

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

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GATT

OPPOSITION
PARTIES

TRADE
UNIONS

-Don't
Let
Them
Fool
You

The Great American Bubble

The Nigerian Crisis

A Tribute

Two distinguished Indians passed away in April and May this year. Both were non-conformist, upright individuals who commanded respect not only for what they were but also for what they did. We honour the memories of Mr. S.L. Kirloskar, the eminent industrialist who built up the Kirloskar group of companies and Mr. Laxmanshastri Joshi an outstanding litterateur, a master of religious texts and a humanist all rolled in one.

The following tribute by the eminent economist Mr. D.R. Pendse and the other, an editorial in *The Times of India*, cannot be bettered.

Mr. S.L. Kirloskar



"Shantanurao Laxman-rao Kirloskar - SLK or just Shantanurao to most of us died on April 24 at the ripe age of 91.

"I do not remember when I met him first. Probably it was sometime in the mid-seventies. The licence-permit raj was taking its toll;... In a speech in Madras, SLK analysed the economic malaise and its cure. He was blunt. He pleaded that the Planning Commission should be abolished; that FERA should be scrapped, and the

industrial licensing system should also be done away with. Quite a few at that time thought that SLK was far behind the times and that 'these things' were not going to happen...I for one found a tremendous fresh breeze in that assessment, and admired the man who had the courage to call a spade a spade...

"His opposition to the malfunctioning of the public sector was very fundamental indeed. He would have like a total elimination of the public sector. Even in 1981, he was in favour of a Plan holiday. I asked if setting up of long gestation public sector plants like fertilisers or power generation can be postponed. SLK said, "Why not? We should concentrate on the very expeditious completion of the on-going projects... Government must realise that its record of planning and executing new projects is uniformly bad; and therefore desist from starting any such new projects.

"Several of SLK's decades-old policy convictions are being translated into policies by Dr. Manmohan Singh's economic reforms programmes since 1991, though SLK would have surely felt that the reforms process was slow and halting....

"At a personal level also, I found SLK surprisingly composed during the days when he was raided and arrested. I believe in connection with alleged foreign exchange violations. During those days, he once explained to me and classified raids into two types. The excise evasion raids or the income tax raids were the first type; and, at least on paper the motive was to collect more revenue. Most of those raided had to pay up first and litigate later. Tax officers had, he said, not only incentives but quotas fixed. Raids on FERA violators were the second type. They were essentially for instilling fear into the minds of others, or out of vengeance. In his case, the Finance Minister was angry because Government did not know what charges to frame; government did not find anything (damaging); so, still more raids were conducted!"

(MR. D. R. PENDSE. From his article: *In the company of S.L. Kirloskar*)

Tarkateerth Laxmanshastri Joshi



"Tarkateerth Laxmanshastri Joshi, who dies at 94 on May 27, 1994, was one of the most distinguished thinkers Maharashtra has produced in this century. Though gifted with an awesome grasp of Indian and western philosophical traditions, Mr. Joshi eschewed a life of mere scholarship. He was an active participant in the independence movement and suffered imprisonment for his convictions.

"He campaigned hard against untouchability as also against illiteracy, ignorance and bigotry. With his deep belief in the power of the intellect to bring about radical social and political change, Mr. Joshi was a representative of the best traditions of the Indian *gnana-yogis*. He was thus able to master the vedas and shastras with mentors like Swami Kevalananda and Rajaramshastri Dravid and to study English, western philosophy and modern history under the influence of masters like Vinoba Bhave and the historian, V. K. Rajawade.

"Such was Mr. Joshi's polymathic genius, that his teachers said he would have made an outstanding scientist had he turned to the natural sciences or mathematics. Unlike many traditionalists however, he was also a *karma-yogi*, doer who had an open mind. For instance, when the so-called traditionalists attacked Gandhiji's movement against untouchability in Maharashtra, it was Mr. Joshi who showed convincingly that the practice had no sanction in the *shastras*. He also wrote about and campaigned for the relevance of the reforms carried out by Jyotiba Phule, long before the latter acquired a reputation for being 'politically correct' in Maharashtra.

"Mr. Joshi was attracted by marxist and materialist thinking and later by M. N. Roy's new humanism. Despite his activism, however, he persisted in the pursuit of pure knowledge. Among his many achievements, perhaps his most lasting contribution to posterity will be his monumental work on a Marathi encyclopaedia, 14 volumes of which are already in print."

(*The Times of India*, 30 May, 1994)

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

India's decision to sign the Marrakesh declaration on GATT is in keeping with (what is now so very evident) the accelerating trend towards globalisation and the Indian government's new economic policy. The Indira Congress's championing of GATT is therefore understandable even if it be tactical and inescapable in the circumstances.

But why are the saffrons, the reds and the pinks so worked up. Do they themselves really believe their charge that by signing the GATT, the government has signed away our sovereignty? Very unlikely. The BJP finds that international class warfare is, at this point of time, more profitable than warring for Ram and his palace at Ayodhya. The reds and the pinks feel cheated by history. Instead of the State withering way they are. May be by joining the hysteria being artificially generated on GATT they could perhaps recover some lost ground. There are still many who dislike Coke.

Almost every day there are TV spots on why GATT is to India's advantage. But the credibility of the Congress party and more so Doordarshan is so low that people would prefer to believe the opposite of what is said by a Congressman or by Doordarshan. This and the disinformation being spread by the RSS, the BJP and the, assorted Dals and parties has confused the ordinary man and woman.

We have had many requests from readers asking us to write in simple language what GATT is and whether it is good or bad for India. We have attempted to do this and hope it helps make the issues involved easier to understand. We shall have more on GATT in subsequent issues.

The reproduction of the article "Islam and Bosnia" from *The Salisbury Review* should not lead our readers to conclude that we speak for the Serbs and are critical of the Bosnians. This is not so. We condemn in unambiguous terms the beastliness of the concept of 'ethnic cleansing' but we want to highlight the fact that thoughtless recourse (even academically) to religious fundamentalism could lead to bloodshed and untold misery - a point made forcefully in the article, also in this issue, "God and Violence".

We are late again but have not given up hope of being able to restore the timeliness of publication. Once again we apologise to our readers, some of who have even reprimanded us. We accept their reprimand and ask them to bear with us a little while longer.

S.V.Raju, R.Srinivasan

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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 government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem.

Milton Friedman, quoted in
the *Indian Express* March 22.

We the members of the common public cannot take legal action against those who tell white lies on (the) Assembly floor.

Mr. Arup Das, Secretary of The Sky-Lark Co-operative Housing Society Ltd., *The Times of India*, March 20.

All prime ministers are stop-gap. It depends on how wide the gap is.

Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, *The Times of India*, March 20.

In country after country, religious fundamentalism and aggressive nationalism are exceptions to the rule. When its voters chose equality and secularism, the politics of modern hate were exposed for what they are: man made and far from ancient.

Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph,
New Republic, February 14.

As with great conversions, the Afrikaners ended apartheid not so much because they wanted to be good as basically because they wanted to be fashionable.

Andrew Kenny, *Spectator*, April 2.

The stability of the private sector is judged by rise in profits; that of the public sector by fall in losses.

Santosh Puthran, in a letter in
the *Indian Express*, June 1.

Whenever the Government of India is in trouble, it does two things. First, it denies what has not been said. Second it blames the foreign hand for all its problems.

Chitra Subramaniam, the *Indian Express*, April 30.

There are Sekou Toure and Nyerere streets, boulevards and avenues all over Africa. Other tyrants, incompetent in everything except in gaining and retaining power, are similarly celebrated and memorialised.

Anthony Daniels in his article "The Undoing of Africa",
The Salisbury Review, December 1993.

AungSan Suu Kyi! She is the only one not afraid! She has no gun, only her mouth to fight 300,000 soldiers.

A Rangoon shopkeeper, *TIME*, February 28.

The BJP prescribed history text-books (in U.P.) not only claimed that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India but that India's independence struggle began 2500 years ago!

V. K. Sinha, *The Secularist*, May-June 1993.

In every country the politician is a despised species. In parts of Africa he has not been seen for years, the war lords having killed them, or put them away in asylums.

K. F. Rustomji in his article "Democracy too is failing",
The Radical Humanist, January 1994.

When I talk of foreign investment, I don't necessarily mean foreign in the sense of a foreign country. What is outside the government is foreign.

Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, in an interview
in the *Financial Times* (London), March 11.

If India's 120 million Muslims begin to share a mass fantasy of an imaginary homeland peopled only by believers, it is the faulty choreographing of Indian foreign policy that must henceforth be blamed.

Rashmee Z. Ahmed, *The Times of India*, April 29.

We are at a loss to know whether it is compulsory that a heroine should invariably appear on the screen with accentuated angularities, deepened depressions and exaggerated protruberances of the body.

Justices K. Jayachandra Reddy and G. N. Ray in their judgement while confirming the death sentence of a notorious criminal, *Indian Express*, April 8, '94

Religious books should be sent to museums.

Taslina Nasreen, quoted in
the *Indian Express* June 6.

If a man is pictured chopping off a woman's breast, it only gets an 'R' rating; but if, God forbid, a man is pictured kissing a woman's breast, it gets an 'X' rating. Why is violence more acceptable than tenderness?

Sally Struthers, *Indian Express*, April 8.

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Fatal 'Encounters' of the Chinese Kind

Some months ago, our newspapers report off foreign tourists in Egypt being shot at and a few of them being killed. The tourists flooding that country now have been reduced to a trickle. I wonder whether our newspapers have reported similar happenings in China. The *San Jose Mercury* of April 15, 1994 reports that one could visit China as a tourist and could die there by "accident" - even as it used to happen in our land when "encounters" used to take place with the police.

Taiwanese go to China on tours and one such group of 24 on a pleasure boat were found mysteriously dead in the "Scenic Quiandao Lake" nearly 200 miles southeast of Shanghai. This happened on 31 March, but what is surprising was that the officials refused to allow the relatives to inspect the dead bodies or the boat itself. While the officials claimed to have done autopsies, the results were not available to the relatives. The relatives who protested against this were held incommunicado in their hotels for a week. The bodies were cremated and the ashes were given to the relatives. The relatives allege that they saw bullet holes in the boat and all the 32 bodies were below the deck - not one of them could have jumped overboard.

The guess appears to be that the boat was attacked by pirates, who robbed the tourists, shot them up in the lower deck and set fire to the boat. Taipei has halted all cultural exchanges. If a ban is imposed, China would lose 1.5 million tourists from the land who spend lavishly.

Is China a disciplined country unlike ours?

"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



Executions for Profit - China Style

In recent years, China has had the distinction of being in the front page of newspapers, but our papers have not publicized another dimension which needs to be. Its record of state executions is indeed frightening. On a conservative estimate, four people are executed every day - 63% of state executions of the world take place in that ancient land. Once shot dead, the bodies are taken to a hospital and organs removed for transplant. Needless to mention, no consent is taken of the prisoner. Since the prisoners are not treated with dignity before their death, what matters if their bodies are treated so shabbily after death? Their death is instant and summary with no frills like being blind-folded. One could be executed for crimes "like making and selling ordinary spirits as Maotai, a liquor famous for its potency." One-third of all criminal offences in China end up in execution. The family has to pay the equivalent of six American cents for the ashes of the executed - the ultimate in the dishonouring the members of the family of the unfortunate dead.

Churchill

Many readers of *Freedom First* will be familiar with the statement of Winston Churchill that India on independence, was handed over to men of straw. Elderly people generally quote this in condemning our rulers. That this verbal outbreak was part of

Churchill's deep-seated racism is now documented in an interesting article in the *Spectator* of 4 April 1994. He invited the editor of the *Spectator* in April 1955 to write on the dangers of Indian and other immigrants flooding the islands and turning it into a "magpie society". As Home Secretary in 1906, he dabbled in eugenics and "instructed his officials to look into the possibility of enforced sterilization of the feeble and the insane. One wonders how Sanjay Gandhi would have responded to this proposal had it been made during the 'Emergency'. While in Kenya, he regarded the Kikuyu to be "light-hearted, tractable if brutish children ... capable of being instructed, Africans in general were "less crudely animal" when they wore clothes. After declaring "no man has a right to be idle", he charitably added, "and I do not exempt the African."

In 1921, when he was Colonial Secretary, he described "Indians of East Africa ... (as) mainly of a very low class of coolies and the idea that they should be put on equality with Europeans is revolting to every white man throughout British East Africa." He described Negroes as "niggers" or "blackamons", Arabs as "worthless", Chinese as "chinks" or "pigtales", other black races as "baboons" or "Hot-tentots". Italians were "mere organ grinders" and the Egyptians on one occasion as "lower than the most degraded savages now known".

He was sure that the Indians in spite of the 1943 famine, would breed

like rabbits. The Japanese, he "accepted" were regarded as "short-sighted" as a race and they could not make good bomber pilots. It was an opinion he had swiftly to revise, after the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse. At the outbreak of the Korean war, he argued that "four million pigtailed don't make an army" till the Chinese Red Army proved otherwise.

Had he been alive, perhaps, he would point to the brutal massacre of the Hutus and Tutsi as justifying him but what of the Serbs?

Resisting Freedom's Power

After celebrating the International Year of Human Rights, the Japanese Prime Minister has announced that the Chinese and Japanese people should not be clamped upon by "western or European type democracy" and western concepts of human rights should not be imposed on all

nations. Many African "statesmen" and non-statesmen of the third world will be happy at this. The attempt is to pressurize the U.S. not to end the low tariff privileges that China is entitled to from the U.S. and allow this vast nation to trample upon Tibetans and the dissidents.

Often, the excuse trumped up is the Confucian heritage of China and Japan enforced by the Government of Singapore. The rights of the Community triumph over that of the individual. Fang Lizhi with whom readers of *Freedom First* are familiar, put the matter well. The Communists fight human rights not because they are Confucianists, but because they are heminists. For all its increasing armed power, Beijing like all dictatorships, knows the greater power of creeping freedom".

RS

On Professors

Not all, but many professors possess an utterly wrong notion that no one but their tribe can guide the ordinary people where progressive thoughts are to be propagated. But the reality is quite different. Renowned historian V. K. Rajwade died at Dhule, on 1st December 1926 at the age of 63. What does he say about teachers and professors? He says that he did not come into contact with the teacher worth his profession right from the primary to the varsity levels. Whatever real knowledge he acquired, he acquired it by reading books on different subjects written by eminent authors. The remark refers to the teachers and professors in the pre-1926 era. In that context, the less said the better in respect of the teachers and professors in the current era!

Thus, it will be clear that propagation of progressive thoughts cannot be the monopoly of professors. In fact, this task can be more efficiently and effectively performed by doctors, pleaders, serving or retired government servants with progressive disposition or outlook. Government servants from the revenue, police, judicial and railway departments have the advantage of considerable mass contact which professors lack. A University Degree counts only in securing jobs. Where renaissance is concerned only knowledge counts. Persons without any Degree but possessing sufficient knowledge can propagate progressive thoughts more effectively than persons with Degrees but possessing insufficient knowledge.

Jalgaon

G. Y. Dharap

The Bombay of Whose Dreams ?

One has been reading with interest, press reports of our dynamic Chief Minister and the powers that be, wanting to make Bombay the financial capital of the East.

It is rather amusing to note, that while Bombay has inherent infrastructural advantages to fulfil this dream is the Government so naive to believe that global players would want to invest, reside and operate out of a city like Bombay?

A city that is decaying by the second? A city that is infested by beggars and squatters at almost every street corner? A city that is a haven for all hues of criminals? A city where life and limb of honest tax paying citizens are constantly insecure? A city reduced to squalor and filth? A city that constitutes a slum component of 60%? A city which is a slum-dwellers paradise? (Where else in the world can land valued at an average of Rs.4,000/- per sq.ft. be usurped under the excuse of poverty, whereas the honest, tax paying citizen is made to cough up market prices).

And to think that the very same politicians who let this once beautiful island city choke before their very eyes because of vote bank compulsions, greed and avarice are today conceiving grandiose plans to convert Bombay into an international financial centre.

Good luck to them! For if any person can achieve this impossible dream of reinstating Bombay to its pristine glory, that man would have his name etched in gold for as long as Bombay remains

Bombay

K. J. Patel

Don't Let Them Fool You

This Hysteria over GATT

S. V. Raju

A number of readers have requested us to explain to them what GATT (or the Dunkel Draft as it is 'popularly' known) is all about. They say that the arguments for or against the GATT agreement confuse them and they are unable to decide whether the Government of India acted in the country's interest when they signed the GATT agreement at Marrakesh in Morocco recently.

GATT is an international forum founded in 1947 by 23 countries - one of them India - as a special organisation of the United Nations. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland. Today, GATT has a membership of 117 countries. Of these about two thirds or 78 countries are from the developing world. It is estimated that its members account for 93% of the world's trade.

GATT is the acronym for GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE. It is not an organisation like the WHO or the ILO. It is more in the nature of a forum where member countries attempt to organise mutually acceptable trade arrangements. GATT seeks to frame rules on the basis of a consensus. These rules are binding on all the 117 member countries. If these rules are violated then the aggrieved country, can, under the GATT agreement, seek redress. For, the treaty also provides a mechanism for settling disputes between member governments. In other words GATT is both a code of rules for international trade as well as a forum in which countries can discuss and find solutions to their trade problems.

Beginning April 1995, GATT will be converted into a formal organisation and will be known as the World Trade Organisation or WTO enjoying the same status as the World Bank or the IMF.

GATT's main considerations

GATT's aim is simple: To get countries to reduce their tariffs or import

duties to the maximum extent possible, open their markets to each other, stimulate world trade and global economic growth. Member-countries enjoy MFN (Most Favoured Nation) status with one another. This means that any favourable tariffs that any two or more GATT member-countries have between themselves would have to be extended to all other GATT members.

