of bureaucrats to uplift a particular caste or class, except within the framework of the Constitution.

Postings and Promotions

The ICS was a Convenanted Service. The IAS is protected by a number of Constitutional guarantees. Consequently, other than postings and promotions, they have total job security to render free, fearless and objective "aid and advice" which will form the basis of executive actions by Ministers. The ICS generally, and the author, specifically, always put down advice in writing, even when an occasional minister sent back a file, with the noting "Please speak". Many crises in which the IAS as a Service, and individual officers have been involved, stemmed either from rendering oral advice, or anticipating the wishes of ministers for a "mess of pottage": a plum posting or a promotion. The damage this has caused to the polity as a whole, and the people whom they are supposed to serve, is incalculable.

Other signs of politicisation are evident. A few ICS officers contested for Parliament — after leaving the Service. Nearly every one of them including the author, won a direct election with a decent interval following their resignation or retirement. However, in the past few years, serving officers of the IAS and IFS have attended political party meetings while still in Service, some even accepting the sinecure of Rajya Sabha seats for services rendered. This is only slightly less distasteful than judges playing politics, in or immediately after holding office.

Still Some Hope!

This is not to decry the IAS which had and has some very fine officers. Despite 'Reservations', those who survive a three-stage examination (even in the reserved category) are among our more intelligent young people. Motivations may vary. It would be idle to pretend that all take the rigorous examination, from a burning desire to serve the people! For many, who come

from a modest social background, the terrible grind involved in passing is fuelled by the knowledge that these three magic letters make for instant social acceptance and power. Nonetheless, many young Civilians are idealistic, and anxious to serve the people. It is in the middle ranks of the Service that a certain disillusionment sets in. This is the most vulnerable part of an Officer's career. As a fresher, he is too lowly for much political interference; at the very top he has sufficient status to withstand it. In the middle, he is certainly caught, and how he turns at this time, will determine what kind of officer he will become at the highest level. The author's meetings and interaction with young Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of South Kanara over the last twenty five years suggests that principled individuals can beat the system. Some officers, despite the changing face of administration will still represent in the most meaningful way, the concept that the "Sarkar" is *Ma-baap* to the people.

MR. J.M. LOBO PRABHU, ICS(Retd.) and a former member of the Lok Sabha is 85 years of age and resides in Mangalore. This article is based on some of the reminiscences the author shared with his journalist wife, Louella Lobo Prabhu.

Anything Karega for Power

I refer to the various articles on politicians, who would do anything for power (*Freedom First* Jan-Mar 1991). It is most unfortunate that politics has become the place for soundrals. It is no more an opportunity to serve the people and nation in the spirit of Karma Yoga.

During the freedom struggle we had men with vision and higher goals to guide our nation. They were not worried about luxuries, fame and name. Nor they did fight for our freedom with an eye on power or position. For them the nation came first, service their life, and duty their life. After having sacrificed everything they did expect politicians to name even a street in their honour. Mere utterance of their names inspired the nation and kindled the spirit of sacrifice in one and all.

Today the names of politicians spread foul-smell everywhere. Boforisation of deals, criminalisation of politics, mandalisation of people, rigging of polls and vote banks have killed the spirit of democracy. There is no place for morality and ethics in political life.

S.A. Srinivasa Sarma

Stalin's Indian Apologists

A.G. Modak

Comrade E.M.S. Namboodripad, a veteran leader of the Communist Party of India — Marxist (CPM) seems to be immensely irritated over the fact that the bourgeois press in India has almost unanimously described his party as "Stalinist". He has given expression to his irritation in an article published in the *People's Democracy* of June 24, 1990. That the CPM is restless because of the debacle of communist parties in the USSR and East Europe is undeniable. That the collapse of several articles of faith in communist countries has given a shock to the CPM is a fact; and that the CPM holds the Gorbachevian policies of glasnost and perestroika responsible for all 'tragic' happenings is self evident.

Com. Namboodripad has showered his anger mainly on the *Times of India*, because this newspaper very bluntly pointed out that the CPM does not find any fallacy in the Soviet system and that "it still seeks alibis for its Stalinist mentors". The CPM leader totally rejects this type of accusation.

Namboodripad argues that Stalin's contribution deserves due appreciation as it reflects the honest pursuit of truth. To stress this should not lead a reader to comment that the person or the party which emphasises this point of view is Stalinist. If Nikita Khrushchev in the USSR and Comrade Ajoy Ghosh in India were critical of Stalin, they also noted certain plus points of the Stalin era. In other words, they opted for a balanced assessment of the Stalin years. Should we therefore rush to brand them also as Stalinists? Mikhail Gorbachev has of course crossed the limits, states Com. Namboodripad rather painfully and notes how, at present in the USSR, any balanced assessment of Stalin is blacked out and Stalin is projected as a "giddy despot". He concludes his article with the following apology:

"We see in Stalin a great leader who skillfully steered the ship of the Soviet state, and the international communist movement, but who mistakenly

It is amazing to read how the Namboodripads and Surjeet Singhs still continue to glorify the Stalinist dogma of 'Socialism in One Country'. While the whole world now knows the fact that Stalin surpassed all previous dictators, the CPM finds it necessary to continue to felicitate this dictator.

thought that repression was necessary in the interests of the revolution, and was thus responsible for many crimes. We refuse to be blind either to the positive or the negative in the personality and work of Stalin".

As for the contributions made by Stalin to the cause of socialism, Comrade Namboodripad has given us a lengthy list. Thus, according to the CPM leader, Stalin defended Lenin against Trotskyism and other ideological deviations; he built socialism in the USSR; he led a successful war against fascism; he reconstructed the war ravaged Soviet Union, and so on.

In fact, each and every 'contribution' listed above can be challenged. If Stalin sided with Lenin when the latter was engaged in the fight against Trotsky, it was to earn the credit of being a camp follower of the architect of the October Revolution. Stalin moreover did not dare to distort the Party line when Lenin was alive and active. But as Lenin became unwell, Stalin began to distort the principles and practices of his god-father. Thus he ignored Lenin's warm feelings for Bukharin and his New Economic Policy. The last years of the life of Lenin give us adequate hints of his faith in the democratic dimensions of 'Democratic Centralism.'

It is amazing to read how the Namboodripads and Surjeet Singhs still continue to glorify the Stalinist dogma of 'Socialism in One Country'. Actually it was the Stalinist reliance on totalitarian methods which caused a great amount of damage to the rise and spread of socially autonomous activities. The Stalinist faith in administrative means gave birth to an army of sycophants. His war against innocent farmers, his insistence on rapid mechanisation, his urge to industrialize and militarize his country at the expense of the day to day needs of the common people, resulted in the perversion of socialism. While the whole world now knows the fact that Stalin surpassed all previous dictators, the CPM finds it necessary to continue to felicitate this dictator.

Was Stalin's role in the crusade against fascism something deserving of honour? Historians point out that if Stalin's presentation of the Social Democrats as the left wing of fascism caused divisions among opponents of the Nazi threat, his massacre of the military and Party cadres facilitated the entry of German soldiers in the USSR. If the USSR came out with flying colours in the Second World War, it is the spirit of nationalism of Soviet citizens which deserves to be saluted. The Russian people, not because of, but in spite of Stalinist leadership, waged a heroic war against the fascist invaders.

And can we share the Namboodripad felicitation of the Stalinist contribution to the task of reconstruction of war-ravaged USSR? Various factors such as victory over Hitler, success achieved in carving out a communist world around the USSR in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the acquisition on the part of the Soviet Union of the status of a super-power led Stalin to believe in the infallibility of his favourite dogmas. The resultant consolidation of a swollen state at the cost of a free society can hardly be appreciated.

Curiously enough, CPM leaders take pride in the kind of reconstruction that

was shaped in the USSR. Stalin died in 1953 and within three years the USSR witnessed a historical campaign of de-stalinisation. Applauded by the Russian people they urged their leaders to remove all relics of the Stalin era. Soviet citizens thus conveyed to the world what they felt about Stalinism. More than three decades after the Khrushchevian campaign of de-stalinisation the CPM leaders continue to refuse to accept the necessity of this campaign.

It is true that Khrushchev tried to present certain benefits of the Stalin era. We should not however forget that those were the years when leaders like Molotov with their nostalgic memories for this era attempted to place various obstacles in the campaign against Stalin. Khrushchev was therefore constrained to launch his campaign at a secret session of the 20th CPSU Congress. He could also not afford to throw mud on the entire Stalin era. He was careful while blaming certain actions of Stalin to balance it by giving Stalin the benefit of doubt in some others. But it is a fact that as Khrushchev consolidated his power and succeeded in defeating his challengers he went to the extent of removing the dead body of Stalin from the Red Square mausoleum. Unfortunately, the campaign of de-stalinisation suffered a setback when Leonid Brezhnev took over as the General Secretary of the CPSU.

As far as Ajoy Ghosh is concerned, Comrade Namboodripad needs to be reminded that the former General Secretary of the united CPI in his Report expressed disgust with de-stalinisation. Comrade Ajoy was shocked to see how worshippers of Stalin suddenly began to criticise their leader. The correspondence between Ajoy Ghosh and Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) clearly mirrors how the former rushed to admit to the latter that the habit of communists to attribute all supreme qualities to their General Secretary was at the root cause of the catastrophe that had visited the USSR. Comrade Namboodripad asks Indian journalists to describe Ajoy Ghosh a Stalinist. He, in fact, feels that Indians would absolve him & his colleagues in the CPM of the charge of being Stalinists, if Ajoy Ghosh is also projected as the sinner of the same type. We can only observe in response that Ajay Ghosh was honest enough not to try and whitewash the image of his party and

found it necessary to re-assure JP of correcting errors.

Then came the assessment by Gorbachev on 2 November 1987 and his open attack on Stalin: "It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know about instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so. The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations".

In the light of Gorbachev's devastating criticism, the CPM leadership tried to cover up by pretending to believe that Gorbachev was not blaming the entire era of Stalin; that Gorbachev was least inclined to expose systemic inadequacies of the USSR and that he was most reluctant to invite capitalist methods in the Soviet Union. But the world at large correctly understood Gorbachev as questioning such repressive institutions as the party bureaucracy, the command economy, censorship, and so on. It was obvious that Gorbachev had not only challenged the Stalinist theory of a linkage between socialism and violent class struggles, but was inclined towards the eradication of Stalinism including its Leninist roots.

It is at this point that the CPM decided to stop explaining away Gorbachev and signed what amounts to a bond of friendship with Ligachev. The article written by Comrade Namboodripad is evidence in this regard. Whereas Gorbachev does not want even a single black page in the history of the USSR, Ligachev is afraid of openness because, in his opinion, such a policy would enable some people to present Soviet history as a "chain of errors".

Indeed in a speech in February 1987 Ligachev made it clear that he opposed the attempts "to denigrate the entire path of the building of socialism in the USSR". He was critical of the policy of presenting Soviet history as an unbroken chain of errors and highlight instances of repression. He argued that these were meant to obscure the feat of the people who created a mighty socialist power.

Mikhail Gorbachev has gone way beyond Nikita Khrushchev in his criticism of Stalin. Hence it is that the CPM

has now developed a soft corner for Nikita. If Khrushchev wished to avoid a discussion of systemic failures in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev has encouraged people to speak against such failures. If Nikita merely removed the dead body of Stalin from the Red Square Mausoleum, Mikhail has adopted measures to institutionalise the process of democratisation to ensure that the USSR would never again see the revival of Stalinism. Gorbachev has done away with number of simplistic notions — that a socialist society can never have a free and fair market; that this society will forever be ruled by the oligarchy of chosen communities; that such a society will always enjoy homogeneity and uninterrupted economic growth.

Comrade Namboodripad and his colleagues are naturally highly perturbed over the happenings in the entire communist world. In fact worshippers of Statism are shedding tears over the enthusiastic replacement of the State by society in communist countries. The fact of the matter is that after seventy years of experimentation, the Marxian dream has had to concede defeat to pluralism.

DR. A. G. MODAK is a Reader in the Centre for Soviet Studies, University of Bombay.

Ex-killers Live in Comfort

"Hitler's crimes are still being justly punished. But in the Soviet Union there are literally thousands of ex-killers and ex-torturers living on official pensions, attending various celebrations decked out in their medals."

These words, written by a former American secretary of state, Zbigniew Brzezinski, appear in a recent issue of the US magazine "Commentary."

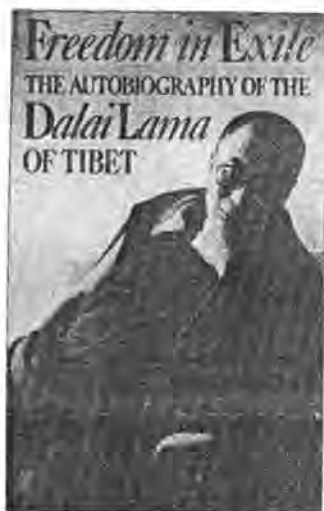
He adds that a former secret police major called Serepenko, the "Eichmann" of the murder of 15,000 Polish officers at Katyn, lives comfortably in Moscow. Officers who took part in Stalin's anti-jewish purges are still around, and many Russians, victims or accomplices, know who they are, says Brzezinski.

The "killers" still hold high places in the government, the Communist Party, the KGB and the dozens of other police and intelligence agencies in the Soviet Union — none of them disbanded in the six years of the Gorbachev regime.

COURTESY: Human Rights Worldwide

BOOK REVIEWS

FREEDOM IN EXILE the Autobiography of the Dalai Lama of Tibet; Hodder & Stoughton, Kent, U.K.; 1990; pp.308; £ 16.95.



Tibet is a vast land, twice the size of France. It is bleak, freezing, barren, sparsely populated and lashed by harsh winds. The Chinese claim to have subjected it to what they call their 'suzerainty' in the year 1247. The Tibetans, for their part, claim that they had conquered China and imposed their suzerainty on it even earlier, in the year 821. Be that as it may, throughout history, neither country had tried to annex the other in support of its claim with the result that Tibet, with formidable mountain barriers surrounding it from both its major neighbours, India and China, had continued to remain one of the world's truly forbidden lands and had developed a unique culture of its own.