For example any tariff reductions that the US and EC negotiate between themselves will automatically be applicable to all GATT members. For instance if the US and EC agree to eliminate tariffs on electronic goods, even a country like India will benefit since this concession will have to be extended to electronic goods exported from India as well.

The main considerations are generally related to import duties, import restrictions, customs duties, export incentives, 'dumping' etc. The GATT agreement sets down detailed rules governing these issues, often product by product.

As countries develop and trade patterns change, trading arrangements keep changing. To keep up with these changing needs and to reduce obstacles to the movement of goods between nations, GATT arranges periodic reviews of the existing trading arrangements between member-countries. These periodic reviews are called 'Rounds'. In the 47 years since the founding of GATT there have been eight such 'Rounds':

The present GATT accord signed at Marrakesh in Morocco on April 15 this year, which marked the conclusion of the 8th Round is therefore also known as the 'Uruguay Round'.

Advantages of GATT membership

Member countries of GATT are able to agree (on the basis of consensus) on a common set of rules to govern trade with each other. These rules provide for a stable and predictable basis for trade and enables world trade to be conducted without discrimination.

In the absence of such internationally accepted rules, economically weaker countries i.e. under-developed countries could be and are known to have been pressurised by more powerful trading countries. In other words membership of GATT is more advantageous to the weaker and poorer nations than to the richer and stronger ones.

As already mentioned, by being a member of GATT, a member country

GATT 'Rounds'

1	Havana	1947
2	Annecy (France)	1949
3	Torquay (U.K.)	1950-51
4	Geneva	1955-56
5	Geneva	1960-62
6	Geneva	1964-67
7	Tokyo	1973-79
8	Punta del Este (Uruguay)	1986-93

automatically enjoys the MFN treatment from all other member countries. This means that all member countries are bound to grant each other, treatment as favourable as they give to any country in the matter of imposing duties (or tariffs). Any benefit given by any one country in favour of another is automatically available to all other member countries. This is particularly beneficial to developing countries whose economic power is limited.

Conversely, if a country, say India, is not a member of GATT, it will have to negotiate trading arrangements with each country separately. In such an event India, as a non-member, will, when negotiating with an economically more prosperous and powerful country, have to give up much more on the very same issues than would have been the case under a multilateral system like GATT.

The Dunkel Draft and GATT

The Uruguay Round started in September 1986 and was to end by December 1990. But because of sharp differences of opinion among the member countries the Round had to be extended. When, even a year later, in December 1991, no agreement was in sight, Mr. Arthur Dunkel, the then Director General of GATT, himself drafted a set of proposals based on the five years of discussions at Punta del Este including areas of differences that had surfaced. In other words Mr. Dunkel prepared what he considered a consensus draft that would be generally acceptable to the member countries. This came to be known as the Dunkel Draft or the Dunkel Text or the Dunkel Proposals.

By its very nature, and considering the circumstances, Mr. Dunkel's Draft was a compromise package. And, as we all know, the very meaning of compromise is that we give some and take some.

For his remarkable feat Mr. Arthur Dunkel should have been honoured. Instead we saw his effigies being burnt. On the other hand this is not so surprising considering the fact

that those who have sought to whip up hysteria over GATT are actually those (e.g. political parties, groups, organisations and individuals) who saw the Dunkel proposals freeing world trade as a threat to their little kingdoms and their self-interests.

With the signing of the GATT accord at Marrakesh it is now a proper GATT agreement and no longer a "draft". It is a document with 500 pages of legal text called the Final Act, and around 20,000 pages of individual concessions on market access to goods and services.

The Agreement cuts across national boundaries and creates a trading system which takes full cognizance of the globalisation of the world's economy. It presents the biggest package of market concessions ever negotiated.

The WTO (which as mentioned earlier is the organisation that has been conceived by the Uruguay Round) will have a number of councils and committees to monitor the observance of rules and regulations covering every aspect of world commerce, including trade in agriculture, textiles, services and

intellectual property protection. These are in addition to traditional areas of mercantile trade generally covered by earlier GATT accords.

Areas covered by GATT

The areas covered by the Uruguay Round of GATT are:

1. Agriculture,
2. Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)
3. Textiles,
4. Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), and,
5. Services

Let us briefly examine how each of these have been dealt with in GATT.

1. Agriculture:

Agriculture is included in GATT for the first time. It is patterned on similar arrangements between the European Community (EC) and the United States.

All non-tariff barriers like quotas* have been converted into tariffs (import duties). These have, under GATT, been reduced by 36% for industrialised countries and by 24% for poor nations. The cuts will be implemented over six years for rich countries and ten years for the others. Member countries are not allowed to ban imports.

What this means is that countries with closed farm markets are now compelled to import at least three per cent of their domestic requirement (rising to five per cent over a six-year period). For instance, Japan until now had banned the import of rice. This ban will now have to go. Japan will have to import 4% of its rice consumption. This will go up to 8% by 1999. South Korea will have to import one per cent of its rice requirement rising to two per cent by 1999.

* For readers who may not be entirely familiar with this business of quotas, we need to explain that the developed countries' favourite method of protecting their agriculture, industry, trade and employment was to regulate the entry of goods and people into their countries by imposing quotas (e.g. not more than so many meters of cloth, or not more than so many tons of this or that grain or so many heads of immigrants). This was true of nations like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia or Canada.



DUNKEL AND GATT IN FLAMES: BJP activists burnt a placard symbolising the trade accord, in Bombay on Friday
— Express photo

Support for farmers (i.e. subsidies in various forms) in developed countries is to be cut by 20% over six years and by 13.3% for the developing countries during the same period. Similarly the *value* of direct export subsidies are to be cut by 36% over six years, and *volume* by 21%.

The poorest nations have been exempted from farm reforms.

2. Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)

Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights or TRIPs cover seven areas:

1. Copyright
2. Trademarks
3. Trade secrets
4. Industrial designs
5. Integrated circuits
6. Geographical indications
7. Patents.

Each of these items is intended to protect the rights in the areas concerned for a prescribed period. The idea is to ensure uniformity so that any copyright or invention by an individual or an organisation is respected by all member countries.

3. Textiles

Before the (Marrakesh) GATT agreement, trade in textiles was governed by an arrangement known as the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA). Under this agreement countries such as the USA, those in the European Community (EC), Canada, Austria, Norway and Finland maintained certain quantitative restrictions on the import of textile items from developing countries (including India).

Under the new GATT dispensation these restrictions will have to go in ten years. In other words the MFA will have to disappear in ten years.

4. Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs)

Under the Trade Related Investment Measures or TRIMs each country is free to follow its own foreign investment policy. The agreement on TRIMs only requires that in the matter of import of goods, it shall not be made

a condition that a venture with foreign investment would not be allowed to import goods that are normally allowed to be imported by others.

5. Services

Currently there are no international trade rules relating to services such as banking, insurance, transport, tourism, consultancy telecommunications, construction, accountancy, films, labour services etc.

The GATT accord now incorporates basic rules for fair trade practices and principles such as non-discrimination in the area of financial services, telecommunications, air transport and the movement of labour.

Is GATT Good or Bad for India?

Are the GATT arrangements settled at Marrakesh good or bad for India?

Let's first consider the arguments which say that GATT is bad for India. There are six areas which have served as focal points for opposing GATT in India. These are:

- The accord will force the government to reduce subsidies to farmers.
- The government will compulsorily have to import three per cent of the domestic demand for agricultural products.
- It will interfere with the government's policies on public procurement operations and the public distribution system.
- The Agreement will require the patenting of seeds, forcing farmers to buy them from multinational firms.
- It will seek product, instead of process patents in the drugs sector, leading to astronomical hike in drug prices.
- Above all, it means India's loss of sovereignty.

Are these Objections Valid?

Subsidies to farmers

According to the agreement a reduction in subsidies to farmers arises only if subsidies exceed 10 per

Services

In services, while industrialised countries are seeking access to our market for capital intensive service industries like banking, life insurance, telecommunications, etc., we are seeking greater access for the movement of skilled and professional people to render services in industrialised countries. At present, visa and other restrictions are impeding the delivery of services by our professional people. Greater access for movement of skilled and professional people from India will enable us to increase our export earnings from the services sector, particularly in areas like computer software, consultancy, hoteling, medical and educational professions etc.

A.V. Ganesan
former Commerce Secretary
Government of India

cent of the value of output of a product. According to one estimate India provides minimum support prices to 20 agricultural products, where the subsidy is less than 10 per cent.

On the other hand, as the popular leader of the Shetkari Sanghatana, Mr. Sharad Joshi, has pointed out not only is the farmer in India not subsidised, he is actually a victim of negative subsidy. [Please see his article on this subject (page 13) on what he means by 'negative subsidy' and how he has arrived at the figure that the negative subsidy is as high as minus 69%].

Compulsory Imports

This will not apply to India because India is under a balance of payments cover in GATT by virtue of which India still has the right to impose quantitative or other restrictions to regulate or even prohibit imports. The agreement on agriculture is for a period of six years. It is unlikely that the balance of payments cover for India will be lifted in the near future however improved the BoP situation may now appear to be.

Public Distribution System

There is no basis for this statement because the public distribution system in India is essentially meant for subsidising the poor (in economic terms) consumer and it is not a subsidy for the farmer.

Should India Get Out of GATT or Why China Wants to Get In

In the light of the criticism that India has lost her sovereignty, Mr. Rajwade discusses whether we should get out of the GATT:

"The main issue is whether we could have got a better deal or whether the balance of gains and losses is so much against our interests that we should consider withdrawing from GATT; as of now, mainland China and the erstwhile communist nations in Europe are the only ones which are not members, but they too are trying their best to join as quickly as possible.

"Multilateral and growing free trade is as powerful an engine of economic growth as any and it would be suicidal for India to even consider withdrawing from GATT.

"Consider what this would imply. We would lose our 'Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status - viz. that duties on our exports are not more than those of any other country's - and would have to

negotiate it bilaterally, and every year, as China is doing with the United States. The painful, and no less humiliating, process is the principal reason underlying China's anxiety to joining GATT which automatically ensures MFN status. The fact that China, last year had to pass a far more restrictive law on intellectual property than what the Marrakesh agreement calls for is an indicator of how much worse off we could be outside GATT.

"Given that withdrawal from GATT was not a feasible alternative, the question is whether we could have improved upon the terms. The first point to be noted is that we are a puny nation in trade terms. Our international trade is less than half a percent of the world's and this limits our bargain-

ing capacity. Remember that such a mighty trading nation as Japan had to bow down to the inevitable and lift its ban on rice imports, a highly emotional issue for that country. So did Korea.

"One also wonders how many critics of the agreement have actually read the proposals, and understood their implication and those of the alternative courses of action. It is foolish to expect that such a complex series of negotiations can ever lead to an agreement fully satisfactory to all the signatories, let alone all the politicians in all the signatory nations. It is time to forget Dunkel, who has become a private citizen months back, and get on with the job."

A. V. Rajwade

Thus Spake the 'Experts' ...

Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav (Janata Dal):

"The Janata Dal will not allow the government to mislead the people on the new GATT it is going to sign to barter away nation's sovereignty for petty gains...

"When big farms are set up with facilities for aerial spraying and computerised monitoring of the crop as is going to happen with the entry of foreign entrepreneurs with their bulging cash barrels, the dream of land to the tiller would disappear into thin air..." (*The Times of India* April 5, '94).

Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee (BJP):

Speaking at the Anti-Dunkel rally organised by the BJP on April 6, '94 Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee said the Dunkel proposals were indication of US design to mould the entire world in accordance to its wishes. While we viewed the world as a family with our faith in the principle of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, for the US the world was a market. (*Indian Express*, April 7, '94).

Mr. Bal Thackeray (Shiv Sena):

Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray con-

demned the decision of the Centre to sign the GATT saying it amounted to establishment of another East India Company in the country. (*Indian Express*, April 17, '94).

Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi (BJP):

We see GATT as an attack on India as a mission, India as a message and India as a culture. (*The Times of India*, April 16, '94).

Mr. Kamal Morarka (Samajwadi Janata Dal)

"In April 1989, the US realised India had a weak government under Rajiv Gandhi. They knew they could push us through anything, they realised they could easily arntwist India. So they forced India to accept GATT as they framed it." (*The Sunday Observer*, April 10, '94).

Mr. C. Chandrashekhar (Samajwadi Janata Dal)

"These investors (coming into India as a result of the GATT agreement) would concentrate only around big cities like Bombay, Ahmedabad, and they are not going to invest in the backward regions of

Jaisalmer or Kalahandi. This would create more imbalance and sow the seeds of disintegration." (*The Times of India*, April 14, '94).

Mr. S. Gurumurthy (Akhil Bharatiya Swadeshi Jagaran Manch - an RSS outfit)

Mr. Gurumurthy said that since no special mandate of the people has been sought through a referendum to sign the GATT treaty, the signature of the Rao government on the treaty would be a public forgery in the name of the people of India and would not bind the sovereign people of India. (*The Times of India*, April 13, '94).

Mr. Jagmohan (former Governor of J&K)

"What is most disconcerting, India will lose its most treasured possession, its distinctive value system. Unlike most other developing countries, India is heir to an ancient civilisation and is a repository of great culture which has given to the world a new outlook on life, an outlook which values spirituality more than materialism." (*Indian Express*, April 28, '94).

The Patenting of Seeds

The GATT signed at Marrakesh does not compel any country to patent seeds (ie. plant seeds). According to the Agreement countries are either free to give patents or adopt a *sui generis** system of protection or a mixture of both for the protection of plant varieties. It is for each country to adopt its own system for the protection of plant varieties.

Seeds are not patentable in India. We can adopt our own system for the protection of plant varieties. Such a system of protection will provide for "farmers' rights" and "researchers' rights". The farmers' rights include their using the seeds for their own use or for exchange in the village community according to their traditional customs. The farmers' rights will be fully safeguarded under our own system and the plant breeders' rights protected. There is therefore no truth in the allegation that farmers will not be able to retain the seeds for their own use and they will have to buy seeds

*According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, *sui generis* means "of its own kind, peculiar, unique."

every year from multinational companies. On the other hand such a system of plant breeders' rights will make available improved and better varieties of seeds in the market, and a major beneficiary will be our own agricultural research institutions.

Hike in Drug Prices

It is true that when products are covered by patents there is a tendency for their prices to be high. But the nature and level of price depends on many factors. Firstly, of the total number of drugs available in the market in India only 10 to 15% are likely to be covered by patents at any time. Secondly, non-patented medicines are generally available as alternatives, and the extent of such availability will act as a check on the prices of patented medicines. Thirdly if the domestic environment is favourable the patent may be worked in India and the domestic manufacturer may keep prices down.

It is only in respect of those products that may be newly given patents after the Marrakesh GATT agreement and which are likely to come into the

market towards the early years of the next century that the price rise may be felt. There is therefore no basis to fear an immediate and all round increase in the price of drugs and medicines in the market. But the fact remains that the Indian Patents Act, 1970 would need to be brought in line with global laws.

Loss of Sovereignty

Of all the canards being spread about GATT, the one that is being assiduously spread, particularly by the BJP leadership, supported by their newly found socialist and leftist allies, is that by signing the GATT agreement India has breached, if not surrendered, its sovereignty.

Should we then conclude that both communist China and Vietnam who are queuing outside GATT for admission are hell-bent on giving up their sovereignty?

GATT membership - Gains & Losses

The country could emerge as a major exporter of agriculture produce including cereals, fruits and vegetables.

What is a Patent?

A patent confers exclusive rights on an inventor to make, use and sell the product or process of his invention. Without the consent of the patent owner no other person can make, use or sell the patented product on a commercial basis. For a patent to be granted, the invention must be new, non-obvious and useful. A patent system thus encourages investment in research and development in order to bring about new and useful inventions. It is an incentive for innovation. The patent system protects inventors and their inventions from being copied or pirated by others.

Major areas of Divergence

The major areas of divergence between the Indian Patents Act 1970 and the GATT agreement are as follows:

The Indian Patents Act, 1970

The Indian Patent Law does not provide 'product' patents in food, pharmaceutical and chemical sectors; in these areas, the Indian law provides only 'process' patents.

The duration of a patent in India is 7 years in the case of food and pharmaceutical sectors and 14 years in the case of all other sectors.

The Indian law provides for automatic compulsory licensing in the case of food, pharmaceutical and chemical sectors, which means that compulsory licences would be available to anybody in these sectors without the patent holder being heard or even if the patent holder works his patent in India.

At present there is no system for protection of plant varieties in India.

The Indian law does not allow patenting of life forms

GATT Accord

The GATT accord requires product patents to be provided in all branches of technology.

GATT provides for a uniform duration of 20 years for all patents.

GATT permits compulsory licensing on the merits of each case, but the patent holder will have to be heard.

GATT requires an effective *sui generis* system for the protection of plant varieties.

GATT requires micro-organisms to be protected.

"In recent weeks America and France have been pressing for an addition to the declaration from Marrakesh. Their demands are unclear but at a minimum they want a promise that the new World Trade Organisation (the successor to GATT) will examine how labour standards and workers' rights ought to affect trade rules. The proposal sounds innocuous, even benign. Yet it caused anger in the developing world. India's prime minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao... said this week that such moves could become 'an alibi for raising protectionist trade barriers.'

"...The charge that developing countries are engaged in 'social dumping' - competing unfairly by denying their workers basic rights and decent conditions - is potent. It appeals equally to rich-country self-interest and self-righteousness. The competitive threat from third-world exports is likely to increase over the next few years; as it does, social dumping will challenge environmental protection as the issue most likely to force radical change on the global trading system.

"Some complaints of social dumping hardly deserve to be taken seriously. Those who regard it as 'unfair' for Chinese workers, say, to be paid less than American ones, and who call for tariffs to redress the balance, are in truth opposed to trade between rich and poor countries. This is extreme protectionism in the crudest possible disguise. When its advocates claim as well to have the best interests of developing country workers in mind, they are surely hypocrites too. Countries cannot pay their workers more merely by deciding to do so. They must first produce more, and the best way to spur growth is to trade...

"Both within India and in the GATT, political conflicts are emerging from the arbitrary nature of the concept of trade-related, and these conflicts need to be resolved in a coherent fashion, not with the double standards that are characteristic of the government of India stand, which is willing to allow non-trade matters like IPRs to be brought into GATT but would like to resist non-trade matters like social policy to be part of the GATT and WTO regime.

"The so-called borderless world that free trade has created is borderless for capital, not for labour. People's mobility is controlled even more strictly by immigration rules, while all rules to control the mobility of capital have been dismantled.

Free Trade or Foul?

"Other concerns, however, cannot be so easily dismissed. Slavery, which is wicked, is still practised in some developing countries. Children should be educated, not sat at looms or made to carry bricks all day. Workers should have the rights of assembly and free speech - which, in some developing countries, they are denied. You do not need to be rich to outlaw slavery or grant the rights of free speech and assembly; education is costly, but curbing the cruellest sorts of child labour is widely affordable. Therefore, is it not right to put pressure on offending third-world governments to change their ways, and if it does not put other interests at risk, the answer is Yes.

"Granting that pressure may sometimes be justified, why not let trade policy be the means? Free-traders, such as this newspaper, would like to answer that pressure of this kind never works. In fact, it often does. Against large countries and small, America has got its way by threatening trade restrictions..

"The difficulty can be stated simply enough: governments cannot be trusted with trade policy. If, as trade policy activists implicitly assume, governments were competent and dedicated to the public good, there would be less to worry about. The institutions that liberal democracies use to rule themselves are needed precisely because governments in the real world are often incompetent and always subject to demands from narrow, organised interests. The GATT is one of these needed institutions - an especially necessary one, because trade policy is an area in which governments, left to themselves, are especially

unreliable.

"If industrial countries insist on bringing labour-related rights into the multilateral trade talks, they will do the opposite... For instance, a trade rule on child labour might keep countries in which that practice is common (whether or not legal) out of the WTO; on the other hand, if a country joined the WTO after signing up for the rule, but was then unable to enforce it, it would be prey to every species of rich-country protectionist, henceforth equipped with few grounds to seek trade sanctions. In the battle between liberal trade on one side and the protectionism that helps to keep poor countries poor on the other, the balance would have shifted decisively in the wrong direction.

"Those who truly seek to advance the cause of human rights in the third world should weigh this carefully - and reluctantly conclude that the costs of pressing for new links between trade and basic human rights outweigh the likely benefits. They should call for diplomatic pressure instead; and tell rich-country consumers about human-rights abuses, then let them make up their own minds about whose goods to buy. That is bound to strike many as inadequate. But in reality most lobbyists seek to use human rights as just another way to raise old-fashioned barriers against poor countries' exports, caring little for human rights, caring nothing for the plight of the third world's poor, caring nothing for the freedoms of industrial-country consumers. The argument is ugly - but it will run and run."

*The Economist (London),
April 9, 1994.*

A Major Instrument for Job Destruction

"However, as capital moves unrestricted in its search for greater profits, jobs are lost. Unemployment is becoming the biggest social crisis of our time. While jobs are being destroyed both by restructuring of corporations as well as by migrating industry, it is the spectre of the loss of first world jobs to the third world that the US is raising. The social clause debate in the GATT achieves two things simultaneously. It detracts the attention of the workforce from the multinational corporations which have become major job liquidators in recent history and have also been the propelling force behind the Uruguay round of the GATT. It also directs the anger of the jobless to the third world.

"It is not true that the movement of transnational corporations to the south is a major cause of northern unemployment. Most movements of capital take place among northern countries and only a small share goes to the south.

"In the debate on labour standards in GATT, the government of India has totally failed to point to the unemployment and drive towards lower wages that are resulting from global economy dominated by multinational corporations and the Bretton Woods institutions - the World Bank, IMF and GATT."

*(Ms. Vandana Shiva, The Independent,
April 15, '94)*

The new economic policy and the GATT arrangement could lead to the generation of eight to nine million jobs every year.

In his article in the *Business Standard* (April 13, 1994), Mr. T. C. A. Srinivasan Raghavan sums these up rather succinctly:

"The pros and cons of the Uruguay Round for India have been discussed threadbare, by experts and ignoramuses alike. The divide which has developed is a sharp one. Those who support it mainly talk economics; those who oppose it, only politics.

"The truth is that India has gained in some ways (for instance more liberal trade in agriculture) and lost in other ways (no gains in trade in textiles for 10 years after the rules take effect). This makes it difficult to gauge the balance, which will also depend on what Indian firms make of the new trading opportunities. Overall though, unless India bungles on the macro economic side, the gains ought to outweigh the losses.

"Did India handle the negotiations well? There is no easy answer to that for two reasons:

"One, India was always negotiating from a position of weakness. It had nothing to give except access to its markets. But given the fog of ideology which enveloped policy, this was considered to be only a little short of a return to being colonised. Second, until 1989, India was represented at GATT by a man who belonged to the old Mahalanobis type exploitation school. Intellectually too, he would have been more comfortable at UNCTAD than GATT. The former, as everyone knows, is essentially anti-MNC, pro-state intervention, and ambivalent about markets. The latter, however, tends to look at the world through the eyes of the regulator rather than the polemicist.

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"...It was not even as though India had some clout in international trade. Its share of the total world trade stood at less than half per cent which made its pretensions even more

Sovereignty

"Webster's Dictionary defines sovereignty as the 'supremacy of authority or rule as exercised by a sovereign or a sovereign state'. The first recorded breach of domestic sovereignty of a ruler occurred in the thirteenth century when King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta, which for the first time gave some civil rights to citizens. In the international context every agreement among nation-states compromises the signatories' sovereignty in that it binds them to conform to the terms of the agreement. It is pointless therefore to criticise India's joining 115 countries in bringing to an end the long drawn out Uruguay Round of negotiations to modify, and enlarge the scope of, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, on grounds of breach of sovereignty."

ludicrous. To be strong and talk is one thing; but to be a verbose weakling, that simply wasn't on. So in the two years from 1985 when the Uruguay Round had started India talked itself into irrelevance...

"...As the smoke settles, one thing is clear: India got none of the things it started out to get. The MFA remains for another 10 years at least; trade in services is very much within GATT now and labour export as an obverse of capital imports is not being countenanced even for a moment. Hopefully, the right lessons have been learnt. These are that trade policy cannot be driven by ideology and by bureaucrats who do not understand business. In future negotiations India must involve businessmen much more closely. In the end, it is Indian firms which matter, not political parties, politicians and bureaucrats."

Acknowledgements

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Indian IPR Laws Inconsistent

On the one hand India has introduced the Trade & Merchandise Bill even before Dunkel, which is the most reformist and progressive legislation in any part of the world, and on the other, it has the most regressive, archaic and anachronistic piece of legislation related to IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) and patents, said Mr. R. A. Shah, a leading solicitor.

Though internationally renowned brand names and trade marks did not receive adequate protection in India, the situation has now changed, said Mr. Shah. Now brands such as Pepsi and Xerox do not need double-barrel appellations like Lehar Pepsi or Modi Xerox.

Under the current patent law, pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and food products require 5 years from the date of sealing the patent or 7 years from the date of filing, or whichever is shorter. The irony of it, noted Mr. Shah, is that it takes at least 7 years for the patent office to grant a patent application. Just when the patent is sealed and issued to the patentee, its term, duration and validity expires. The grant is thus contemptuous and it is not worth the paper it is issued on, he explained.

"This has been the main cause of global indignation against our present patent law. Another irritant is in respect of the 7 year period. The patent is granted for the process not the product. Moreover the burden of proof is on the patentee in case of infringement. Thus in practice, the process patent has no meaning. To add insult to injury, every pharma patent granted in India is deemed as a licence of right," added Mr. Shah.

The GATT accord mandates that these obnoxious features are eliminated.

(IPR Update published by Interpat-IPF (India), Bombay)

Not Making the Best The Enemy of the Good

In his own inimitable style Swaminathan S. A. Aiyar has dealt with various criticism of the GATT. Here are some extracts from his column 'Swaminomics' in The Times of India.

On the issue of sovereignty:

"Pariahs are fully sovereign"

"If a country wants to be completely sovereign, it has to cut itself off from all groups and agreements. Such a nation has complete freedom. The problem is that it has no international rights either. It can be kicked around and discriminated against by any other country, and has none of the protection that international agreements bestow. It will be a pariah."

"Burma is the only developing country to have become a self-appointed pariah, and the misery this has inflicted on the Burmese people has been sustained only by the autocracy of military rule. No democracy would tolerate such misery in the name of sovereignty."

"There can be many views on the desirability of GATT. But those who argue that we should leave simply on the ground that it erodes our sovereignty are guilty of advocating that we become pariahs in international trade."

"The issue is not whether membership of any group erodes our sovereignty - it unquestionably does - but whether the benefits of pooled sovereignty outweigh the losses. In GATT, the key advantage is that every member gets most-favoured nation (MFN) treatment in trade from all other members. The US cannot, for instance, give Japan more favourable terms than it gives India."

"If India leaves GATT, it will by definition be entitled to less than most-favoured nation treatment. Some simpletons actually believe that, after getting out of GATT, India can negotiate superior bilateral trade agreements with all countries. Do these simpletons really think the developed countries are stupid enough to give better than MFN treatment to a pariah?"

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On GATT being an unequal trading system:

"Who's afraid of subordination"

"...In the Times group, I am subordinate to my proprietors...I will remain subordinate no matter how talented I am, because I was born in the wrong place. Unfair and unequal though my position is, I find it advantageous to remain in the Times group rather than quit. My leaving will not make the system any more equal. Besides, despite the many constraints I labour under as a subordinate, the system nevertheless presents me with many opportunities for achieving my personal goals, which I would lose if I quit...And for the same reason, India should continue in GATT..."

"Clearly an erosion of sovereignty is not good enough reason for (India) to quit GATT. Nobody can doubt the determination of China and Vietnam to uphold their sovereignty, yet both are clamouring to enter GATT. As the Chinese Ambassador said the other day, it makes sense to work for your goals within an unequal system rather than remain a pariah outside. Despite inequalities, the global trading system provides opportunities for great improvement: Singapore has in three decades become richer than its erstwhile colonial master. But by quitting the system, you (the reference is to a journalist in *Frontline* who had suggested that India should quit GATT) and I will not achieve more or become richer than Mr. Ram (who owns *Frontline*) or Mr. Jain (who owns *The Times of India*)."

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On the East India Company syndrome

East India Co. in reverse

"...The end of the cold war meant India could no longer play off one superpower against the other, and a host of new demands came from the US - on human rights, intellectual property rights, and capping our

nuclear and missile programmes.

"Many leftists in India denounced this as renewed imperialism in a unipolar world. They suggested that India should band together with other developing countries against the US. But India had already found (in GATT and elsewhere) that other developing countries would rather strike bilateral deals with the US than join hands with India."

"Where then was India to look for new allies? Where could it obtain some countervailing power against pressures from the US Administration? The unexpected answer has turned out to be - US investors. It is rightly said that the business of America is business, and all US Administrations view the world through the eyes of multinationals, partly though not wholly. Top members of every administration (including President Clinton's) include people drawn from business. One of Mr. Clinton's economic advisers, Mr. J. Rubin was formerly with Goldman Sachs, an investment company which hopes to funnel billions into India."

"The flood of dollars into India in the last year has taken our foreign exchange reserves to over \$15 billion. This has had another vital foreign policy consequence - it has deprived the US Administration of the leverage it normally enjoys over developing countries in need of aid and trade concessions. In a major recent speech, Senator Lee Hamilton, who dominates the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had castigated India's proposal to deploy the Prithvi missile, and suggested that the US should use its voting power in the IMF and World Bank to pressure India into giving up Prithvi. However, thanks to foreign investment that has poured into India, the country is no longer dependent for dollars on the IMF and the World Bank, so this American leverage has disappeared..."

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National 'Ulti-patti' for Kisans

Enter the World of Negative Prices

Sharad Joshi

Thanks to the GATT Act the Government was forced to admit that the Indian farmer has been subject to a regime of 'Ulti patti'. All these years he has been required to pay 69 per cent of gross proceeds as informal tax.

The very first experience I had as a UN official-turned-farmer of marketing the produce was very bizarre and is closely linked with what is happening at present in connection with the GATT.

In my first *Kharif* season, I planted some cucumber, a quick yielding crop that helps cash-disposability. Three days after dispatching ten bags of cucumber to the Pune market, I walked jauntily into the cramped office of the commission agent, expecting on the basis of my experience as a consumer, to net at least Rs.300. The commission agent's clerk took out an envelope, handed it over to me rather brusquely and curtly demanded payment of Rs.32 and odd. Totally at a loss to understand, why I was being asked to pay rather than receive money, I opened the envelope and saw the contents of the account slip. It contained remarks which can be roughly translated as follows:

"Your produce was sold with unsparing energy, the proceeds were nevertheless, insufficient to cover the expense of transport, portage, agent's commission, weighing charges, cess of the marketing committee and deduction towards the Chief Minister's Fund."

The net outcome of the transaction was: I worked for five weeks to produce cucumbers, the sale proceeds of which were insufficient to cover even the post-harvest expenses incurred after the consignment left my field. Despite the disaster, no agency was willing to forgo its claim; the truck transporter got his fare, the *mathadis* got their portage, the agent got his commission, the market committee got its cess and I had to shell out, in addition to ten bags of cucumber, Rs.32 and odd.

In the technical dialect of agricultural marketing this kind of communication is called the "Reverse Slip" or "Ulti patti" in the vernacular. The 'Ulti patti' experience made me feel, at least for a moment that I had entered the mad-

mad world of "Alice in Wonderland" or even more appropriate, "Through the looking-glass". I had arrived in a world of negative prices where the seller was required to hand over not only the sale commodity but an additional sum of money in cash. It was to take me a few more months to realise that even in cases, where some positive sum of money came to me by way of sale proceeds, minus deductions, the amount received was hardly enough even to cover the cost incurred in production, so meticulously recorded in my account books.

My fears were confirmed when I helped a group of landless labourers start work on land allocated to them during the 'emergency'. The project report showed that even under most favourable assumptions, it would have been difficult to pay even interest on the bank-loan for a well.

Give hundred; take sixty

It appeared absurd to me that agriculture should be, as a Hindi proverb goes "Give hundred, take sixty; Protect forefathers' reputation".

I made a cursory study of costs incurred and prices received for some fourteen commodities and came to the conclusion that the Indian farmer lost about Rs.12,000 crores every year due to unremunerative prices.

Dr. Dalip Swamy and Dr. Ashok Gulati published two years later their celebrated paper giving the conclusion that the loss to the Indian farmer was of the order of Rs.5,000-6,000 crores.

The difference between Swamy's and my estimates are substantial but understandable. The learned economist had worked on the basis of the cost figures of the then Agricultural Prices Commission (APC), which were notoriously conservative in any case. It was heartening, nevertheless, that finally some recognised economist admitted the deficit character of the agricultural sector, no matter the

size of the deficit.

Goebbels of the Left

Those were the days in which leftist jargon held sway. Anybody owning more than a couple of hectares was considered to be a rich kulak sucking the blood of the poor peasantry. Smita Patil, Shabana Azmi and such-like stars abounded in art films like 'Akrosh' depicting all land-holding farmers as villains, all cut from one piece of cloth. The learned Dr. Ashok Mitra had come to the categorical conclusion that agricultural prices were extremely favourable to the farmers, that the terms of trade were moving continuously in favour of agriculture and that the kulaks had become co-sharers of political power along with the capitalist-industrialists. Even the man-in-the-street was convinced that farmers were a pampered lot receiving subsidies galore on fertilizer, electricity, seeds and what not and the rascal had managed to dodge all burden of income taxes to boot. The atmosphere was full of venom for the land-holding farmer. Any stick was good enough to beat him with. If the Government imposed increasingly stringent land ceilings, hurrah to it for its bold and progressive measures.

Dividends of Dunkel

Some 15 years have passed since then. Agricultural trade has become important enough to be included in the agenda of the Uruguay Round. The Government of India was required to submit official figures of subsidies given to the farmers. The Government submitted three successive lists, first in 1990, and then again in 1993 and 1994. In 1990, for the first time the Government admitted that farmers in India had no product-specific subsidy worth the name and had, in fact, a negative subsidy of 2.3%. What does it mean? Simply that, but for State intervention, the farmers would have received market prices 2.3 per cent higher than they actually did. In 1993 the Govern-

ment become bolder and more honest and admitted to having levied negative subsidies to the tune of some 6 per cent. In February 1994, the latest document submitted to GATT Secretariat, the Government admits to having imposed on Indian farmers a negative subsidy of over Rs.24,000 crores (18% by official computation).

In public, all ruling party leaders continue to talk of subsidies being just a little negative. I have not heard any ruling party leader publicly admitting the figure contained in the latest submission to the GATT secretariat, i.e. of -18%. The actual situation is much worse. The Ministry of Commerce admits that in respect of just 20 commodities farmers had a negative subsidy of Rs.24,000 crore. It admits that, had the Government not imposed bans and restrictions on exports and organised dumping against its own farmers, the producers of these 20 commodities would have gained Rs.24,000 crore more than they actually did. This

loss to the Indian farmers of twenty commodities comes to 68.88 percent of total value of production of these commodities. The Ministry of Commerce has tried a sleight-of-hand and divided the amount of negative subsidy on twenty commodities by the aggregate value of all agricultural products and arrived fraudulently at -18%.