A land with no roads or railways and indeed, virtually no wheels, Tibet was ruled by a hierarchy of monks called the lamas; they were priests but also administrators, policemen, even soldiers. Its titular head was the Dalai Lama who was believed to have been a reincarnation "of each of the previous thirteen Dalai Lamas," the first of whom, who lived way back in the four-

teenth century, was said to have been an *avatar* of Lord Buddha himself, the founder of the Buddhist religion.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama died in 1933. While his body lay — or, in point of fact, sat — in state, its head was seen to deflect itself towards the north east, indicating that it was in that direction that his successor would be found. A couple of years later, the Chief Lama of the Regency Council in Tibet saw a vision: two letters of the alphabet, *ah* and *ka* floated in view, followed by the image of a monastery on a high hill, and finally he saw "a house with a strangely shaped guttering."

Ah, the court oracles at Lhasa interpreted to mean the province of Amdo which lay to the north east, and *ka* could only be the monastery of Kumbum. Thus directed, a team of holy men disguised as ordinary travellers set out in search of their new God-king. And right enough, in the province of Amdo, in the vicinity of the monastery of Kumbum, was a village called Taktser which contained a house with that strangely shaped guttering..

And in that house, born after the right number of months following the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, lived a little boy of three who at once saw through the disguise of the leader of this search party by addressing him as "Sera Lama!" meaning that he was a priest from the monastery of Sera. The boy also gave other, more precise signals to establish his divinity. He recognized some of the articles which had belonged to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama by pronouncing: "That's mine! That's mine!"

By such process of reading of omens and of random guesswork was the eighth child of poor parents in the village of Taktser identified as the reincarnation of his predecessor. Fifty years later, the Dalai Lama himself blandly asserts: "I have no difficulty in accepting that I am connected both to the previous thirteen Dalai Lamas... and to the Buddha himself."

Call it a draw in a raffle, call it igno-

rance, obscurantism, mumbo jumbo. The abiding fact is that the system must have served the Tibetan people well enough for them to have gone on with it for fourteen generations and six hundred years. Also, for that matter, it is difficult to imagine how, in the light of our own recent experiences, the democratic process would have served them any better. At least one commendable aspect of their system was that, after choosing a three year old child as their reincarnated ruler, they subjected him to a rigorous regimen of studies to train him for his high office. And almost as final proof of the triumphant efficacy of the Tibetan system, is the present Dalai Lama. After fifty years as the Priest-King of his country, if the Dalai Lama were to offer himself as a candidate for re-election to his office, he would be swept into it virtually unopposed — and what other world leader can lay claim to that sort of unswerving following from his people?

In his book *Freedom in Exile*, the Dalai Lama tells the story of his life from childhood to the point in time when he was honoured by the civilized world with the gift of the Nobel Peace Prize. It is, inevitably, a sad story, of private anxieties and dangers and hardships and betrayals. But there is a historical level to the story, too, and that is even sadder and more distasteful, since it is a chronicle of one country swallowing up another and getting away with it. The Chinese who had claimed 'suzerainty' over Tibet since the year 1247, proceeded in 1950 to annex it and now look well on course to completing the process of assimilation. Already there are said to be more Chinese people in Tibet than Tibetans. Lhasa comes awake and goes to sleep on Beijing time which is two hours ahead of local time, and a western visitor who was allowed a glimpse of the Potala only a few months ago reports that "but for a few caretaker monks," there were no Tibetans in the Potala itself.

The Dalai Lama's writing is simple, even sparse, but somehow exact and effective, and whoever has edited the

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book has shown restraint and even wisdom in not taking too many liberties with the text. By its very nature, *Freedom in Exile* is a story of denunciation, a chronicle of excesses perpetrated by one nation against its neighbour. Nevertheless, as one reads on, the Gandhian parallels in the character of the Dalai Lama begin to emerge..

At no time does his mood lapse into hatred or even bitterness. The conviction grows that there is another of those true practitioners of *Ahimsa*, someone who hopes to convert a people who are gung-ho with the logic of Mao Dze Dong, into the practice of non-violence. The Dalai Lama's *mantra* for all the evils of the world seems to be : Compassion, forgiveness, love."

Indeed just as Gandhiji in his prayers often beseeched God to "give good sense to all," the Fourteenth Dalai Lama ends his autobiography with a prayer:..

"For as long as space endures
For as long as there is life
Until then I may, too, abide
To dispel the miseries of the world."

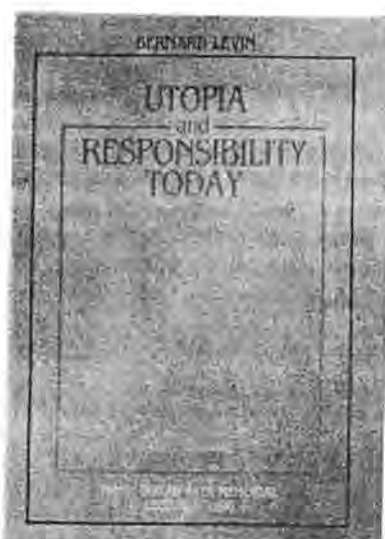
Perhaps there are those in the Dalai Lama's immediate circle who have already determined how and where the Fifteenth Dalai Lama will manifest himself. Those of us who are outside the mystic circle should enjoin them to use their magic powers to ensure that the Fourteenth one lives long. His country needs him, his people need him, above all the civilized world needs men like him. It is a rare breed indeed.

Reviewed by MANOHAR MALGONKAR, the well-known novelist and author of such bestsellers as *The Princes* and *A Bend in the Ganges*

UTOPIA AND RESPONSIBILITY TODAY, (Ninth Dorab Tata Memorial Lectures, 1990) by Bernard Levin; McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd. New Delhi; 1990; pp 68; Price not stated.

For the past few years, the Dorab Tata Trust has been doing the public a great good by inviting eminent persons and arranging for them to lecture on subjects of importance thus serving the cause of general enlightenment; some of them have been memorable occasions indeed.

The Ninth Dorab Tata Lectures were delivered last year in Bombay and Delhi and the texts of these have been



brought together in a handsome small book. This could form an ideal book for gifting to young people who are on the threshold of adult responsibilities. It is a book for the young and contains wholesome and pertinent observations for a generation that needs them most. It is not as though our elders would not benefit by reading these lectures and pondering upon them — but looking at the examples of 'elders' collected in the capital, one feels they are past the age of reformation.

I say advisedly that our younger people should read these, for the elegance of presentation, the humour and the seriousness of purpose are things that are not seen in books these days. For such good things are not to be read in the columns of the tabloids and the glossies to which they are used to. It is good to turn to more serious reading once in a while.

The first essay on 'Utopia' reminds us that this has been a continuous quest in western history right from the first systematic book on philosophy and politics. It is a dream of the perfect world, a yardstick to judge present inadequacies. Often it is a dream world, a world of escape, a flight, a retreat into one's own domain. Utopias have been fuelled either by logic or reason or by a feeling of an awakened sensibility. Perhaps the latter are less harmful. The Utopias erected on the principles of logic can be terrible.

The Utopians who build their dream cities armed with reason, science and technology very often can create veritable hells. It is fortunate that they do not always find followers who are able to put their dreams into reality.

In this quest for the perfect reality what does it matter if we sacrifice our present pleasures for the magnificent future that will unfold itself before us? When confused ideas like the Idea of Progress or the Necessity of a Revolution are added to the Utopian potion the draught can not only be intoxicating but socially deadly and disastrous. The English, French and other Revolutions have testified to the near social disruption of entire communities. Later, Hitler and Stalin filled in the gaps and "illuminated" for generations to come the Dance of Death that Utopias can generate.