Confession of 'Ulti-Patti'

Thanks to the GATT Act the Government was forced to admit that the Indian farmer has been subject to a regime of 'Ulti patti'. All these years he has been required to pay 69 per cent of gross proceeds as informal tax. While the highest rate of income tax for the non-agricultural sector is 60 per cent of the net taxable income, even the humblest kisan is subjected to a tax of 69 per cent on the total turnover.

Some very embarrassing questions naturally come up. One, why did not the "village-address" MPs and other leaders

ever talk of the national 'Ulti patti' on farmers? Were they really blissfully ignorant of it? Or they observed conspiratorial silence all along? Either way its too bad.

All those leftists too need to explain why all their erudite discourses never revealed the enormous fact of a minus 69% subsidy.

And lastly, all those critics of loan-waivers can work out the astronomical amount the Government owes to the farmers at the rate of Rs.24,000 crores per year less Rs.14,000 crores the cumulative amount of rural indebtedness.

The minus 69 per cent 'Ulti patti' on the Indian farmer is a sad, sad fact and many, many will need to answer for it.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI is a leader of the Shetkari Sanghatana.

Courtesy: Mr. Sharad Joshi and *The Times of India*.

Implementating the Provisions of the 'GATT'

The following is based on a letter from Mr. Moreshwar Temurde, Deputy Speaker, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, written in February this year, to the Prime Minister of India.

We whole-heartedly welcome the decision of the Government of India's acceptance of the "DUNKEL DRAFT". The acceptance of this proposal gives a new horizon to Development in general and more particularly to the field of agriculture.

Sir, actually I doubt whether the Government of India is keen on implementing the provisions incorporated in 'GATT'. The socialist pattern of the Nehruvian Model by imposing barriers in the agricultural sector, concerning the production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce, deprived the farmers of their legitimate rights to compete and to get the benefits of an open market system. Some of the constraints experienced in Maharashtra are mentioned here:

1. The Central Government has issued an order imposing a levy on Rice Mill owners to the extent of 30% of the rice processed. Though the levy appears to be imposed on Rice Mill owners, the latter pay lower prices to farmers to bridge the difference between the support price and the open market price for paddy.

The imposition of this levy must therefore be withdrawn immediately.

2. In a 'Welfare State' like Maharashtra, in

the name of the 'Welfare of the Adivasis', all agricultural and forest produce can only be purchased by a government agency known as the 'Tribal Development Corporation' (TDC), and these are purchased at much lower rates than those prevailing in the open market. As a result, Adivasis lose at least Rs.50-100 per quintal of produce. Is this not exploitation of Adivasis? All monopoly purchases by the Government should be scrapped immediately, including the Cotton Monopoly Scheme. Monopoly is against the principle of 'Democracy'. Monopoly means absence of competition; it means dictatorship.

3. Recently, the Government of India decided to ban the export of cotton bales as also ban the export of the unutilised portion of the cotton export quota of five lakh bales, already released for the current year, to safeguard the interests of cloth mill owners as also to control the price of cotton in the local market. Such restrictions on export creates a doubt whether the government has really accepted the Dunkel Proposal or has merely acceded to them on paper with no intention of implementing them.

4. Maharashtra is the biggest producer of

sugar. The sugar industry is almost entirely in the co-operative sector. Whole villages are attached to a sugar mill as 'Captive Producers', thereby preventing them from selling their sugarcane elsewhere. Restrictions of this sort deprive the farmers the advantage of higher prices available outside this zone. Moreover, the Government of Maharashtra has issued orders to 'Sugar Mills' imposing a ceiling of Rs.450/- per tonne of sugarcane whereas open market rate was as high as Rs.700/-.

These are some instances where our farmers are compelled to sell their produce well below market price, thereby depriving them remunerative prices and pushing them into indebtedness.

The Government of India has to take strong measures to remove these impediments and allow the Indian farmer to be a free producer. As the farmer is the producer and owner of his produce, he has every right to sell his produce to anybody at any rate and at any place, even outside India. Restrictions imposed in the production, processing and marketing of his produce must be lifted forthwith to give him an opportunity to compete in the open market in India as well as to export.

Mr. Moreshwar Temurde

Continuing Erosion of the Federal Structure

The way in which the federal structure of our Constitution is being constantly eroded, is now provided with an example.

It seems that the Prime Minister was asked to choose the leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Gujarat who will become the Chief Minister of Gujarat. This is absolute nonsense. The Chief Minister of Gujarat has to be selected by the people of Gujarat and the Gujarat Assembly. This easy way of passing the buck is inconsistent with the federal structure of our Constitution.

President & PM: The Essential Difference

There has been an attempt to denigrate the status of certain functionaries who are supposed to be independent of the government of the day.

Such are state governors, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and, in particular, the Chief Election Commissioner. This is part of the tendency of the Union Government to grab authority under a Constitution which has divided power and kept the Union Government in a somewhat subordinate status.

Mr. T. N. Seshan, therefore, deserves every credit for holding out for the independence of his high office.

It is significant that the Constitution talks of the President of India but never mentions the Prime Minister of the country. He is described as the Prime Minister of the Union government which is somewhat different.

Amendments to the Cr.PC: A Mixed Bag

The various amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code on which the Union Government is now engaged are all not very desirable. However one of these to prevent women being arrested between sunset and sunrise is a good amendment.

The grant of bail to those guilty of serious offences like murder is also not desirable. A speedy solution of the murder charge would be much more to the point than this measure.

Carry On Mr. Khairnar

One's heart goes out to Mr. Khairnar, the Deputy Municipal Commissioner, who is putting up a valiant fight against the powers that be.

Not only is Mr. Khairnar working according to the rules, but has shown great guts. It is a pity that honest people like him are persecuted by those who are in authority.

The response to my Appeal

I have not appeared on the platform of a public meeting for a long time, but I was persuaded by my friend, Mr. S. V. Raju, to do so the other day when there was a public meeting at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan with Mr. Ram Jethmalani in the Chair and Mr. Sharad Joshi as the main speaker.

The meeting was called to consider the steps that needed to be taken to organise a movement to put pressure on the government to ensure that it honestly

implemented the reforms.

I had earlier made an appeal to younger people on these lines (see *Freedom First*, January-March, 1994) and I expressed my satisfaction that something on these lines was being contemplated.

The Swatantra Bharat movement that will be formally launched in Nagpur on October 2, I hope will stand for those very same ideals which the Swatantra Party stood for, namely free enterprise and *dharma*. One may ask why one more political party to add to the welter of parties already around. My answer to them is just because the original (Swatantra) Party failed, there is no reason why such an attempt should not be made again.

For starters, I see no hope in any of the political parties around today. They all have limitations. The Congress cannot fulfil the tasks laid out in the Constitution because of its reputation, and the Bharatiya Janata Party cannot do likewise because it is a communal party.

A Question of "Integrity"

Everyone keeps telling that Dr. Manmohan Singh's integrity is unquestionable. One supposes it depends on what one understands by the term. Dr. Singh had a long innings as a bureaucrat holding important positions like Governor of RBI and Secretary to the Government of India. He has been actively associated with policy making and one has found him to be a time-server sailing with the prevailing wind. So, what does all this integrity of Dr. Singh add up to?

K. S. Ramamurthy

THE LITTLE RED HEN

Why she never again baked any more bread

Once upon a time, there was a little red hen who scratched about the barnyard until she uncovered some grains of wheat. She called her neighbours and said, "If we plant this wheat, we shall have bread to eat. Who will help me plant it?"

"Not I," said the cow.

"Not I," said the duck.

"Not I," said the pig.

"Not I," said the goose.

"Then I will," said the little red hen. And she did. The wheat grew tall and ripened into golden grain.

"Who will help me reap my wheat?" asked the little red hen.

"Not I," said the duck.

"Out of my classification," said the pig.

"I'd lose my seniority," said the cow.

"I'd lose my unemployment compensation," said the goose.

"Then I will," said the little red hen, and she did.

At last it came time to bake the bread.

"Who will help me bake the bread?" asked the little red hen.

"That would be overtime for me," said the cow.

"I'd lose my welfare benefits," said the duck.

"I'm a dropout and never learned how," said the pig.

"If I'm to be the only helper, that's discrimination," said the goose.

"Then I will," said the little red hen.

She baked five loaves and held them up for her neighbours to see.

They all wanted some and, in fact, demanded a share. But the little red hen said, "No, I can eat the five loaves myself."

"Excess profits!" cried the cow.

"Capitalist leech!" screamed the duck.

"I demand equal rights!" yelled the goose.

And the pig just grunted. And they painted "unfair" picket signs and marched round and round the little red hen, shouting obscenities.

When the government agent came, he said to the little red hen, "You must not be greedy."

"But I earned the bread," said the little red hen.

"Exactly," said the agent. "That is the wonderful free enterprise system. Anyone in the barnyard can earn as much as he wants. But under our modern government regulations, the productive workers must divide their product with the idle."

And they lived happily ever after, including the little red hen, who smiled and clucked, "I am grateful. I am grateful."

But her neighbours wondered why she never again baked any more bread.

Believe it a lot!

From: General Manager

To: Department Heads

"On Friday evening at approximately 5 p.m., Halley's Comet will be visible in this area, an event which occurs only once every 76 years. Please have the employees assemble in the park area outside the building and I will explain this rare phenomenon to them. In case of rain, we will not be able to see anything, so assemble the employees in the canteen and I will show them a film on it".

From: Department Head

To: Deputy Department Head

"By order of the general manager, on Friday at 5 p.m., Halley's Comet will appear above the area outside the building. If it rains, please assemble the employees and proceed to the canteen, where this rare phenomenon will take place, something which occurs only every 76 years."

From: Deputy Department Head

To: Superintendent

"By order of the general manager, at 5 p.m. on Friday, the phenomenal Halley's Comet will appear in the canteen. In case of rain in the area outside the building, the general manager will give another order, something which occurs once every 76 years."

From: Superintendent

To: Foreman

"On Friday at 5 p.m., the general manager will appear in the canteen with Halley's Comet, something which happens every 76 years. If it rains, the general manager will order the comet into the area outside the building."

From: Foreman

To: Team Leader

"When it rains on Friday at 5 p.m., the phenomenal 76-year-old Bill Halley, accompanied by this Comets, will drive the general manager through the area outside the building to the canteen."

Courtesy: The Gateway

The Great American Bubble

Sharad Bailur

Unfortunately, much of the health of the world's economy rests on the strength of the American economy. If the American economy collapses, it can lead to major upheavals not just in the economic sphere but in the way the world is politically run.

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives has finally passed the NAFTA Bill. Like the Gadarene swine the people's representatives appear to be bent on the demolition of the economy of their own country in ways which it would have been considered impossible just two short decades ago. There is a whole range of policies that the United States could do without, entirely to its benefit, which would put its economy back on track if only it did not fall victim to populist nonsense. It does, without fail, due to the vested interests of those who seek election to power and duly get elected on the strength of their propaganda machines.

Let us begin with a small refresher in fundamental economics:

Money: Money is a medium of exchange and confers on its possessor the power to purchase goods. Inherently it has no value of its own at least not in this day and age. Credit cards that are not supposed to be money also confer on their possessor the power to purchase goods, and therefore, act as money.

The Central Bank of a country: This is the organisation which creates and manipulates the total quantity of money that exists in its economy. In the United States it is the Federal Reserve Bank.

Inflation: This is the phenomenon of rising prices. Or to put it another way, of the diminishing purchasing power of money. Inflation is caused either by too much money chasing too few goods or if the economy heats up and the number of exchanges of money for goods increases.

Free trade and customs barriers: In a highly developed economy,

conventional wisdom has it that the more the trade between nations, the more prosperity it generates, increasing levels of income and well being. To facilitate more trade, therefore, countries like the United States believe that customs barriers should be brought down all over the world. Hence GATT. And NAFTA. It went ahead to set an example and reduced its barriers progressively starting some twenty years ago and today there is only a token 5% customs duty on selected items. Virtually anything can be imported freely. The only exception, perhaps, is the physical quota on the import of textiles. This, combined with a freely convertible currency, means that the world sees the United States as its market. Logically this American policy has about as much validity as the curious assumption made by religious leaders all over the world that if everyone in this world were to become good, the world would be a paradise to live in. What the Americans ought to have done was to budget for a world which is *not* a paradise in the certain knowledge that other countries would take advantage of its shortsightedness. They have done exactly the opposite with disastrous effects to the economy.

Control of Inflation: Governments control inflation in two ways. One by increasing taxes to mop up the excess money floating around in an economy, and two by floating long term gilt edged securities on the market offering a certain interest which again does the same thing. Increasing taxes is unpopular because it is seen by the paying public as highway robbery. So the central bank is persuaded to float government backed securities. So long as it is the central bank, and the central bank alone, which has

sole control over the creation and manipulation of money in an economy the task of controlling inflation is relatively simple. Once the government decides to step in by deficit spending, things become more complicated but even then they can be controlled since the central bank acts virtually as an arm of government. If the prerogative of creating money, or rather creating purchasing power, is given over to all and sundry the control of inflation becomes impossible. In a sense lending activity by any agency whether it is a pawn shop or a commercial bank increases the purchasing power of the people and thereby adds to inflation. But in the case of these agencies the lending is against specific security and there is an upper limit beyond which it cannot go, unless all norms to sound lending are deliberately thrown to the winds, which is highly unlikely, since these agencies want their money back.

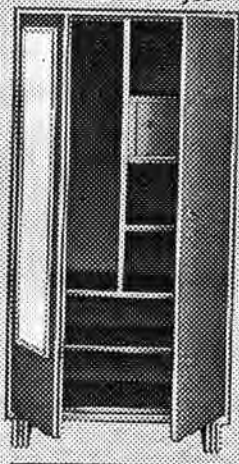
Credit Card Economy

In the United States the situation has been turned upside down. Anybody but anybody can issue credit cards. Therefore, anybody with anything to sell does. Everybody has credit cards and everybody buys on the strength of a promise to pay tomorrow. When the economy takes a down turn the desperation to keep above water can get so bad that selling acquires prime importance even if it is on a "deferred payment basis" which may never come good. The population of the United States is therefore the most indebted in the world. Credit card companies depend upon a national bank of information on the credit worthiness of a potential customer to which they have access when necessary, or when they think it is neces-



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sary. This bank builds up a "credit history" of everybody who has participated in any form of economic endeavour - this means everybody. And the information is available to anybody under the Freedom of Information Act. Organisations offering credit cards whether it is Chevron wishing to sell jewellery (believe it or not) or Randalls wishing to sell tractors (which may sound just as ridiculous, but it does) go to this bank of information and offer goods to potential customers against their own credit cards.

Premium on Dishonesty

Incredibly no single organisation shares information with any other on how much credit it has offered to any single customer. This is because all other organisations are their competitors. So if my credit worth is assessed at \$3,000 by the credit information available, it is perfectly possible that I should be offered credit worth \$2,500 by 200 different credit card companies. I can then go about with credit cards against which I can potentially borrow \$500,000! The credit card companies cover themselves with the credit insurance organisations who charge high premium rates for the risk they are taking. The credit card companies in turn charge high interest rates to their customers — as much as 21%. If there is a default (the default rate is as high as 30%) the credit card companies have only to arrange for an annual write-off and recover its dues from the honest card holder in terms of higher interest rates. In other words, there is a premium on dishonesty. Compare this with the going rate of 3% for certificates of deposit with banks.

In Keynesian macroeconomic terms the high cost of loanable funds is an indication of high inflation. Inflation is kept artificially low by mopping up currency from the market with government bonds. These government bonds are then traded on the market at a discount. The more the quantity of government bonds being traded on the market the higher is their discount rate. The discount rate

is now so high that banks cannot offer more than 3% on fixed deposits to customers, since if they need money at slightly higher rates they can always get them by trading the government bonds they hold. What has apparently never been understood is that monetary control is only a palliative and a temporary one at that. The government cannot reduce the minimum wage. That would be unpopular. It also cannot make things easy for industry to manufacture within the United States, by protecting domestic industry since import is free.

Government to the Rescue

I have always been sceptical about the Ananda Marg, the Proutist Movement and of its guru P. R. Sarkar. I am therefore, by definition, sceptical of anyone who subscribes to its ideology however well known the personage may be. I, therefore, did not hold Dr. Ravi Batra, who wrote his famous book about the crash of 1992, in particularly high esteem — till I read his new book, "The Myth of Free Trade". He seems to have come to precisely the conclusions I came to on my own, only in greater detail. The fact is that the United States has never known adversity and cannot understand the meaning of belt-tightening. This is as visible in the gross overweight of its population as it is in the gross overpayment for the work they do. There is a lot of truth in the old British soldier's gripe about American soldiers being overpaid, oversexed, overfed and over here. If the American people worry about rising prices the government ensures that they are kept low by increasing government debt by mopping up excess currency. And this can never work in the long run. It cannot increase taxes — for the people would promptly recall their representatives in the government. The move to increase taxes on petrol by four cents to the gallon met with strong opposition. Yet gasoline prices in the United States are among the lowest in the world. This at a time when it imports 75% of its crude oil needs. It is aware that the high prices of goods manufactured in the country

are partly the result of high wages that it insists should be paid to workers — the legal minimum wage rate today is \$4.50 per hour. When things produced in the country are expensive and import is freely allowed, and if things produced abroad are of better quality and come cheaper, people buy the imports. Much of the downfall of American industry can be attributed to this one single factor.