Today the pilgrims in quest of Utopia in the West are not those who arm themselves with the Red Book, but they are the *bidi* smoking wanderers who try to make it to Kathmandu. They retreat into a senile world of their own and wreak havoc upon themselves. Another dangerous breed which we hope is extinct is the terrorist which nearly blasted the fragile civilization that Europe was.

The dream of Utopia will continue for all time to come. Levin believes that the nearest to an Utopia where there was no oppression and where there is a maximisation of the good life was perhaps in the Florence of the Medicis and more certainly in the Athens of Pericles. But if you happened to be a worker in the silver mines owned by the fortunate Athenian perhaps you would have a different story to tell. Levin concedes that even in Athens, there was a serpent in residence — the hubris that led to the fall.

Where then is the Utopia and why this persistent quest? Levin quotes from the *Conference of the Birds of Sadi*:

"The birds, after long debate, set out to find their King, the Simorg, who has a utopian solution to their troubles of poverty, fear and strife. Some, from scepticism or weakness, refuse to go on the journey; others drop out or die as it goes on and the hardships they are forced to endure become more and more dreadful, the rivers they must cross wider and more turbulent, the deserts hotter and more arid, the plagues more virulent and incurable. In the end, a tiny band of survivors reach their goal, where they learn that they have carried the Simorg with them from the beginning, for he is made of the courage and wisdom of their hearts, and all

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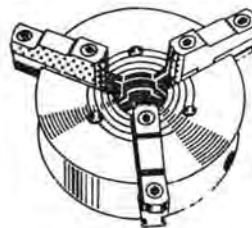


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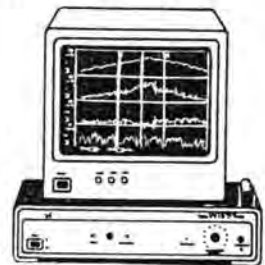
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they had to do to reach him was to recognise that he lies within them, as he does within us all. The persistence of the utopian conviction points only to the persistence of the utopian perfection of which all men and women are capable, if they will only believe themselves so."

Perhaps it is like the musk deer of Tagore which runs all along to get at the haunting, fragrance which eludes it and yet is irresistible. It is in the very body of the deer itself!

Did we in India hunger for an Utopia? It does not appear so. For, apart from cracked leftists and intellectuals in universities and the press, none in this country ever built an Utopia intellectually. All looked back to a past *Rama Rajya* and the idiocy of the rural Indian peasant saved him from the horrors of an Utopian nightmare. It is not possible that even a V.P. Singh basing himself on the inanities of Mandal will be able to erect one for us. Our problems are of another sort and they may well arise from another quarter.

The second lecture 'Responsibility Today' is more satisfying for it reminds us of a moral void that will soon envelop us as it already has the Western world. From the time of the Renaissance the European learnt that he could not take refuge in God, Fate or the Dark Forces. He had to own responsibility for his actions. The entire edifice of Western civilization is built upon this premise of individual responsibility.

This has been eroded gradually over the last half century mainly due to intellectual currents and a sense of rootlessness in the arts. He squarely puts the responsibility on vulgarized Marxism and Freudism for this abdication. Not you, but the economic-social structure, the pre-ordained forces that determined your actions made you do the foolish things you do. In the field of art, there was no meaning; "even as they (the painters) flung their paint at the canvas, they were consigning their own work, together with that of the masters, into the void".

Lack of individual responsibility for one's act has reached such a pass that a man who killed himself by incessant smoking, "launched a legal action, continued by his family after his death, against the manufacturers of his favourite brand who were accused of caus-

ing his death..." That such ridiculous suits could be pressed and entertained in courts (and there are others) indicate a deep malaise in the Western social system and beliefs.

With the abdication of individual responsibility, since it is too heavy to be borne, one comes to a point where "anything goes". You don't have to fend for yourself, you don't have to pay your debts, nor make your decisions or be responsible for your actions. We have become so inured to our responsibilities that one even abuses one's children sexually or for immediate gratification.

This irresponsibility has spread to the State as well, for they have degenerated from being Welfare States to becoming Nanny States where they treat adults as children. He quotes a case in Britain where "a municipal council was seeking to evict a family from their council apartment for non-payment, over a long period of the rent. The family's defence was that they could not afford to pay the rent because they were already paying for the hire of five television sets and three video recorders". This may be an extreme case but may not be untypical of the brood of citizens that a consumer society produces.

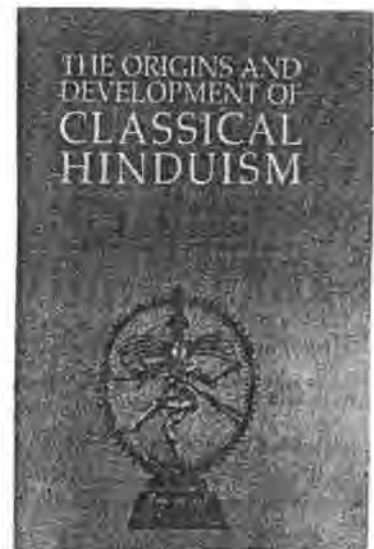
How do we get out of this? He quotes an important insight of Solzhenitsyn with which we can end the review of this delightful and instructive little book.

"If you wanted to set the world to rights, whom would you begin with — yourself or other people?"

Reviewed by DR. R. SRINIVASAN

THE ORIGINS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASSICAL HINDUISM by A.L. Basham edited by Kenneth G. Zysk Oxford University Press, Delhi; 1990; pp. 159; Rs.175

The book under review contains A.L. Basham's last lectures delivered in North American Universities during 1984-85. These were delivered before his death in January 1986. Posthumously published, the book is edited and annotated by his student, Kenneth G. Zysk, who completed some parts of the last chapter by way of providing 'concluding remarks'. This work pre-



sents a lucid and precise account of the origin and some of the major developments of classical Hinduism, suggesting in the course, its dynamic character.

Basham compares the early history of India, to 'a jig-saw puzzle with many missing pieces; some parts of the picture are fairly clear, others may be reconstructed with the aid of controlled imagination'. The methodology followed by Basham, in undertaking this delicate and arduous task, has been summed up by the editor as consisting of "traditional indology with personal intuition, for it combines history, philology, and phenomenology" (pp xviii – xix). This makes the overall thrust of the work "historical rather than thematic", which contextualizes the otherwise abstract religion. Basham's account of classical Hinduism viewed through this novel methodology makes interesting reading.

The book which is about the ancient Indian religion, carries with it some contemporary concerns, which seem to have motivated Basham to undertake the study of Hinduism in particular and (Ancient) India in general. A close look at his *magnum opus* THE WONDER THAT WAS INDIA as well as the book under review, makes one realize that the plurality and diversity of Hindu culture had struck the imagination of Basham, which was more than just a motivation of intellectual curiosity. Referring to the cultural diversity of Hindu culture which was born out of South Asia around 5000 B.C. Basham remarks that the "culture was by no means uniform".

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This seems to set the tone of the narrative which is very sympathetic and often defensive about Hinduism. This is clearly seen in his portrayal of the village culture of South Asia as 'well advanced'; his characterization of the period between 700 - 600 B.C as a period of 'great material progress', which coincides with the formation of the *Varna* system; and his attempt to dispel the doubt that the Indus Valley Civilization was brought to India by the invaders. He points out that it was born out of the indigenous civilization which 'seems to have developed on the soil of the subcontinent' (p. 1).