The US Debt Trap

It might appear to some that with the passing of the GATT agreement recently, the United States has a lot to gain. It does not. It has had to give in on a lot of detail in the small print and hopes to make up with things like intellectual property rights. But other countries have not agreed to fully free trade since they have a lot to lose. What others want is that the US should continue with its low or non-existent barriers to enable them to sell their goods in the US, while simultaneously protecting their own markets from foreign competition. In persisting with the policy of free trade, with NAFTA and with GATT the United States is willingly impoverishing itself entirely to the benefit of other countries. The government debt today is 4 trillion dollars and rising at the rate of 6 billion dollars a month. In three years or less the United States Government can bankrupt itself because the national debt will rise, at the present rate to more than \$6 trillion at which point the government will find itself unable to pay even the interest on the bonds it has floated.

Take NAFTA. If Mexico were as well off as the United States the move for NAFTA would be entirely justified. Today NAFTA means that almost all American companies will start manufacturing south of the border at one fourth the price and sell to the American people for money they do not have, courtesy the credit card system, and the government will pick up the bill with more gilt edged securities. All that NAFTA can do is to increase the inflationary pressure, now being kept artificially low. In defence of NAFTA, Mr. Clinton him-

self went on TV to tell his people that if the jobs went to Mexico it would increase the purchasing power of the Mexican people and they would buy American goods because of the free trade agreement. What he did not tell the people was that with its own tariff barriers being virtually non-existent the American market is flooded with goods made abroad. If the "newly rich" Mexicans want to buy goods, there is nothing to prevent them from buying better quality goods made elsewhere in the world at prices lower than those for which American goods sell.

What, for example, do other countries do? They protect their markets, encourage competition among producers within their economies to increase quality and to keep prices low and they export, export, export. Take Japan. It is not even willing to import rice. But tell Japan that the United States plans to raise customs duty on the import of cars, and see what happens. The United States is not even aware that the myth of the all powerful American dollar has increasingly become known to be just that - a myth, precisely because of its policy of import, import, import.

Drastic Restructuring Needed

What America needs is drastic restructuring. There has been a lot of talk about the post industrial world where information and knowledge replace manufacturing. Toffler called it "The Third Wave". The theory had about as Hegelian a smell to it as Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis. What was not realised was that unlike manufactured goods, of which there is always a physical limit on quantity, information is infinitely extensible. For all its pride in leading the world in cutting edge technologies, much of the cutting edge is now being done by Japan and the Asian tigers. Texas Instruments, for instance, gets all its software from Bangalore in India.

Whether they like it or not America will have to stop resting on its hard earned laurels, and get down to the serious business of manufacturing for its own domestic market. It

can do so only by raising customs barriers, keeping tight control on wage levels, and if necessary, subsidising its industry instead of subsidising consumption through government bonds and thereby subsidising, indirectly, the industries of other countries. It can curb the menace of the credit card economy by insisting on the sharing of information among credit card issuing organisations so that they can recover what they have lent. It can do so by raising taxes across the board especially on items of conspicuous consumption. It can stop using the "Monetarist route to prosperity", and stop issuing government bonds to siphon off currency. That way it will gradually facilitate the raising of interest offered by banks to depositors and by lowering the interest charged on lending, to bring about some sort of correspondence between the two. It can do so by export, export, export at qualities better and prices lower than anybody else. It can do so by devaluing the dollar and making imports that much more expensive. That will also make exports that much cheaper and therefore that much more competitive. All this it can do, for it has the inherent strength of the prosperity that it has won over the last two hundred years, and the undoubted genius of its people which makes it the world's only super power.

Unpopular Measures Needed

It calls for unpopular measures that will have a drastic impact on the bubble of spurious prosperity on which most Americans today live. They do not want the bubble to burst and anybody who tells them that it will, is dismissed as a crank. Unfortunately, much of the health of the world's economy rests on the strength of the American economy. If the American economy collapses, it can lead to major upheavals not just in the economic sphere but in the way the world is politically run. If the American bubble bursts, and it today rests on increasingly sharp economic edges, the world's economy collapses. So while it is in the short run interests of the rest of the world to make the best of the willingness of America to continue

wearing its self-created blindfolds, America can bring the rest of the world down with it when it finally collapses, as it must, given its present policies. And with the signing of NAFTA into law the United States has deliberately taken a further step towards its own economic suicide.

If it follows a policy of trade barriers, American industry will boom. This will increase employment and thereby consumption against earnings, instead of against a mythical promise to pay on deferred payment basis. The per capita rate of savings will rise from a bare 1.8 per cent to more respectable levels and so will the rate of investment in new industry. A minor increase in prices till things stabilise with more production within the country is a small price to pay for what is clearly a goal of increased prosperity for its people and the economy and for better stability for the rest of the world in the long run.

MR. SHARAD BAILUR, until recently a bank executive, is now a consultant in laser printing.

What is NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a treaty signed between the United States, Canada and Mexico to ensure that there are no trade barriers between the three countries. This agreement should ordinarily have done a lot for the economic health of these three countries. The problem is not with NAFTA. It lies with the fact that the United States has virtually no trade barriers with anybody else either. Other countries elsewhere are not members of the agreement but have the freedom to sell their goods freely in the United States and now, courtesy NAFTA, in the other two countries as well. But these three do not have reciprocal freedom elsewhere; hence the American insistence on getting GATT pushed through. The result is that a country like Canada with high wage levels will suffer from pneumonia because the United States sneezes. As for Mexico, with its comparatively low wage levels, it will be able to export freely to the United States and will import all that it wants from elsewhere in the world at prices lower than what it must pay for American or Canadian goods. While this will undoubtedly do good to the Mexican economy, it can only harm the US and almost destroy the Canadian economy.

Sharad Bailur

The Right to Choose a Dignified Death

B. N. Colabawalla

According to *Dharma*, the choice to relinquish life is as basic as the one to live. Kunti, Gandhari and Dhritirashtra ended their lives in *vanasprastha* when they felt the purpose of their lives had been served.

The concept of the Right to Die is not an intellectual achievement of our era or even of our century. It goes back many centuries to ancient times. Thus, in the Aymara Indian tribes of ancient Bolivia, when an individual became ill and suffered, the family helped him to die. Similarly, in Eskimo culture, when an individual felt he was ready to depart, the family helped him to do so, at times even by killing him. It is to the credit of ancient Greek philosophers that they brought forth the topic of suicide on the agenda of philosophical discussions. The Greeks, at one stage, permitted suicide under certain circumstances; and later, it was even approved by the Greek State, but with official permission. Once again it was the Greeks who enunciated the concept of euthanasia meaning "good death".

Plato in his treatise *The Republic* condemned physicians who allow patients to suffer from lingering death and advocated euthanasia. The Romans held the belief that a good life deserved a good death. Seneca stated "it makes a good deal of difference whether a man is lengthening his life or his death". Then came the dominance of Christian theology in which suicide and euthanasia were anathema and various stigmas were attached to it. The Renaissance saw the revival of liberalism and once again "good death" became a subject for discussion. Sir Thomas More published his treatise *Utopia* in 1516. Though a Catholic, he wrote "since life is a misery to you, why hesitate to die..."

The 16th century began to give man an 'individual' identity. Montaigne wrote "death is a most assured haven, never to be feared, often to be sought". Francis Bacon speaking of physicians treating dying patients opined that they should help "make a

fair and easy passage from life". In the early 19th century, Schopenhauer underlined the individual's "unassailable title to his own life and person". Debates and discussions continued in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in England and America. Attempts were made to legalise euthanasia. The need for an organised platform became apparent and the first Voluntary Euthanasia Society was established in England in 1935. U.S.A. soon followed the example and established a Society in 1938. Today, the World Federation of Right to Die Societies embraces 40 such Societies from 22 countries of the world, with a total membership of over 5 million.

Not Alien to Indian Culture

In the historical perspective, the concept of willing one's own death - *Ichha Maran* - is not alien to our heritage and culture as exemplified in Hindu mythology, which has a dominant and enduring influence on us to this day. Thus, according to *Dharma*, the choice to relinquish life is as basic as the one to live. Kunti, Gandhari and Dhritirashtra ended their lives in *vanasprastha* when they felt the purpose of their lives had been served. Bhishma prepared a bed of arrows on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and willed the day and time of his own death. *Mahaprashthana* is recommended in the *Puranas* for incurable diseases. A Jain sect advocates euthanasia of a severe kind - *Santhara*. The most prominent example of this is Acharya Vinobha Bhave.

The upsurge of interest in the subject, of late, is due to many contemporary factors. Longevity of human life is increasing and the dread of old age and incapacitation is proportionately also increasing with individuals,

We are today exposed more and more to the mass media where these issues are discussed, thus making people think more than before. Not the least of the factors is the impact of modern medical science and technology affecting various aspects of human living and probably societal values. Surrogate motherhood, genetic engineering, foetal sex determination, invitro & invio fertilisation are some of them. But the most important issue is that of one's right to die a dignified death and voluntary euthanasia. There is a growing realisation that whilst modern medicine can save many a life, it can also be indiscriminately utilised not to prolong life, but to prolong the process of dying where continuation of any treatment is futile and only causes unmitigated pain, agony and loss of dignity of life to the individual.

A Humanist Issue

The concept of the respect for life and our duty to preserve life are often brought to bear on the topic of the right to die. Life comprises of two components - the biological existence and the cognitive living. The latter implies that an individual should be in possession of his faculties to the extent that he can contribute to his own physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being. He should be able to communicate meaningfully with fellow human beings and be able to receive and respond to stimuli. When this cognitive life is destroyed, it becomes a biological existence as opposed to real living. To preserve such a biological but insensate existence, or to preserve life in an individual suffering from unmitigated pain and agony when terminally ill from irremediable disease and against his expressed wishes, is the very negation of respect for life. It devalues the basic needs of

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humanism, com-compassion and respect for an individual's autonomy. Tagore said, though in a different context, but perhaps equally applicable here that we must be "made conscious not of the volume but of the value of existence". Gustaffson has aptly stated that "respect for life does not necessarily indicate the pre-servation of human physical life at the cost of unbearable pain to individuals and even to families around".

The essence of this philosophy is humanism and compassion and one which respects the dignity of man and his autonomy to choose. It has no conflict with an individual who subscribes to the concept of the Right to Life and respects his choice. The issue is not one of philosophy, morality, theology, politics or medical science. It is one of humanism.

The 'Living Will'

The affirmation of this right of an individual to a dignified death is embodied in a document variously labelled as the Living Will or "Advanced Health Directive". It is a

Suicide No Longer an Offence

At the time of going to Press, comes a Supreme Court judgement which makes suicide no longer an offence. Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code which recognised suicide as wilful termination of one's own life and hence a crime, has been described by the Supreme Court judgement as being "a cruel and irrational provision and may result in punishing a person again (doubly) who has suffered agony and would be undergoing ignominy because of his failure to commit suicide".

The following report in *The Independent* of April 28 would be of interest.

"Seeking to 'humanise' criminal law in the country, the Supreme Court in a historic verdict yesterday struck down Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, providing for jail terms and fines for persons surviving suicide attempts, while holding it to be a 'cruel and irrational provision' militating against the right to life.

"We state that Section 309 of the penal code deserves to be effaced from the statute book to humanise our penal laws. It is a cruel and irrational provision and may result in punishing a person again (doubly) who has suffered agony and would be undergoing ignominy because of his failure to commit suicide," a division bench comprising Justice R. M. Sahai and Justice B. L. Hansaria observed in their 60-page judgement."

statement of his legal right to refuse any form of treatment under certain conditions of severe and irrecoverable disease or terminal illness. It is executed by an adult individual, in full possession of his decision-making capacity, without coercion or any kind of duress.

A discussion of the Living Will brings us face to face with the very controversial issue of voluntary euthanasia, with its many implications in the realms of ethics, law, theology and medical practice. These need a wider discussion than is possible here. However, there are certain misconceptions about voluntary euthanasia which need to be clarified at this point. It is a misconception to believe that the Right to Die issue has been brought forth to justify voluntary euthanasia. As stated earlier in the historical context, the Right to Die concept precedes, by centuries, the issue of voluntary euthanasia. The latter is merely a vehicle for executing the Right to Die. Opponents of voluntary euthanasia have equated it to "mercy killing". There is no killing in voluntary euthanasia. Killing is a barbarous act committed violently on an individual who has, by no means, given his consent. Hence, to equate the two is either a manifestation of poor intellect at best, or intellectual dishonesty at worst. It is also equated with suicide. Legally it may be so today; but morally it has no bearing on suicide; it is self-deliverance. The sooner the unci-vilised law of making attempted suicide a criminal offence is deleted from the statute books, the better it will be for society as a whole. We must bear in mind that the operative word in voluntary euthanasia is "Voluntary".

DR. B. N. COLABAWALLA, a neurologist by profession, is the Chairman of the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity.

For further information please write to:

SOCIETY FOR THE RIGHT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY
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Maneckji Wadia Building, 4th Floor,
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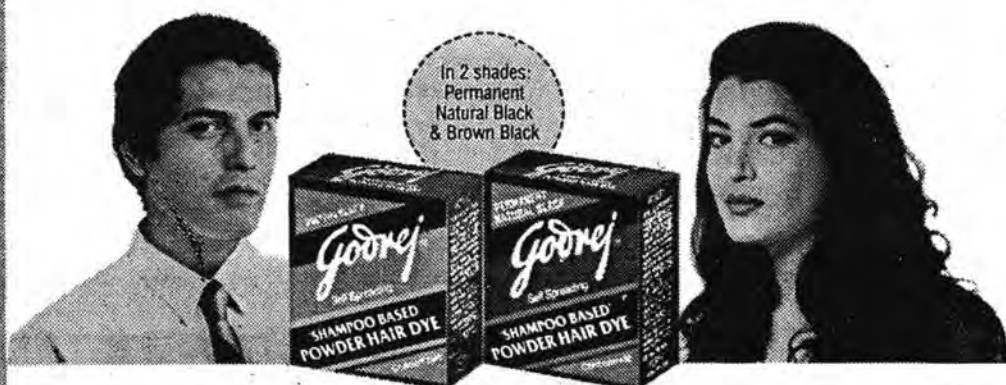
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West Asia : New Challenges to Peace

Nitin G. Raut

Did not Arafat once say: "May my right hand be cut off if I sign any peace treaty that does not include Jerusalem". Indeed, he has signed the DoP, his right arm is intact and the DoP is silent on the future of Jerusalem.

On 13th September 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self Government Arrangements. On 14th September 1993 in Washington D.C., Israel and Jordan declared the attainment of a Common Agenda for the peace efforts. These two momentous events after the 1979 Camp David accord have virtually defused the high voltage tension of the conflict in West Asia. Not that peace has anchored firmly in the turbulent waters of West Asia. Far from it. In fact it has opened up new challenges.

The ultimate aim of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) is to "put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict" and to "achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement" through a process of debate and discussion.

The highlight of the Declaration is autonomy for Jericho and the Gaza Strip under a Palestine Interim Self Government Authority.

Article VIII (Public Order and Security) of the Declaration of Principles envisages the establishment of "a strong police force" of Palestinians for internal security "while Israel will continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats..." In practice it may be more problematic, with the Israelis and Palestinians exercising control over different areas of security and public order. For instance, what happens if an Israeli commits a crime on the West Bank or a Palestinian terrorist opposed to the DoP enters the West Bank? Such situations will require

deft handling and will test the diplomatic endurance of hitherto implacable foes.

A redeeming feature of the Declaration of Principles is that it envisages "direct negotiations" in the event of disagreement and this will operate as a safety valve in an area where even a slight slip could bring West Asia to the brink. It is here that Israel has scored. It has always been Israel's stand that there should be direct negotiations with Arabs, a demand stubbornly opposed until recently by the Arabs.

Although the DoP does not mention the Camp David accord (perhaps because of the fact that the PLO had rejected it, the basic features of the Camp David accord are very much in evidence in the DoP. Both call for Self Governing Authorities and for a transitional period of five years for permanent peace. However, while the Camp David accord envisaged "autonomy" for the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the DoP emphasises the territorial aspect of "autonomy".

The euphoria generated by such events is often not matched by the pace of its implementation. The Arab economic boycott has not only not been lifted but, in fact, has been reiterated by many Arab States.

The PLO was also expected to nullify and delete Articles in its Constitution which call for the annihilation of the State of Israel. The PLO has yet to convene its Palestine National Council for this purpose. It requires a two thirds majority to alter

the Palestine National Covenant, although Yasser Arafat has, in his letter of 9th September 1993 to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, while recognising Israel's "right to exist", assured him that "the PLO undertakes to submit to the Palestine National Council for formal approval the necessary changes in regard to the Palestine Covenant" which are inconsistent with the spirit of the DoP and consequently inoperative and invalid. In other words, even if Israel has withdrawn from Jericho and the Gaza Strip, in theory the PLO can continue to claim the destruction of Israel as its goal. It is also significant to note that other powerful factions in the PLO, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) headed by George Habash and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) headed by Naif Hawatmeh are fiercely opposed to the DoP and have vowed to sabotage it. Will Arafat's Al Fatah faction be able to control them? Together with the Iranian backed Hamas, the PFLP and the DFLP can form a powerful combination to upset the settlement. They have, in fact, stepped up terrorism and Arafat has maintained a discreet silence without a word of condemnation. It is an issue to which Arafat has no answer and neither is he likely to answer.

In Israel too, some sections have accepted the DoP with reservations. Israel's powerful and flamboyant Likud Opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed serious misgivings about the DoP and has suggested an alternative "minimalist plan" for Palestine autonomy. He fears that the proposed autonomy is nothing but a bridgehead for a Palestinian

State. Netanyahu's proposal calls for autonomy for geographically non-contiguous Arab areas on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip while maintaining a geographically contiguous link of Israeli settlements. He is in favour of a comprehensive peace settlement with Jordan to thwart a Palestinian Arab State. If the election of Likud's Ehud Elmor as Mayor of Jerusalem after 28 years of uninterrupted Labours mayoralty and of the independent Ronni Milo as Mayor of Tel Aviv are barometers, there is a wide section of Israelis who are none too happy with DoP.

For many in Israel, the idea of a withdrawal from the West Bank, where about 1,30,000 Jews are settled is alarming. Without the West Bank, Israel at one point would be a mere thirteen-mile strip of land between the Mediterranean and the West Bank and could well be a logistical nightmare in the event of another Arab-Israel conflict as in 1967. Moreover, doubts persist whether the DoP for the PLO is just a tactical move in its sworn goal to eliminate Israel and achieve a diplomatic victory. Did not Arafat once say: "May my right hand be cut off if I sign any peace treaty that does not include Jerusalem". Indeed, he has signed the DoP his right arm is intact and the DoP is silent on the future of Jerusalem.

It is not smooth sailing for the PLO. Terrorism continues and Arafat has refused to condemn the killings perpetrated by Hamas. In fact, he has supported the strikes called by the Hamas and described its militants as "martyrs" and these forbode ill for future peace in West Asia. The Palestinian intellectuals in Tunis and Jordan are also dissatisfied with Arafat's functioning and have called for greater democratization of the PLO. The establishment of the Palestinian Economic Development and Rehabilitation Agency with Arafat as Chairman and his confidante, Farouk Khad-doumi, as Deputy Chairman are instances where Arafat refuses to relax his stranglehold over the PLO. If the dissatisfied elements in Ali Fatah join

hands with George Habash or Naif Hawatmeh then the peace process is bound to run into rough weather.

In Jordan too, the DoP is viewed with concern. Having burnt his bridges with the U.S. during the Gulf crisis, King Hussein fears that Jordanian interests may be sacrificed. A Palestine Arab State is more unwelcome to Jordan than to Israel. So much so that on Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' visit to Amman soon after signing the DoP, King Hussein sought his assurance that the interests of Jordan would not be sacrificed. The implications are clear. What may be in the interests of the PLO may not necessarily be in the interests of Jordan. For West Asia, however, if the present peace process has staved off the possibility of future hostilities, it has ironically created problems of peace, for peace unfortunately was seldom experienced in West Asia and grappling with peace may be problematic. But for a region which has survived four wars, problems of peace can hardly be a deterrent factor in the quest for peace.

MR. NITIN G. RAUT is a lawyer practising in the Bombay High Court.

Peace Accord Signed

At the time of going to press, Mr. Yasser Arafat is esconced in Jericho and the Israelis have withdrawn from this little piece of territory.

An agreement on the details of a partial autonomy was signed on 9th February 1994.

On 4th May, Israel and the PLO signed the Cairo Agreement in the presence of the US Secretary of State, the Russian Foreign Minister and the Egyptian President. This agreement is a landmark as it determines the status of Jericho and the Gaza Strip. While the PLO will exercise control over civil administration, Israel will control defence and foreign affairs. On 18th May 1994, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, handing over charge to the PLO.

Nitin G. Raut

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Islam and Bosnia

Merwyn Hiskett

If the West was bamboozled into failing to recognise the fundamentalist threat in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs, and for that matter the Croats, were not. They were well aware of the radical Islamic activity that had been going on there since before the break up of the Yugoslav union.

Alija Izetbegovic, a Croat Muslim intellectual who is now President of Bosnia-Herzegovina, wrote his *Islamic Declaration* in 1970. This document, which appeared in Turkish, English and Serbo-Croat, from time to time, seems to be little known outside Yugoslavia. It is a long and ardent work that calls on Muslims to renew the practice of their faith in strict accordance with the Koran. The *Declaration* was not made fully public then but, in the words of the editor of the English edition, which appeared in Sarajevo in 1990:

"It was illegally duplicated and circulated among Muslims to serve as an ideological road sign, a manual and a practical instruction for the Islamic propagandist - political and organisational work of adversaries of the secular, non-Islamic order."

Declaration of Intent

The background to this ungrammatical statement is that Alija Izetbegovic and a number of other Bosnian Muslim intellectuals began at this time to organise a Muslim opposition to the secular Marxist state known as the "Young Muslims". The result was that he and twelve other Muslim radicals were arrested by the Yugoslav authorities, charged with "associating for the purpose of hostile activity and jeopardising the constitutional order" and "acting from the standpoint of Islamic fundamentalism and Moslem nationalism". The accused were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment but were later released.

The trial has been criticised as "Stalinist and framed". Yet there is

much in the *Declaration*, to say nothing of the glosses of the English editor, that leaves one with the distinct impression that it was seditious in intent. Whether this justified the author's trial and imprisonment is another matter.

Izetbegovic's *Declaration* was written a few years before the emergence of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Nonetheless, his English editor speaks approvingly of the "Khomeini-like and succinct message contained in the writing of Alija Izetbegovic". My own impression is that the work owes much to the writings of Sayyid al-Qutb, leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who was hanged by Nasser in 1966, for allegedly plotting the overthrow of the Egyptian government of the day. Sayyid al-Qutb was a prolific writer on Islamic revolution. His fierce rejection of democratic pluralism, of nationalism and of all secularist institutions, as well as his insistence on adherence to the strict letter of the Koran and his argument that Islam in its current condition has failed and is in need of complete renewal, are all reflected in Izetbegovic's *Declaration*.

Izetbegovic's work is somewhat rambling, though this may be because of a rather clumsy English translation. It speaks emotionally of Muslim groups "in collision with the mighty forces of the Jahiliya (ignorance, that is the West)". It harks back nostalgically to the heyday of the Ottoman empire and deplores its decline: Turkey as an Islamic country ruled the world. Turkey as plagiary of Europe is now a third-rate country. It denies

the legitimacy of any human authority and avers that:

"It is unthinkable that a Muslim should sacrifice himself for a king or ruler... or for the glory of any nation or party, because the strongest Islamic instinct recognises in this a kind of paganism and idolatry. A Muslim can die only in the name of Allah and for the glory of Islam... the gentlest and least aggressive aspect of Islam."

"Daddy's Sons"

The *Declaration* constantly condemns Sufism, that is Islamic mysticism, a stance that links Izetbegovic, through the Muslim Brotherhood, to the Salafist movement of the nineteenth century. It also condemns modernist reformers in Islamic countries. These are "daddy's sons", schooled in Europe, from which they returned with a deep sense of their own inferiority towards the wealthy West and a personal superiority over the poverty-stricken and backward surroundings from which they spring. Such criticism of the western-educated elite is of course one of the main tenets of the later "Islamic fundamentalism" inspired by Khomeini.

Izetbegovic deplores the abolition of the Arabic alphabet by Turkish modernists and claims, not unreasonably, that "the new Turkish generation found itself with no spiritual prop, in a kind of spiritual vacuum". He lauds the war against the British at Suez, the war for the liberation of Algeria, that for the retention of Islam in Indonesia and the struggle to keep Pakistan Islamic. He insists that for Muslims there is only

one possible way out: the formation and grouping of a new intelligentsia which thinks and feels Islam. This intelligentsia would, then fly the flag of the Islamic order and, together with the Muslim masses, take action to bring about the Islamic idea.

Primacy of Islamic Theocracy

Thus, Izetbegovic appears to envisage the mobilisation of the Muslim masses by a revolutionary Islamic intelligentsia, a programme not unlike that advocated by the Tunisian Shaykh al-Ghannushi - himself a disciple of Sayyid al-Qutb - and his Islamic Tendency.

Consistently with the Islamic radical position, Izetbegovic emphasises that:

"History has no instance of any truly Islamic movement which was not at the same time a political movement..."

... One cannot believe in Islam and act, do business, enjoy one's leisure or rule in a non-Islamic way.

He thus puts a finger on the crux of the Islamic dilemma in the modern world - that Islam cannot be practised as an individual belief system, as Christianity may be, in a surrounding context of secularism and pluralism. Put more starkly, the Muslim must try constantly to set up an Islamic theocracy in order to remain a Muslim. Moreover, "Islam is not nationality. But it is the supranationality of this community (the world-wide Islamic community or *umma*)".

He is puritanical to a degree and would ban all forms of alcoholization of the people, public and secret prostitution, pornography of the spoken word, in pictures, on film and television, casinos, night clubs, dance halls and all other forms of entertainment incompatible with the moral tenets of Islam.

Sometimes he reflects more modern Islamic attitudes, as when urging that polygamy be curbed and divorce restricted. But any conviction this might carry is quickly dissipated by the sequel, an encomium on the sta-

tus of women under a traditional Koranic dispensation, which departs from the reality. He appears from time to time to be conciliatory, as when he renounces the imposition of Islam by "power" and argues that the Islamic state can only be set up through education and moral suasion. But he then appears to contradict this by advocating that the Islamic movement should and can start to take power as soon as it is morally and numerically strong enough not only to overturn the existing non-Islamic government but also to build a new Islamic one.

Towards an Islamic State

Clearly Izetbegovic and his colleagues believed that the death of Tito and the imminent collapse of the Yugoslav union did create such an opportunity to take power. Despite some wooliness concerning ways and means, the kernel of Izetbegovic's thinking is clear.

"First and foremost of these conclusions is certainly the incompatibility of Islam with non-Islamic systems. There can be neither peace nor co-existence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions. And by claiming the right to order its own world itself, Islam obviously excludes the right or possibility of action on the part of any foreign ideology on that terrain. There is therefore no lay principle."

By this reference to "lay principle" Izetbegovic excludes all secular institutions from the territory of the Islamic state. There can be no pluralism. Regarding non-Muslims within such an Islamic state, Izetbegovic states that: "The non-Muslim minorities within an Islamic state, on condition that they are loyal, enjoy religious freedom and all protection". This, which excludes any concession to the secular, legal and pluralist institutions of such non-Muslims, simply repeats the pattern of the old Ottoman *millet* system, where non-Muslims had the status of *dhimmi*s, "protected people". And while Izetbegovic demands that non-Muslims living under an Islamic state shall be "loyal", he clearly does not extend that obligation to Muslims

living under a secular state!

Behind Izetbegovic there stands a recent history of escalating militancy of the Islamic fundamentalist kind among Bosnia's Muslims, which can be profusely documented from Muslim sources. Suffice it here to quote from Kalim Siddiqui's well-known *Issues in the Islamic movement*:

"But the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the leadership of Imam Khomeini have lit the fire of Islam by inspiring hundreds of Bosnian Muslims to return from abroad and preach Islam and, around 1985, pan-Islamic forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina were speculating that Yugoslavia might break up and were hoping to build their own Islamic state."

It has to be said in fairness that given the transcendental certainties upon which Islam is based, Izetbegovic's stance is inevitable. There is no point in blaming the man. It is more profitable to understand that if Muslims did not adopt such a posture, there would shortly be no true Islam - or so they undoubtedly believe. No Muslim worth his salt can contemplate such a possibility. That is the dilemma that faces the non-Islamic West. Yet some have apparently persuaded themselves, particular in the United States, that Izetbegovic has recently repudiated his own *Declaration*. There is certainly no evidence for this in the version published in Sarajevo in 1990. On the contrary, the editor of this edition writes specifically that "The tenets highlighted in the *Islamic Declaration* have never been renounced by its author". This does not support such a belief. But even if a repudiation had been made, it remains understandable that the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats should regard it as one of expediency; and that they should be wary of trusting it.

Understanding Serbian Reaction

When considering the Serbian reaction to all this, certain historical facts should be borne in mind which ought to modify the present, wholly condemnatory Western consensus towards the Serbs. This Orthodox

Christian people lived under the enforced Islamic hegemony of the Ottoman Turkish empire from the fourteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. It was not a happy experience. For the Ottomans during their first expansion period practised a policy of forced population transfers known in Turkish as *surgun*. This took the form of clearing the land of its Christian populations and replacing them with Turkish Muslim peasants and nomads. The policy was implemented by ruthless massacres and the razing of villages. Cities and towns that resisted the Ottoman advance suffered the same massacres of Christian populations and their replacement by Muslim Turks, or sometimes Slav renegades to Islam. The Muslim populations of Sarajevo, Skopje and other Balkan cities originated in this way. *Surgun* continued on and off throughout the middle ages and only diminished with the slow decline of the Ottoman empire from the seventeenth century onwards. It is almost certainly *Surgun*, not *Judenfrei* or any other term from the Nazi extermination lexicon, that gives rise to "ethnic cleansing".

During the nineteenth century the Serbs and the Bulgars, inspired by the French Revolution and encouraged by the pan-Slavic policies of Russia, began to revolt against the Ottoman hegemony. The Turks took a cruel revenge. The well-known "Bulgarian Atrocities" of 1876 which caused Gladstone to thunder his denunciation of the "unspeakable Turk", were just one example of what happened constantly in the Balkan vilayets of the Turkish empire.

At the end of the first world war, Woodrow Wilson wisely recommended that "Serbia (be) accorded free and secure access to the sea", as the eleventh of his well-known "Fourteen Points". In the event this advice was overtaken by the creation of Yugoslavia. It was Yugoslavia, of which Serbia formed part, that gained this access.

The SS Hanjar

During the second world war, the Germans formed the "SS Hanjar",

a unit of Bosnian Muslims that used to terrorise the Serbs. The word, which was germanised as "Handscher", comes from Arabic *hanjara*, "to slit the throat". Whether it was given to these Muslims by their intended victims, or whether they adopted it boastfully for themselves, I do not know. However, since it is Arabic, I assume it arose from a Muslim source. The SS Hanjar are reputed to have massacred 7,00,000 Serbs. Evelyn Waugh, in his reports from Yugoslavia c. 1945, comments on the massacres at that time, of Serbs, gypsies and Jews: Partisan propaganda represents these atrocities as solely the work of Catholic Croats; these were not guiltless, but there is good reason to believe that Mahometans from Montenegro and Bosnia were principally responsible (*Salisbury Review*, September, 1992).

From Secular State to an Islamic State

When the Western powers so foolishly recognised an independent Bosnian state, immediately before the present civil war broke out, this had the effect of forcing the Serbs back into the landlocked position in which they had been before the creation of the Yugoslav union. Their access to the sea was threatened by the imminent creation of the Islamic theocratic state of Bosnia. In addition to this strategic threat from Islamic Bosnia, the creation of such a theocratic state also threatened a large number of ethnic Serbs who lived outside the old Serbian kingdom, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Such Serbs formed 31.3 percent of the Bosnian population (the Catholic Croats formed 17.3 percent and were equally alarmed at the prospect of an Islamic Bosnia). Under the former Yugoslav state these Christian Serbs had lived cheek-by-jowl with the Muslims, sharing the same villages and governed by a common secular law. If Izetbegovic had his way, these Serbs, as well as the Catholic Croats, would have been returned, little more than a century after having won their freedom from the Ottoman empire, to the status of non-Muslim citizens of a theocratic Is-

lamic state, that is they would once again have become *dhimmis*. In view of the history I have outlined, this seems too much to ask of these people. Indeed, the Western powers did not understand the implications of what they were doing when they recognised Izetbegovic's Bosnia-Herzegovina. The real intentions of the Muslims were deliberately played down in an attempt to gain this recognition. Izetbegovic's editor comments, with remarkable frankness, that from the moment when the Democratic (sic!) Action Party (SDA) headed by A. Izetbegovic and led by his like-minded colleagues, won a convincing majority of Muslim votes at the first multi-party election in Bosnia-Herzegovina (in November, 1990), the real nature and meaning of the *Islamic Declaration* became blurred and extremely relativistic. Special care was taken along these lines to divert the attention of the western audience which, as is well known, does not have much sympathy for Islamic radicalism. These endeavours appear to have been successful.

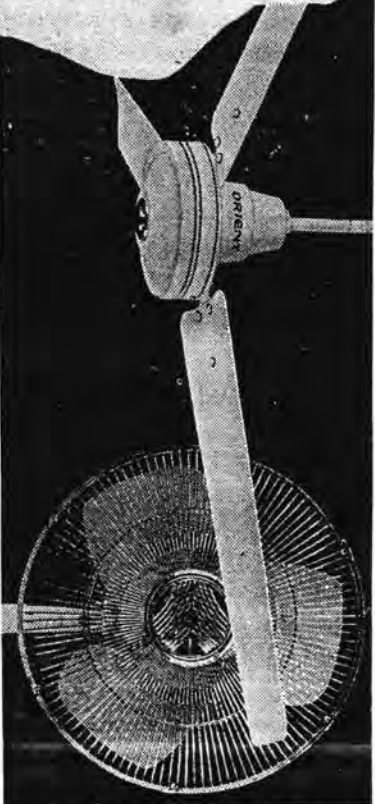
But if the West was bamboozled into failing to recognise the fundamentalist threat in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs, and for that matter the Croats, were not. They were well aware of the radical Islamic activity, described above, that had been going on there since before the break-up of the Yugoslav union. They were simply not prepared to forego the secular status which, communist or not, had been the gift of the Yugoslav state, and return to that of second-class citizens of an Islamic Republic. One can surely not blame them. The great English historian, Sir Robert Ensor, described the Ottoman Turkish theocratic rule over the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth century as "hideous misgovernment". There is no reason to believe that of present-day Islamic theocratic would be any better.

MERVYN HISKETT is a former Lecturer at the School of African and Oriental Studies, England.

COURTESY: *The Salisbury Review*.