He further mentions what he considers to be an enigmatic feature in early Hinduism, namely, that the religious life of the people was centered around the 'home' and not the 'temple'. He brings this out when he says:

Jews, Christians or Muslims must, if they wish to be considered pious members of their faiths, attend their places of worship at regular intervals. On the other hand it is possible to be a very devout Hindu without ever going near a temple, which is a later development in Hinduism and still not one of its essential features. (p. 5)

Implicit in this contrast is the attribution of polycentredness to Hinduism and monocentredness to Christianity, Islam etc. This characterization displaces, as it were, the orientalist paradigm which associated the East with spiritualism and the West with materialism. In addition, Basham's treatment clearly goes beyond the earlier approach of comparative religions where the 'generalities' and commonalities between religions were sought to be established. In this context Basham seems to have anticipated the methodological shift in the studies of comparative religions initiated by the East-West center at Honolulu, Hawaii, where the differences between religions are highlighted. This is articulated in the collection of essays entitled *Interpreting across the boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (1989).

These concerns (as mentioned above) situated the book in a larger context and possibly makes for a better reading of classical Hinduism as presented by Basham. Having done this let us present a brief resume of the book.

While reading through the chapters in the book one easily notices that these

have been impressively divided by the author, on the basis of what he considers to be the significant changes Hinduism had undergone. Chapter 1 reconstructs with the aid of archaeological sources and Carbon-14 dating, the village culture of the South Asian people around 5000 B.C. This culture gave rise to the Indus Valley Civilization. These formed the basis for the origin of Hinduism. Presenting the people of this period as oriented towards this world and the present life Basham says:

"The religion of the Aryan was oriented towards this world and the present life... But with the last book of *Rg-Veda*, the tenth, a new phase of Indian religion begins, marked on the one hand by speculation, an imaginative search for a first principle, and on the other hand by the expansion of sacrificial rituals and the development of a sacrificial symbolism ..." (pp. 18-19)

The next chapter discusses the themes generated by the shift, from this world to the other world. These are: The fundamental questions raised in this period — "Why is there a universe at all?", "Why is there not just nothingness?" etc; formulating in this vein such important distinctions as being and non-being, *sat* and *asat*, real and unreal; and a discussion of different theories about the sources of creation. Having discussed this world orientation in chapter 1 and the other world in chapter 2, the following chapter seeks to relate them. This is done through the doctrine of transmigration, which is post-vedic and authored by *Yājñavalkya* in *Brahadařanyaka upanishad*. Referring to this significant doctrine and the subsequent development of ascetic movements, Basham says:

In India there were so many changes and developments in religion as the doctrine of transmigration and nonviolence, organized asceticism, mystical gnosis in search of release (*moksa*) from the cycle of birth and death, and many lesser features of Hinduism, not to speak of the rise of heterodoxies such as Buddhism and Jainism." (p.37)

The transmigration theory discussed in chapter 3, implies a never ending cycle of births and deaths. This furthered the development of asceticism which undertakes the task of finding ways of putting an end to this cycle and

strives to "achieve a sense of complete release from the trammels of the world" (p. 51) This is the theme discussed in a subsequent chapter. One of the major ways of avoiding/overcoming this cycle was to identify *ātman* with *Brahman*. In this identification some new theories about the creation and the creator are offered. That is, whether the *Brahman* is *Saguṇa* or *nirguṇa*, personal or impersonal, male or neuter gender, etc. There is similar discussion of some of the heterodox sects, such as Buddhism, Jainism etc.

In chapter 5, the two great epics of the Hindus, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the 'triumph of theism' in the sixth chapter. The last chapter contains a discussion about the *Sūtras-Strānta*, *Gṛhya* and *Dharma* — which contributed to the establishment of "norms for the social and ritual behaviour of every Hindu and laid down the basis of civil law" (p. 100). This establishment remarks Basham, was necessitated as "with the passage of time, the ritual instructions of the *Brahmanaś* became too complex and obscure, so that a new set of texts was required to elucidate the sacrificial procedures and preserve the traditional practices". (p. 99). This was followed by a brief mention of 'modern Hindu movements' — the Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Ramakrishna Mission, Transcendental Meditation (TM) — which became popular in the West. In this context it is mentioned that these subsequent developments in Hinduism indicate classical Hinduism's 'ability to assimilate and adapt to change' (p. 113).

In addition to this fine narrative the reader is provided by the editor with a list of the principal works of A.L. Basham and a helpful bibliography on the origins and the development of classical Hinduism.

Reviewed by A. RAGHU RAMA RAJU Department of Philosophy, Goa University.

Civilization was thrust into the brain of Europe on the point of a Moorish lance
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

In Calcutta, when people discuss
people, events and news
an important point of reference is
"What did The Statesman say?"



WHAT IS CIVILISATION? by Ananda K Coomaraswamy Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1989; pp xi + 193; Rs.250



It is highly appropriate that the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, has undertaken to publish the Collected Works of A.K. Coomaraswamy, of which this is the second volume. Indeed, even more than Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore, Coomaraswamy has the unique gift of uniting the perennial features of the Eastern with the Western cultures: while Vivekananda was mainly a man of religion and an inspired prophet, Rabindranath Tagore was essentially a poet without the wide-ranging scholarly equipment of Coomaraswamy. Coomaraswamy is a master of seminal insights and a grand reconciler of the great intuitions of the seers of the whole of mankind. He is at once at home with Plato, Aristotle, Philo on the one hand and St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart and other mystics and theologians of the West as also the entire Vedic lore, the Upanishads, the Buddhist and Islamic scriptures and Chinese thought on the other. His luminous mind synthesises wide-ranging thoughts and puts them in an entirely fresh configuration. Every page of his writing is an act of dynamic liberal education.

The essay 'What is Civilisation?' after which the entire collection is named, is a typical example of the complex and rich Coomaraswamy composition. He begins at the beginning, the root of the word. His etymological passion, which is almost an obsession, is constantly an

agent of revelation of hitherto unplumbed thought. The word inevitably takes him to the Word. Neither the Oxford English Dictionary nor the Oxford Latin Dictionary trace the word 'civilisation' to 'Kei' in Greek 'Keisthai' and Sanskrit 'si', 'to lie', 'lie outstretched', 'be located in'. Again, he has his own derivation of 'politics' from 'Pla' in Greek 'pimpleni', Sanskrit, 'pr' 'to fill'. From 'pl' he passes on to Sanskrit 'pur', Latin, 'plenum' and Sanskrit, 'pumam' and English 'fill'. From 'pur', he goes to the word 'purusha' "the person to be distinguished by his powers of foresight and understanding from the animal man (*pasu*), governed by his 'hunger and thirst'".