ठंडी-मस्त
हवाएं
खुशियों के
झरने बहायें



ओरिएन्ट पंखे क्वालिटी में बेजोड़,
रूबसूरत पंखे।
सीलिंग, टेबल, पेंडस्टल और एक्जॉस्ट—
क्रिस्म-क्रिस्म की डिजाइनों में बेशुमार
पंखे। जो गर्मों के मौसम में,
सालोसाल लायें ठंडी-ठंडी हवाएं,
आपके कमरे में।

ये ताज़ी हवाएं, जीवनभर आपकी हो जाएं

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ORIENT FANS

God and Violence

The essential message that God is not on the side of violence has to be rubbed in, not only with respect to Islamic fundamentalism but also with respect to Christian fanaticism. We would beg our readers to believe that in essential terms the religious words 'Islamic' and 'Christian' are out of place in both these contexts.

Throughout history, religion has been a cause of violence and wars. During most of the present century such phenomena were considered typical of the Middle Ages. The crusades were a notable example: considered for many centuries as a laudable attempt to bring the Holy Land back to Christendom they have been re-interpreted by twentieth-century historians as attempts by barbarians to destroy an Islamic civilisation which was more advanced and peaceful than their own. Marxist historians have added their own gloss: for them the crusades were an attempt to deal with population pressures in western Europe and the troubling problems of primogeniture in feudal society. Saladin is now seen as the prince of chivalry, while England's King Richard - a hero down the centuries - is an archetypal product of the dark ages.

The extremes of historiographers are usually false, and the truth generally settles down somewhere in the middle. In the case of the crusaders, there is little doubt that they were murderers all. And the same will perhaps be said in future of those engaging in so-called religious wars in this ill-fated second half of the twentieth century.

Killing for Religion: Ireland

Islamic fundamentalism is seen as one of the main sources of violence in today's world. These adepts of the Koran are highly selective in their approach to their own holy book; and many Muslim scholars scorn their claim that it justifies violent action. But those who are afraid of the fundamentalists should not forget that the

archetype of religious violence in the twentieth century comes from a Christian country. It is the so-called Roman Catholic cause in Northern Ireland. This struggle is widely portrayed as one between Catholics and Protestants. It was started by the Catholics, goes the story, but there is now a Protestant backlash - so that in the first half of 1993 for the first time since the outbreak of these latter-day "troubles" more people have been killed by Protestant than Catholic gunmen in this province of the United Kingdom.

Yet this portrayal entirely begs the question of whether gunmen of any sort can be described as Christians. The gunmen of Northern Ireland have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by the Pope in visits both to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The government in Dublin is as fierce in its condemnation of the violence as that in London, and President Mary Robinson of Ireland has made one of the most eloquent of all appeals for peace in Northern Ireland. Protestant gunmen have been roundly condemned by the established hierarchy in England by many senior religious figures. The same may be said of church leaders in Northern Ireland itself - although, to their lasting shame, not always with entire sincerity.

Killing for Religion: Bosnia

Such pseudo-Christianity also bears the brunt of the blame for the merciless war in Bosnia. The Serbian aggressors often quite literally march under the banner of Orthodox Christianity, and in this conflict a number

of senior religious figures have been wheeled out from the backwoods to bless the guns of aggression. Serbian propaganda aimed at the countries of western Europe has tried to portray the Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the head of a fundamentalist arrow aimed at the heart of Europe. This is an attractive view to people traumatised by the raw side of the Muslim faith, as shown in the assassination of Anwar Sadat as a reward for peacemaking, or the Iranian *fatwa* encouraging members of the true faith to murder the British writer, Salman Rushdie, and the offer of a reward for his death.

Those who know the Muslims of former Yugoslavia and the Balkan peninsula in general - including Albania, Greece and Macedonia - are aware that these are some of the most secular religious communities of the whole Islamic world. The media in western Europe should insist on the fact that any religious fanaticism there may be in the Bosnian war is on the so-called Christian side and not on that of the Muslim communities. Genuine Christians the world over will hasten to dissociate themselves entirely with the monstrous acts of rapine and torture which have been committed by the Serbs and Croats.

The essential message that God is not on the side of violence has to be rubbed in, not only with respect to Islamic fundamentalism but also with respect to Christian fanaticism. We would beg our readers to believe that in essential terms the religious words 'Islamic' and 'Christian' are out of place in both these contexts.

Killing for Religion : Lebanon

Continuing southward from Northern Ireland through Bosnia to the volatile Middle East we come to similar phenomena. The savage religious wars of Lebanon have been between Maronite Christian fanatics on the one hand and local and imported Muslim fundamentalists on the other. The vast majority of Christians and Muslims in that country were innocent onlookers and victims of a civil war which was carried on in a spirit of medieval savagery, inspired by and indeed approaching that of the crusades. Some of the worst acts of violence were committed by one 'Christian' clan against the members of another. And the worst of all was the murder of hundreds of unarmed Palestinian Muslims, mostly women and children, by 'Christian' militiamen in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila.

Killing for Religion : Israel

In Israel, the peacemaking efforts which are now taking place are opposed by so-called religious experts on both sides. These are people who claim, with little enough evidence to support them, that they own monopolies of religious truth which are mysteriously hidden from the mass of normally religious Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Arabs. As the peace effort between secularists amongst Israelis and Palestinians gets underway we may expect acts of violence from both these extremes. Jewish extremism has been responsible for the death of many Palestinians in the years since the creation of the state of Israel, but as it has never been seen as a threat to the heart of western civilisation as has Islamic fundamentalism it has gained less notoriety. There is also a sense that Jewish violence is justified into the indefinite future by what happened in the holocaust - in which Muslims were in no way concerned. This is a view encouraged by many senior figures on the Israeli right-wing who claim to have nothing in common with violent extremism. One of these is Rafael Eitan, formerly chief-of-staff of the Israeli army, notably

during the war in Lebanon. He has now described the present peacemaking as "an agreement with the greatest murderer of Jews since Hitler".

Ending Killing in the Name of Religion

The courage of Rabin and Peres is in the true spirit of the founders of Israel, men in the mould of Ben Gurion, Weizmann and Dayan. Yet successive Labour leaders were prevented from making peace because of pressure from the opposition Likud and in particular its late leader, Menachem Begin. But Begin himself turned into a man of peace when he took the helm of the Israeli government. In spite of the "rivers of blood" speech with which he greeted his election, his was the first breakthrough to the Arab world - and Likud will never again be as convincing as before Camp David in the role of inveterate opponent of the peace process.

It was the Israeli army under orders from Prime Minister Begin which first obeyed orders to eject Israeli settlers from Egyptian Sinai, and this will be remembered if and when such action is necessary again. Begin invariably called the Palestinian West Bank Judaea and Samaria, part of greater Israel, but his Government never annexed it, thereby maintaining open the options which are being explored today. Many of the settlers on the West Bank have been experimenting with violence, and this means that the weapons which they have been able to keep in their possession to defend themselves against the Palestinians may one day be turned against their own people. Some settlers believe that defending their interests against allcomers may be defined as "doing God's work" - and in spite of the fact that Rabin and Peres were elected to office in democratic elections less than a year ago they are defined as 'traitors' by these circles.

Poverty Fuels Fundamentalism

And so we come to the other great danger to the peace process, Hamas. This was originally set up as a benevo-

lent organisation to help indigent Palestinians in the name of their religion. Such is the case with most of the fundamentalist organisations amongst the Sunni Muslims. In Egypt too, murders are being committed by dissident members of the still-legal Muslim Brotherhood, which claims to be essentially a provident society. In Palestine as in Egypt, Hamas has gained adherents at the grass-roots of the population because it has been able to help in areas of life which no other form of assistance has reached. There are many rich Palestinians in the world, just as there are many rich Egyptians, but none of these riches have ever seeped down to the poor inhabitants of the refugee camps or the poverty-stricken inhabitants of Gaza City. This is why the determination of the fundamentalists to wreck the peace agreement can be foiled only if something dramatic is done to better the lot of poor Palestinians in the shortest possible time. Change usually needs months if not years, but euphoria melts away after days or weeks.

The Rise of Hamas

The great change in the nature of Hamas took place on December 9, 1987, the date now seen as the beginning of the *Intifada* - the latest stage of the Palestinian armed struggle. This was at first welcomed by Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation. But enthusiasm soon cooled when it became clear that most of the credit for its apparent success in seriously shaking the overweening confidence of the Israelis was going not to the PLO, but to the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas. Now that the PLO has officially appealed to the Palestinians throughout the occupied territories to bring their campaign of violence to a halt, those who believe that the Declaration of Principles is a sell-out have no place of refuge other than Hamas.

If it is to succeed, any peace process has to become a handwagon. Unless all the forces involved in it decide to climb on board, it is condemned to failure. Although Hamas has caused ripples of fear throughout the society

of Israel, it should not be forgotten that - as in the case of Mau Mau in Kenya - most of its own victims have been amongst its own people. Trials are not held, and those merely suspected of treason are mercilessly killed. No fewer than 900 Palestinians have been murdered by Hamas since the *Intifada* started in 1987.

It is only now that Hamas has finally broken with the PLO. Although a temporary truce was called in the Gaza strip so that the Palestinians there could watch the signing ceremony in Washington, no figure in Hamas has shown any sign of being prepared to accept the peace process in any shape or form. Since it started its campaign of violence, its leaders have asserted that the old objective of driving Israel into the sea should remain valid for ever and that there is no point in talking about any solution to the Palestine problem which does not involve immediate recovery of the whole land they designate as theirs.

Saving the Peace Process

Hamas is a movement based on religious fanaticism. But enough has been written here to show that it is by no means the only such movement, either in the Middle East or in other parts of the world, to be based on the inherently contrary elements of religion and violent hatred. And by no means all of these movements are Islamic in origin.

In the weeks and months to come, attempts will certainly be made by fanatics on both sides to subvert the peace process between the Israelis and the PLO. Murders and other acts of violence may well be committed with the sole aim of preventing the bandwagon of peace which is propelled by better men and women and better organisations.

There must be abiding consciousness of the fact that one human life has the same value as another. The men of violence on both sides of the

wall of hatred are convinced that the lives of their enemies are less valuable than their own. This is the essential difference between those who favour peace and those who are against it. One of the greatest contributions which the media can play in the peace process is by unceasingly emphasising this factor of the equality of human life.

COURTESY: *Swiss Press Review*

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The Nigerian Crisis

Shanti Sadiq Ali

Primarily, most Nigerians are concerned with the decline of the economy, General Babangida has presided over a country that has been pauperised through graft, mismanagement and the absence of political accountability. Despite its great agricultural potential, Nigeria is a large net importer of food, and although it produces more than half the oil in Sub-Saharan Africa, the country suffers from fuel shortages.

On August 26, 1993 General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's military ruler since 1985, relinquished power.

General Babangida hoped for continued dominance, but apparently abandoned plans to instal himself at the head of an "interim government" because his service chiefs are said to have threatened open rebellion if he insisted on clinging to power. They said he had discredited the armed forces by reneging on a pledge to return Africa's most populous nation to democracy. His decision to annul the June Presidential poll, they charged, was responsible for plunging Nigeria into the worst political crisis since the 1967-70 Biafran war.

Political Issues

The new constitution which, we are told, is modelled on the liberal 1979 one, is still not operative. However, the sections of the suspended constitution, which deal with fundamental rights, are intact and unaltered. But this did not prevent the Government from annulling the Presidential elections held on June 12, 1993 on the claim that the ballot was rigged, although international observers vouched that they were largely free and fair.

This was rather surprising because both the National Republican Convention (NRC), led by Mr. Alhaj Bashir Tofa and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Chief Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba businessman, were actually

creations of the military regime, with their manifestos "issued like equipment"! The Lagos-based Campaign for Democracy said the final tally showed Mr. Abiola winning 19 of the 30 states. He had exceeded by eight states the requirement that the winner get at least one third of the votes in at least 20 states. Meanwhile, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President issued a joint statement demanding the election results be released. But Babangida refused to recognize the legitimacy of the winner of the June Presidential election. Abandoning the plan to instal himself at the head of an "interim government", he named instead Chief Ernest Shonekan, to head the outgoing administration.

All members of the Interim Council have been nominated. The new Council is described as interim but no one is sure when it will be wound up. It is expected to prepare for fresh elections in 1994, in which, it is thought, General Babangida will run. As *The Times* (London) of 28.9.93 commented, "Mr. Shonekan's government may appear largely civilian but it is a marionette in the hands of the military".

Though Mr. Shonekan ordered the immediate release of pro-democracy leaders detained in early July and the editors of *News* magazine and a correspondent of *Tell* magazine detained over stories critical of the annulment of the June polls, pro-democracy strikes have continued to paralyse Lagos, the country's com-

mercial capital. The latest in the pro-democracy movement has been the hijacking of a plane.

Ethnic Factors

Thus, as anarchy looms and investor confidence plummets, Nigeria is on the brink of a serious crisis. Nigeria is a case, along with many other African states, where civilians have failed and the army has not succeeded either, representing as it does the same elitist interests in spite of its radical rhetoric. The problem is compounded by the heterogeneity of the state and different religions. Thus the concept of an independent nationhood subsuming tribal divisions is yet to strike root.

The main ethnic groups are the Igbo (in the east), the Yoruba (in the west) and the Hausa and Fulani (in the north). The Hausa and Fulani are often grouped together because the Fulani adopted the Hausa language and culture and inter-married with them. This ethnic group is the largest and most politically powerful. There are about 248 identifiable groups. According to Larry Diamond ("Class Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria; the Failure of the First Republic (1988)"), the Edo, Hausa-Fulani, Ibibio, Igbo, Kanuri, Nape, Tiv and Yoruba constitute almost 80 percent of Nigeria's 88.5 million population. The 50,000 Ogonis, who occupy just 1,048 km., are being subjected to the most horrendous experiences because they live on oil-bearing land and are a minority.

Religious Tensions

Under Babangida, Nigeria has been rocked by Muslim/Christian disturbances in the North, which, in effect, is a colonial legacy as the British ruled Nigeria as two countries. In the South, Western education and religion were vigorously promoted and English employed as the language of administration. By contrast, the British administered the North through the Hausa language and sought to preserve the region's social structure and institutions, effectively sealing off the North, especially the muslim emirates, from western influence, even in the person of Southern Nigerians. Those Southerners who migrated to the North were forced to live in segregated housing and to educate their children in separate schools and were prevented from acquiring free hold title to land. The Northerners were taught to regard the Southerners as 'pagans' and 'infidels'. This separate administration hindered the development of a national identity. It was not surprising, therefore, that when nationalism began to develop in Nigeria, it largely took the form of separate ethnic nationalism.

In 1991 violence erupted in the northern state of Katsina in protest against the publication of an article which was considered blasphemous. That year at least 130 people were killed in riots between Christians and Muslims in the northern state of Bauchi. In October 1991 more than 300 people were killed in clashes between Muslims (Hausa ethnic group) and Christians, which were suppressed by the army. On May 16, 1992 at Zangon Kataf in Kaduna state, a group of Muslim youth vandalised the fields of Christian farmers of the Kataf tribe, who were poorer and more numerous than the Hausa-Fulani merchants in the town. Disagreement between the Hausa and Katafs over land ownership dates back to a century. The Kataf responded with ferocity. Within three days 1,000 people had been killed mainly Hausa-

Fulani. The surviving Muslim population of 20,000 fled to refugee camps. Their plight prompted more violence in other towns and villages, which took on a more overtly religious - rather than ethnic tone. A state of emergency was declared. On February 1, 1993 Major General Zamani Lekwot, a Roman Catholic, was condemned to be hanged, along with fifteen others for their supposed participation in ethnic/religious riots in Kaduna state. On March 3, Human Rights Groups obtained an injunction preventing his execution. Whatever the decision it will inflame the situation. Already the Christian fundamentalists are bent on ending Hausa-Fulani muslim domination.

Ethnic Tensions

In late 1991, ethnic conflicts erupted in the eastern state of Taraba, as a result of a long standing dispute between the Tiv and Jukin ethnic group. The conflict continued in subsequent months and by March 1992 between 2,000 to 5,000 people were reported to have been killed.

The Ogonis, who live in the River state in southern Nigeria are a distinct ethnic group. Under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chairperson of the Movement for the survival of the Ogoni People, (MOSOP): a non violent struggle has been going on since January, 1993 against the environmental degradation of their homeland, one of the most densely populated areas in Nigeria, by Shell and Chevron in partnership with the Nigerian Government.

This once fertile land is totally polluted and has become a wasteland. To quote MOSOP: "The atmosphere is charged with hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and carbon dioxide. There are five gas flames that burn 24 hours, the noise at night is incredible. The traditional farming and fishing economy has been destroyed. The people have no piped water, no electricity. Moreover, the oil-based economy does not employ the Ogoni people."

The other grievances of the Ogonis is that while people in Borno, the arid part of the country, have free education from primary to tertiary level based on oil money, the Ogonis cannot go even to primary school because the local council cannot pay the teachers. Ogoni's language and culture face extinction. The people have no control over their own affairs and are not represented in the government. The Ogoni nation is largely under-developed, although it produces a sizeable percentage of Nigeria's wealth.

The Babangida regime, in an attempt to relieve ethnic tension, created nine new states and three were renamed, increasing the size of the Federation to 30 states. The Northern region, whose inhabitants are mainly muslims, contains about half of Nigeria's total population and more than three quarters of its physical territory.

Economic Malaise

Primarily, most Nigerians are concerned with the decline of the economy. General Babangida has presided over a country that has been pauperised through graft, mismanagement and the absence of political accountability. Despite its great agricultural potential, Nigeria is a large net importer of food, and although it produces more than half the oil in Sub-Saharan Africa, the country suffers from fuel shortages. The rampant overspending of the federal budget has plunged Nigeria into the World Bank's lower income bracket - per capita income of around \$290 a year compared to \$1,000 ten years ago.

General Babangida handed formal control of the Government to a 32-member Interim Federal Executive Council headed by Ernest Shonekan, while General Sam Abacha, his 'Sancho Panza' in the 1985 *coup d'etat* is deputy head of Government.