Worlds of meanings and significance, unapproached by the best of dictionaries, blossom from words and Coomaraswamy builds large patterns of thoughts by his solemn games with words. The miracle he performs is beyond the dream of fancy. Plato and the Upanishads are the fount of his speculation and he takes us straight from the mundane to the spiritual, man to God. Coomaraswamy asks a classic question: 'Who fills or populates, these cities? Whose are these cities, ours or God's? And then answers in a rich way drawing his material from the Vedas and Upanishads on the one hand and Plato on the other, and says, 'these macrocosmic and microcosmic points of view are interdependent'. The city of the heart is the same as the city of God: at the heart of the human city is the city of God. This God extends, undivided, to the entire universe. This very God delegates his power to us, according to the fitness of each one, nature, and it is our responsibility to realise this mission. It is thus a 'vocational society', an organism "not an aggregate of competing interests and consequently unstable 'balance of power' ". He comes to the conclusion that "the human city of God contains within itself the pattern of all other societies and of a true civilisation". There is justice in this city "since everyone is a responsible agent in some special field". He almost sounds utopian when he writes, "Thus the ideal society is thought of as a kind of co-operative workshop in which production is to be for use and not for profit..." Along with Schweitzer he is a strong critic of the modern industrial society which is ambitious, competitive and quantitative. He

affirms in a true civilisation, '*laborare est orare*' (to work is to pray). But "industrialisation – 'the mammon of injustice' (Gr. *adikia*) – and civilisation are incompatible".

Then what is the answer? He resorts to Plato again: the politicians should 'fix their eyes upon their own interior politics, never aiming to be politicians in the city of their birth'; we should entrust our government of cities to 'the uncorrupted remnant of true philosophers who now bear the stigma of uselessness'; and to those who, by some divine inspiration, may conceive a genuine love of true philosophy. He full-throatedly approves Plato's statement that 'no city can ever be happy unless its outlines have been drawn by draughtsmen making use of the divine pattern' and adds, no city is a happy city, unless it conforms to "the city of God that is in heaven and 'within you' ".

This traditional wisdom of cosmic interrelatedness and santification of the human by the divine should not look utterly out of date in the world of today, for the simple reason that forsaking that very wisdom modern civilisation has reached a suicidal impasse. The resurrection of that wisdom which penetrates into the superficialities of human behaviour and social phenomena alone can restore a central sanity and sweetness to a society which has all but lost its legitimacy to exist. Coomaraswamy's confident perceptions and insights should heal our minds and take us forward to a unified vision of the wholeness of human civilisation, which is penetrated by the divine.

The same unitive mind is at work in all the essays that follow. Though most of them are short, they are dense with thought and are the product of contemplation of a life-time. Coomaraswamy constantly fights against all divisions, the division of man from God, the city of man from the city of God, the East from the West, philosophy from mysticism, reason from revelation, religion from religion, religion from metaphysics, the sacred from the profane and language from language. He calls the dictum, 'East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet' as an expression of impotence and arrogance in the Western civilisation of his day, and writes, "we recognise that the only possible ground upon which an effective *entente* of East and West can be

accomplished is that of the purely intellectual wisdom that is one and the same at all times and for all men, and is independent of all environmental idiosyncracies ('On the Pertinence of Philosophy').

His paper, 'Beauty, Light and Sound' is a testimony to the fiction of disunity between the East and the West: Plato's *Symposium*, Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus* and the *Chandogya Upanishad* proclaim, in the same way, the unity and identity of the good, the beautiful, being and light. His papers, 'Windows of the Soul', 'The Coming to Birth of the Spirit', as also 'On Being in One's Right Mind', show how Coomaraswamy constantly finds affinity and even identity of intuitions in the Upanishads, Plato, and the Islamic works of mysticism. He also easily reconciles science and religion and rightly says: 'A real conflict of science with religion is unimaginable; the actual conflicts are always of scientists ignorant of religious philosophy with fundamentalists who maintain that the truth of their myth is historical' ('Gradation and Evolution' I, p.72).

He never divides metaphysics from aesthetics either: his papers 'Symbols' 'The Interpretation of Symbols' amply bear witness to his organic outlook. 'The Symbolism of Archery' is an admirable expedition into the symbology of the West and the East alike. You see the same eclectic tendency in his essay 'Khwaja Khadir and the Fountain of Life, in the Tradition of Persian and Mughal Art'. Coomaraswamy displays a profound exegetical imagination when he glosses the Biblical references to Christ as 'diamond' and 'Corner-stone', in his papers 'Eckstein' and *Quod Factum Est in Ipso Vita Erat*. The book characteristically ends in one of his art essays, which examines the relation between wisdom and methods, or reason and art ('Athena and Hephaistos'). It is impossible to squeeze the writings of Coomaraswamy to extract their essence: they are all essence, and they need to be read again and again to remake one's mind. His notion of 'civilisation' is not a historian's or an anthropologist's: it is that of a humanist with a luminous mind which is nursed on the light of a multitude of thoughts emanating from the seminal minds of the whole human globe.

The 'Foreword' by Sayyed Hossain Nasr is helpful. But what was really

needed was a thorough editorial material which would come to the help of layman and specialist alike. The writings draw from a wide range of works in a large number of languages. The reader needs notes for almost every reference that he makes. His own footnotes are but a mine of scholarship which take the reader deeper into the thoughts he develops but they do not stop and help a general reader find his way.

It is hoped that future volumes are competently edited to make them even more valuable. One is also eager to know the dates of the various papers, their sources, and even their contexts and their relation to his other works. Though the book is printed in the United Kingdom, it has a number of printing errors: e.g. 'communications' (for 'communications') p.21, 'mortalie' (for 'mortali è'), p.75 'jatissaranam' (for 'jatismaranam') p.78, 'loki' (for 'loke') p.91, *Sukhadukhair - sarjina* (for *Sukhadukhasanjinai*) p. 99 'sompadyage' (for 'sompadyate') p.113; 'babudha' (for 'bahudha') p.116 etc.

Once again it is necessary to congratulate the IGNCA for the admirable venture of publishing the works of one of the greatest non-resident, but intensely genuine, sons of India, who was much closer to the Indian ethos than many of those who claim a close kinship with the soil.

Reviewed by R.A. MALAGI, Head of the Department of English, and Director, University School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad.

LIVING OFF THE WEST by Sol Sanders; Madison Books, 3, Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU; 1990; pp.249; £ 19.95.

Mikhail Gorbachev is a household name — at least among those who read newspapers. Lionised by the West as the 'Deliverer' who rung down the Iron Curtain, ended the Cold War and allowed the satellites in East Europe to choose freedom he was quickly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1990.

Barring the Stalinists and of course the *nomenclatura* in his own country, communist parties elsewhere including our very own dyed-in-the-wool Stalinists (who have deplored the denigration



of Stalin and Gorbachev's move towards a less centralised economy), the world has, by and large, hailed him as among the greats of the twentieth century.

Just a minute! says Sol Sanders, a respected journalist and political analyst, striking a note of caution amidst the paean of praise. Are we absolutely sure Gorbachev is what he claims to be or the world perceives him to be? Are we to conclude that Gorbachev has abandoned Democratic Centralism and accepted a pluralist society with all its concomitants? Or is it merely a tactical turnaround — a 'U' turn' dictated by economic compulsions?

In the preface to his book *Living Off the West* Sanders avers:

"I believe that it is... a widening gap — on the military side — which has provided the main motivation for Soviet leadership, headed by Mikhail Gorbachev and his supporters to try a radical restructuring of their system. The hidden agenda is to persuade the West, once again to give the Soviet state a transfusion of wealth that may enable the Soviets continue to play a superpower role, far beyond the means of an essentially third world economy."

This is Sanders' thesis and he marshals evidence (nineteen printed pages of notes and bibliography) going back to the days of Peter the Great to prove his point.

He points out four periods in the history of the Soviet Union when intellectuals in the West were taken in by

communist pretensions:

1. Immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution.
2. During the days of the Popular Front Against Fascism.
3. During World War II as partners of the Allied Forces against Hitler.
4. The *detente* with the West in the 1970s.

On each of these occasions the CPSU leadership — Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev — desperately needed Western assistance to tide over deep economic crises.

Immediately after Lenin had masterminded the takeover of the Russian State, the country, wrecked by civil war, was facing serious economic difficulties. Lenin decided that Marxist prescriptions were not going to help. The Western response to the Bolshevik Revolution had been hostile. To attract their assistance Lenin conceived in 1921 the New Economic Policy or NEP. Under this policy, peasant farmers were permitted "to produce again by going back to taking a percentage of their production in kind rather than relying on increasingly arbitrary requisitions that often had not even left seed for replanting and had aggravated famine conditions." The NEP also permitted "the re-emergence of markets that had been expropriated..." That this was a reluctant move is evident from a statement made by Lenin that the NEP represented a "defeat and a retreat — for a new attack".

Sanders points out that the NEP served its purpose for it resulted in "massive shipments of food relief" from the United States to "alleviate the post-civil war famine conditions" in the Soviet Union and "helped stave off total collapse of the Soviet domestic agricultural and consumer economy."

Lenin died and with him went the NEP. Announcing its end in an article in *Prauda* in November 1928 Stalin wrote: "Either we go back to capitalism or we go forward to socialism". In his onward march to 'socialism' the Soviet dictator liquidated tens of thousands of *kulaks* (peasant farmers) as part of his programme to 'industrialise agriculture'. The result was famine once again. The *kolkhoz* or collective farms were a disaster. The Soviet Union once again needed Western aid but the Western nations had been turned off by Stalin's reign of terror. Without pretending to

change policy, Stalin launched the Popular Front campaign. It was a concerted effort to seduce Western intellectuals and through them spread disinformation and propaganda about the ideal society that was the Soviet Union. As a school boy I still remember the couple of visits I made to the office of the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' nearby and the beautiful magazines and pictures which portrayed Stalin as a benevolent father-figure and the Soviet Union as a land of peace, prosperity and happiness.

And then the Soviets had their opportunity to secure Western aid when Hitler who had signed a pact of friendship with Stalin turned on his 'friend'. The 'Imperialist War' had now become the 'Peoples' War'. The Americans rushed in not only to help the Soviets fight the Nazis but with promise of help to rebuild the Soviet post-war economy. This was the famous Lend-Lease — "...14000 aircraft, half a million tons of explosives, five million tons of registered shipping, seven thousand marine engines, four million tons of foodstuffs, one billion dollars worth of machinery and equipment, two and half million tons of steel" and the list goes on as Sanders quotes from Sovietologist Sutton. According to estimates "the Soviets entered the post-war period with at least 1.25 billion dollars worth of the latest US equipment for the rehabilitation of the Soviet post-war economy".

Stalin rewarded the Allies by swallowing up the nations of Eastern Europe. The Cold War was on.

Despite all this Western benevolence the 'socialist system' failed yet again and the Soviet Union was once more in desperate straits.

Stalin, at long last, died. His successor Khrushchev and Khrushchev's successor Brezhnev found that Western help was needed yet again to bail out the Soviet economy. This time their lure was *detente*. They found two very important takers in the United States — Nixon and Kissinger. Once again food and machinery, trucks and tools made their way to the Soviet Union. Kissinger's premise was that "greater economic interdependency between the West including the United States, and the Soviets would restrain Moscow's behaviour." The Kissinger premise was shattered when Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan. President Carter con-

fessed that this invasion "had taught him more in twenty four hours about communism than he had learned in the whole process until then...." *Detente* was dead.

Enter Gorbachev with his *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. Quite apart from the fact that the war in Afghanistan was draining the Soviet economy, Gorbachev inherited a country on the verge of bankruptcy. Once bitten twice shy as the old adage goes. The West had been bitten not once but four times in sixty years. Would it be any different this time? Sol Sanders thinks not. True he wrote the book towards the end of 1989 and early 1990. Since then most of East Europe is free. Lech Walesa is President of Poland and Vaclav Havel presides over the destinies of Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union is facing internal strife with many of the republics opting for freedom or a loose federation. Then there is Boris Yeltsin who wants, unlike Gorbachev, a systemic change. He is President of the Russian Federation elected to that position in a free election. On the other hand independence demanding protesters in Lithuania have been shot dead by soldiers of the Red Army.

In the light of all this even assuming Gorbachev is sincere, will the Soviet Establishment particularly the *nomenclatura* and more importantly the Armed Forces allow Gorbachev to go beyond a point?

To go back to Sanders' preface:

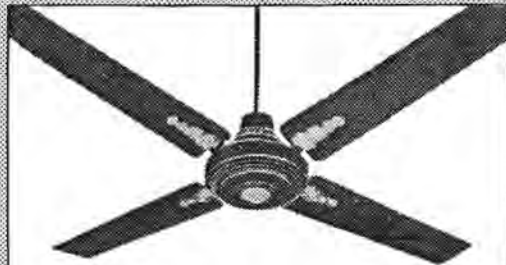
What is the real reason that Gorbachev and the Soviet 'new thinkers' have asked for aid from the West? The next question is, of course, not only whether enough of a "transfusion" will be forthcoming from the West, but whether the patient is too ill to take the blood. And what is the probability that a sick and dying Soviet regime may not try to use its only remaining asset — its military strength — in a last desperate attempt to resuscitate its system.

"...I believe Gorbachev's heritage in the Soviet Union is too poor to accomplish his ends. He will ultimately fail..."

Perhaps Sol Sanders should have waited a little longer before writing his book. He couldn't have known, for instance of the tricks that Saddam Hussein was up to, and the silent but supportive role played by Gorbachev

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leaves. For ordinary peoples plain
looking punkha of palm leaves.

The Company regime:
Bardar (Punkah Puller) operated giant
punkah hung by rope.

British India:
Electrical Ceiling fan with 4 wooden
blades and iron body (In vogue, in early
20th century).

Independent India:
3/4 bladed modern fan.

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(other than the last minute effort to steal the Western thunder) in the Gulf War. Perhaps Gorbachev has travelled too far down the road to turn back; perhaps he honestly feels that the Soviet Union does indeed need a systemic change and is treading cautiously. Whatever it be, *Living Off the West* is a book I would recommend to Gorbachev's admirers. Perhaps the answer lies somewhere between Sol Sanders' well-founded cynicism and the uncritical adulation of even longtime critics of the communist system.

Reviewed by S.V. RAJU

SAYAJIRAO OF BARODA. THE PRINCE AND THE MAN by Fatehsinghrao P. Gaekwad; Popular Prakashan, Bombay; 1989; pp. xiv + 397; Rs 250



Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad has succeeded in bringing to life the person of Sayajirao III of Baroda, with his many-faceted characteristics. In 1875 Sayajirao, belonging to the Gaekwad clan was chosen for adoption, and thus succession, to the *gadi* of Malharrao Gaekwad by his childless widow Maharani Jamnabai. The boy born to a well-to-do farmer's family was just twelve years old, and had lived hitherto in an obscure village. The British, who, by now, held the strings in Baroda, welcomed the choice, as they envisaged total control over his education, upbringing, and later, over his reign. The British took control of the caretaker government during the minority of

the new heir apparent, working through the submissive Diwan, Madhav Rao, and Rani Jamnabai.

The introductory chapters show how Damajirao Gaekwad entered Gujarat as a Commander of the Maratha Army in 1700, and how Pilaji Gaekwad and his successors steadily acquired independent control of various parts of Gujarat, with Baroda as the main district and headquarters. Fatehsinghrao shows the initial entry of the British in this region and how by 1810, they had brought Baroda under their control through the system of subsidiary alliance. With the 'definitive treaty' of 1810, Anandrao Gaekwad bound Baroda to the British in no uncertain terms, giving up for ever the Gaekwad sovereignty over Baroda. Fatehsinghrao, however keeps harping on equality of the treaties, and of Gaekwad sovereignty over Baroda as if they actually existed. Once a subsidiary alliance is signed, the British place their agent — Resident-Commissioner-Agent of the Governor General — to live in the capital to overlook all activities of the Maharajahs.

The British compelled the ruler to disband his own army and keep a 'subsidiary' force paid by him, but, captained by a British Officer, under the

supervision of the British Agent. In Sayajirao II's case he was forced to maintain an additional contingent of 3000 horses at his expense to help the British in their fight against recalcitrant Indian princes. An Indian prince under the subsidiary alliance was nothing but a cypher, and any prince trying to presume on sovereignty, or showing even a slight sense of independence was summarily dealt with by the British, either by the acquisition of his territories, as in the case of Sayajirao II, or deposition, as in the case of Malharrao Gaekwad. Thus the *gadi* which Sayajirao III inherited was extremely circumscribed. In spite of this he gave a great deal to his state, instead of reacting as many other princes did with total disinterest in anything but self pleasure and indulgence — the consequence of their protection by the British.

A very well documented and interesting account is given by the author of the training and preparation of Sayajirao III for accession to the *gadi*. He was fortunate in having as his tutor, a humane, liberal Englishman, Mr. F. A. H. Elliott, who subsequently wrote an excellent history of the Baroda State. He taught his young charge well enough to develop in him an astute, diligent, and rational mind, which was to stand him in

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good stead in the future, as ruler. At the same time, he learnt the realities of British paramountcy from the actions and 'advice' of the Dewan Madhav Rao — who was an epitome of the servility expected by the British.

The nearly sixty years of Sayajirao's 'reign' was extremely fruitful for Baroda. He was one of the most enlightened rulers of an Indian State, and in some respects Baroda was recognised as more progressive, and doing more for its subjects, than the British were doing in their territories — an affront to British paramountcy!

Sayajirao was a great traveller and everywhere he went, he studied public administration, educational systems, water conservation, irrigation and various aspects of civic amenities. He put all this information to use and made Baroda an ideal State.

He started by putting into effect the separation of the judiciary from the administration, and setting up a legislative council, albeit nominated, but more representative than what British India had. He rationalised the civil service and his household administration, weeding out surplus, unproductive 'offices'. In the economic sphere he started Baroda on the road to industrialisation as early as 1885, by setting up sugar and textile mills, adding to the railway line, linking Baroda city to all the main towns, and at the same time, connecting them by a network of roads. Baroda was rapidly developed into a modern city, with broad roads, parks and fine public buildings.

Education which was always a priority with the Maharajah was made compulsory upto the age of 14 and new schools sprang up every year. The Baroda College, now the M. S. University, made rapid strides with new facilities added in quick succession. Influenced by social reforms, he started schools for girls and also encouraged education among the untouchables by starting separate schools for them. These schools were free and the students were provided with free slates, pencils and textbooks. Special model schools were also started for aboriginal children with arrangements for agricultural and other vocational training. Indeed the Maharajah transformed Baroda into a model of a socially and politically progressive state. It was generally acknowledged that Baroda was much in advance of

British India in the matter of social legislation, and it was this that galled the British most. Sayajirao thus became a target of attack by British administrators — the Agent Generals, Governors and Governor Generals.

Sayajirao on his part realised the real position of the native States and their rulers. Being a proud, sensitive, dignified, and self-respecting Prince, he resented the position in which he found himself. As Fatensinghrao points out, he showed this in no uncertain terms, but also, intelligent as he was, in a very circumspect manner. Thus, whilst the British knew exactly what he was doing, they could not fault him enough to depose him. Sayajirao tried to escape as often as possible from the British officials breathing down his neck by making long trips outside his State and coordinated affairs from a distance in a systematic and disciplined manner. He chose his *Diwans* well, so that they helped him raise Baroda to a high level of development. His stay outside the State never did any harm to the State. On the other hand it gave him an excuse for not attending the obsequious *darbars* and avoiding visits to Baroda by Governors and Governor-Generals. All this added to the British dislike of Sayajirao and their determination to depose him if possible.

The British even tried to accuse Sayajirao of joining hands with nationalists in and outside India. Elaborate arrangements were made by them to spy on him and reports prepared with all sorts of inconsequential details. Sayajirao as a man of the future, was definitely a lover of his country, a nationalist and against imperialism. He was an admirer of the great leaders of the day — Tilak, Ranade, Gokhale and supported them openly in the meetings of the Annual Social Conference, but was careful not to openly espouse their political cause. He in turn was held up as an ideal Prince by them and eulogised in their papers and speeches.

Fatehsinghrao has done justice to his great grandfather in bringing before the public this very accomplished and eminently wise ruler of a bygone, but unforgettable era.

Reviewed by DR. (MRS.) MANI KAMERKAR, Retired Professor of History and Director of the College Development Council of the SNDT Women's University, Bombay.



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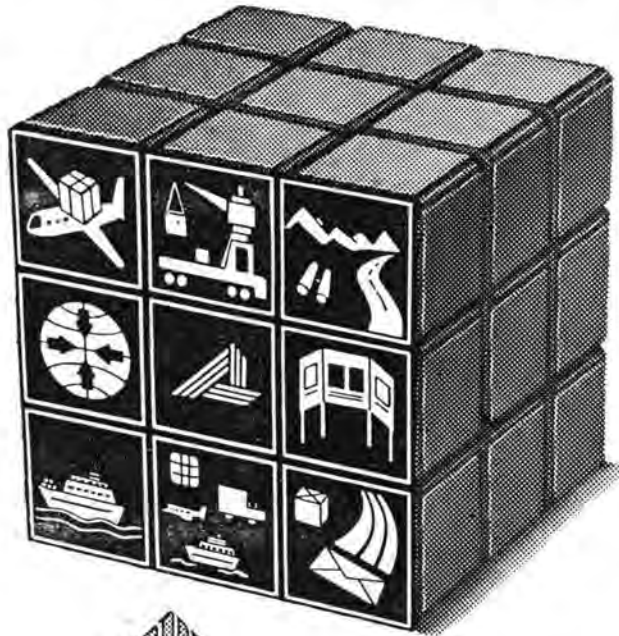


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I am grateful to Shri Sumant Bankeshwar for introducing *Freedom First* to me. I have seen quite a few old issues of this quarterly which in a nutshell can be described as a "Journal of Journalists" — just as the great musician, Late Ameer Khan was known as the 'Musicians' musician'!

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