A reshuffle at the head of Nigeria's

armed forces strengthened the position of General Sam Abacha as Defence Minister. He comes from the northern city of Kano, and swept aside allies of the former President Babangida as pressure built up on the interim Government to settle the dispute with Moshood Abiola, who had now returned to the country; and also assert its independence from the Babangida regime.

Meanwhile Shonekan resigned as head of State and was replaced by Gen. Sam Abacha. All institutions were dissolved, including all local government councils. General Abacha, in his maiden speech, pleaded: "This Government is a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability to our country and, on this foundation enthrone a lasting and true democracy. Give us the chance to solve our problems in

our own way." On November 30th the country witnessed the formal restoration of the 1979 Constitution, which the opposition had been calling for.

General Abacha strengthened his position as Nigeria's new Head of State at the end of November by purging army officers loyal to General Babangida. He also formed a 33-Member civilian cabinet which balances tribal loyalists and includes several supporters of Moshood Abiola. He has promised elections to a Constitutional Conference in early 1994, probably March, throwing his opponents into confusion over whether this is a genuine opportunity to resolve the recurring political crisis or a bait to gain their collaboration. The *Guardian London*, commenting on their scepticism wrote on 4th December: "They eye Zaire, where President Mobutu Sesa Seko has tied

a similar conference in knots in a successful effort to neutralise opponents and retain power." The Campaign for Democracy has already rejected the conference as an attempt to rubber stamp the military's "unpopular agenda".

There is a glimmer of hope in Britain's announcement in the House of Commons in December that the European Union (EU) will tighten sanctions against the new military Government in a bid to compel it to give democracy a chance. The USA, as a country along with Britain, which has large stakes in Nigeria, should also join in pressurising Nigeria to take the civilian road.

MS. SHANTI SADIQ ALI is President of the African Studies Society of India, New Delhi.

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Nigeria : The Plague of Corruption

When Nigeria attained independence on October 1, 1960, it was in the spirit of the greatest optimism. The government had been democratically elected. This would be the country which would show the world that black Africa was as capable of self-government as any other part of the world. Democratic institutions had been set up by the departing British. All the Nigerians had to do was to use them.

Colonialism bore the seeds of its own destruction. It did not accord with the spirit of the mid-20th century to state that one country had the right to rule another. Many of the premises upon which colonial rule was based were akin to racism. Many people in the so-called European mother countries genuinely thought that white people were superior to black people.

Educated Europeans today are largely free of the dangerous racial illusion. They do not believe that they are better than others. They know that people of all races, colours and nationalities have equal value as individuals. Yet we are still faced with the great problem of why African countries, as well as many other countries in the world, do not seem capable of building up the type of institution which will bring good government under the rule of law to their peoples.

Early African Dictators

Europeans retreated from Africa in the early 1960s in disarray. They were obeying the spirit of the times, and of course there was no alternative. But they should not later have been so conscience-stricken about what they had done. They were accused of being domineering exploiters. But these accusations were levelled at them by African politicians tainted with communism. Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and their ilk looked to Moscow for help - but for help in what? In exercising dictatorship in their countries which were infinitely more repressive than anything which had existed under British or French rule.

It was to the credit of successive

Nigerian politicians that they never took the easy road to Moscow. They never - except under the most recent incumbent of the messiah's throne - exercised absolute dictatorship. Nigeria had different problems. Its politicians had to deal with the huge problems of tribalism. Many of the politicians who had been groomed in the British stable of democracy were from the south of the country, in which colonial power had been concentrated. But the Muslims of the north were more numerous than the southerners, and when they came into their own they could claim that it was the British themselves who had told them that the majority should rule. The first president was from the south, an Ibo from Eastern Nigeria, the skilful though mild Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe - Zik to Nigerians, friend and foe alike - and of the latter he had few.

Monuments to Corruption

Moscow-oriented African politicians were both politically and financially corrupt. But this did not mean that the others were not money-grabbers. Although they wanted no truck with communism, Nigeria's politicians became huge monuments of corruption. Successive ministers of finance, not to speak of other government members, simply looted the nation's financial resources. Successive military regimes stepped in with the stated objective of rooting out corruption. When they thought they had succeeded, they would hand power back to civilians, but new ones. This actually happened more than once, but the new civilian rulers turned out to be just as corrupt as the old ones. So the military took over again.

This just about sums up the post-

colonial history of Nigeria - until the most recent past. The military government of Ibrahim Babangida - for many months past opposed by the heads of all past military governments, as well as most other Nigerians - was different in that it became as corrupt as the civilian administration that it replaced. This is why, when the time came to go, it did not hand over to a man elected by the people, but to a nominated civilian who would still be answerable to the military. The new government would no doubt be able to hang on to power until the former rulers had effectively hidden or otherwise disposed of their ill-gotten gains.

Destroyers of a Great Dream

These are of course strong words. But perhaps there are no words strong enough to describe those who destroyed what was, after all, a great African dream. A spokesman of the trades unions, which did so much to bring about independence, was recently quoted by *Time* magazine as saying: "The colonialists did not do as much damage to the national psyche as Babangida has done".

The immediate answer to Nigeria's problems is of course a return to democracy. But then corruption will have to be rooted out if democracy - and the country - is to survive. This has become a genuine matter of survival - and it is difficult to see how it can be done. But one thing is clear: the initiative has to be taken from the top and nowhere else.

COURTESY: *Swiss Press Review*

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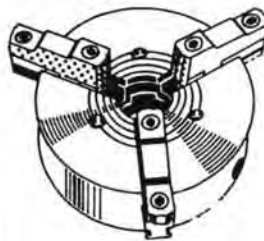


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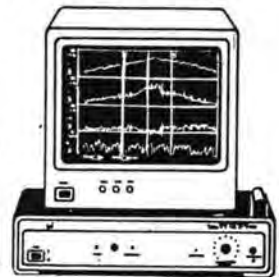
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BOOK REVIEWS

WOMEN WRITING IN INDIA, VOL.II - THE TWENTIETH CENTURY edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha; Oxford University Press, Delhi; 1993; pp.642; Rs.500.



**Reviewed by
R. Srinivasan**

Volume II of *Women Writing in India* completes a major publishing venture of the decade - that of collecting the entire significant corpus of women writing and recollecting their position from the very beginning to our own days. It is not only feminist writing but women's writing as well. It contains translations from writings in the various Indian languages and none of us can ignore this - for this concerns about half of our people.

The book is in two parts. The first is the introduction - placing the extracts in a political and sociological context and helping us evaluate and understand the writings better. It will interest more the student of literary criticism and the social scientist than the common reader. Three distinct stages are seen in modern India which were to profoundly affect Indian women - the 19th century reform movement beginning with the efforts of Ram Mohun Roy; the national struggle which again deeply churned

all aspects of social life; and the third movement starting from the 1970s. The last brought into the arena a conscious, questioning generation of educated women who, with confidence and courage, began an era of protest. It was in this period that organizations for furthering the cause of women began to work together focusing upon the continuing exploitation of their sex.

Though women participated in the national movement, it has to be accepted that even by the seventies, the benefits of development, education and health continued to be unequally distributed and women, particularly of the lower orders, gained little of the rights and opportunities that they were entitled to.

Even at the height of the nationalist struggle, the battles waged by the tribals, workers and landless peasants were transformed and used for furthering "mainstream nationalism" acceptable to the then leadership. And to the elite, by and large, women had to be in a supplementary position rather than of equality with men.

The reader who is not familiar with the writings on the national movement and feminist debate would perhaps find the stories and poems themselves of absorbing interest and would do well to go to them directly. After savouring these, he could turn to the introductions and confirm or modify his conclusions. Since it would be difficult for one to grasp at one go the entire corpus from about a dozen languages and regional structures, the reviewer confined himself to the Southern region (the Dravidian), the Bengali and Marathi sections.

In the complex social reality that India is, different regional groups responded in varying measures to the problem of women's liberation. What may be true of the deep South may not

be true of Bengal or of the Punjab. For instance, we find the extracts from South India individualist and family centered while the Marathi and Bengali readings indicate a deeper involvement in social issues and social protest as well. These dimensions are not present to an equal degree in the Southern section.

The editors have, at the outset, mentioned that they have not included Dalit writings and understandably so, for this came into its own much later and are still in the making. There are, however, two autobiographical accounts, one of them reconstructed from an oral presentation. This tantalisingly brief and singular piece makes us yearn for more. The one service that the editors could do is to persuade groups in different parts of the country to collect orally the autobiographical accounts of aging women, which surely will open up an age that we have lost irretrievably. This autobiographical account narrates the initial helplessness, the sense of defeatism in the face of the ruthless, exploiting gang of oppressors but only to bloom into defiance and the waging of a war against the tyrants. The grit, determination, the physical torture, yet the unfailing courage and determination to fight raises it to a great document of the human spirit, in spite of an almost abandoned hope for a better order of things.

While a woman who is unlettered and at the lowest depths of society fights her better-to-do sisters in the upper levels, she finds it difficult and chooses to come to terms with a near oppressive social reality where hierarchy, male dominance and continued insensitiveness to the sensibilities of the other is documented in narration after narration all through the extracts. Whether high or low, women have it out on them all the time, even when they are earning well.

As a film star, Hamsa Wadekar supports the family but they regard her as a money churning machine. Even her husband forces on her his will and compels her to terminate her pregnancies, and unconcerned, sells her jewels - even the little bagatelle that she holds most dearly and against her repeated importunities. If this can happen to one who is economically better off, what of the lot of the poor dalit?

Chaya Datar, a social worker and an activist who obviously has a sense of independence finds herself recalled from her assignment among the tribals just when she feels deeply a sense of fulfilment and individuality and is at peace with herself. Her lot is psychologically only slightly better than the wretched people whom she has come to serve.

What is disheartening is that the women themselves become a party to the exploitation, particularly when they are in a position of advantage. In a few cases, the elders when they are women do see the point of view of the younger girl. Even then they are able to do little to give them succour. Most women who are unable to protest, pocket their resentment and become victims. Young girls are married off even when they do not know what marriage is, and are sent back home for the poor dowry they bring with them. In some cases the worst enemies of married women are their husbands who either do little to protect their wives from rape, if not physically, at least by actions that would have comforted the victim and by words that would have soothed and strengthened them to meet the challenge. In the searing story by Anupama Niranjana, the deeply wronged wife walks away.

Many stories record the indifference of husbands to their wives not because of the constraints of family life, but because of their insensitivity. Even two decades of married life do not make for a sense of equality and comradeship - and this in the case

of a wife who is well employed and has economic independence.

The loneliness of young girls imprisoned in matrimony with no means to open their hearts is portrayed feelingly. Marriage for many women brings no relief but only accentuates their loneliness, heightened by the incapacity of the spouse to sympathetically respond to the woman.

Mahesweta Devi and Sulekha Sanyal narrate another world of the exploited. In the Mahesweta piece the mockery that development administration or relief is, is narrated in a gripping manner. The most wretched of the earth assert themselves and their helpless predicament against a district official, humiliate him, and reduce him to helplessness for a brief while. There is an unforgettable evocation of their world of fable and myth so different from the "civilised" world of the elite. Sulekha Sanyal's pages record the defiance of a generation against the social mores of an earlier entrenched hierarchy, the travails of girls impatient of the senseless trammels that oppress and humiliate them - even denying them a rightful share of food as children. This is again recaptured in the account of Baby Kamli. But not all of these are sombre for there is a hilarious account by Naveneetha Sen of a cat, caught up in an inaccessible cornice and rescued by the fire brigade.

These stories written during the past three decades record how little things have changed for the women of the middle classes.

Recent decades have seen many writers turning to the writing of verse which, though brief, capture unforgettably their lonely predicament. A young person thinks of Akka Mahadevi who was not only a saint but who tore off the trammels that tried to stifle all and walked alone to find her salvation. The kitchen which is regarded as the exclusive domain of the woman imprisons her and turns her very limbs into spatulas.

Wherever she goes, she has to helplessly experience the staring and ogling of mentally lecherous men - she has to learn to cope with this by defying them. Similarly, the poems in Bengali and Marathi. The poems are individual sensitive experiments which explore the prison of the body of loneliness, the process of aging, the sense of anguish of the defiant female human body and of eve revolting.

While women will doubtless read this, it would benefit the male to carefully study the volume and try to understand the problems of the second sex. This has to begin at home and neighbourhood and the volume would do a great deal to open up windows and allow much needed fresh air to waft in and blow off the dust and cobwebs of superstition, superciliousness and dominance.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN is retired professor of politics, Bombay University and editor, *Freedom First*.

CASTE, RELIGION AND COUNTRY : A VIEW OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIA by S. V. Desika Char; Orient Longman, New Delhi; 1993; pp.258; Rs.125.



Reviewed by
Padma Srinivasan

In a country rocked by communal riots off and on in the past, much more rudely in recent times, the above book is a 'macro' journey through the

'micro' lanes of caste and religion to understand their strength and shortcomings and their role in shaping India to-day.

The theme of '*Caste, Religion and Country*' is far more complex but the distinguished author handles them with competence and authority. He has analysed the main characteristics of the Hindu approach to life and its manifestations in different aspects like eclecticism, religion, castes, sects, political and economic spheres. His writing may not be exciting but shows great involvement, painstaking research and insight. Above all, it is thought provoking.

Mr. S.V.Desika Char traces the origin of castes and sects, the indigenous religious and socio-cultural heritage of the country. He proves with authentic examples that no profession was an exclusive domain of any particular caste though there were vocational caste groups. It was not detrimental either to the economic progress or political set up and unity during pre or modern times.

He traverses through the period to make his convictions loud and clear that if the country was to follow the balanced view of the Vedic Aryans, the Hindus might have ushered in a Renaissance much earlier. It was the foreign invasions and centuries of alien rule that hindered the progress of Hindu society. He is especially critical of Muslim rule and the subsequent loss of the heritage of the Hindus. The Hindus did not fight the enemy as their fighting qualities were stunted and blunted since the *vedic* ages by a tolerant religion.

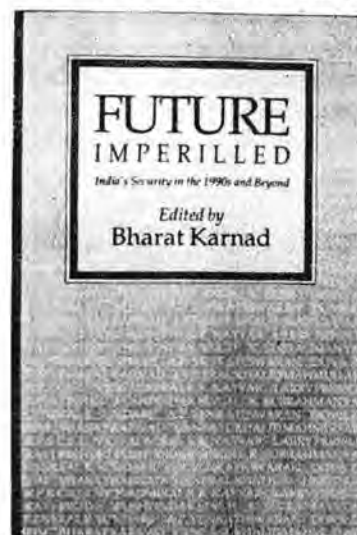
Even when numerous temples were either desecrated or destroyed by Muslim fanatics, the Hindus did not retaliate. The loss of political power and constant attacks on cherished institutions of the Hindus resulted in their seclusion and aloofness. He also laments the lack of development of healthy cross-

fertilization between the Hindu and Islamic traditions which would have done wonders for this country! The Muslim invaders who formed the ruling community, the *Ashrafs* remained aloof and did not mingle even with the natives converted to Islam. Their rule was not broad-based as their source of power was political and military and not the people at large. In fact, this was the chief cause for the decline of Muslim rule. The author is equally critical of the Marathas and their failure to accommodate other Hindu rulers as well as Muslim rulers in their fight against the British and which ultimately led to their decline.

There are a number of avoidable repetitions. For instance, the same reference is made twice on page numbers 133 and 141 and footnoted as number 38 and 61 respectively in the same chapter. Mr. Desika Char moves forward and backward rather than narrating chronologically or thematically. Above all, the periodization in history is either overlooked or overstepped by the author as he deals with periods ancient and medieval. At many places, the distinction between medieval and modern is blurred and mixed up. Hence the latter part of the title does look a bit out of place. As he himself admits, there are 'many dark corners' in his work that need to be proved further. Despite these shortcomings, this book will be a valuable addition for a good library.

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FUTURE IMPERILLED. INDIA'S SECURITY IN THE 1990s AND BEYOND; edited by Bharat Karnad; Viking Penguin India, New Delhi; 1994; pp.258; Rs.195.



Reviewed by
S. S. Bankeshwar

This book, a collection of essays by eminent specialists in different fields,* analyses India's foreign policy and stresses the need for its drastic re-examination and revision in view of the ever-changing global scenario, without compromising our national and regional interests.

These specialists* have rightly questioned the validity of our defence perspectives and argued that India's defence preparedness in terms of availability of conventional and nuclear weapons capabilities is wholly inadequate and also a huge drain on our national resources. They have pleaded for a streamlined and cost-effective foreign and defense policy to meet possible threats from different quarters. They have called for a realistic appreciation of threats and re-examination of our policy options.

This publication deserves careful study by all those who are concerned about India's present foreign and defence policies in a unipolar world where the policy of non-alignment has become irrelevant. After the II World War, most other wars have

been between non-aligned countries. Naturally, other non-aligned countries remained non-aligned when one non-aligned country was attacked by another non-aligned country! Before the Soviet empire collapsed, non-aligned countries were divided into two camps: one supporting the Soviet Union, and the other the United States.

Karnad fears that the collapse of the Soviet empire may pave the way for a regression to mercantilism, atavistic nationalism, religious conflicts and a series of 'super hot' wars because of the availability of state of the art weapons based on advanced technology. Driven by paranoia, rival trade blocs may feel compelled to pursue their economic interests, igniting expansionist and militaristic adventures.

What is most explosive about the emerging situation is that the power to annihilate the enemy with nuclear weapons and to be wiped out in turn may be available for the asking to any country willing to acquire the lethal technology for a price. According to Karnad, the prospects for international peace and tranquility are very bleak.

Rikhye, Pushpinder Singh, K. Subramanyam and Bharat Karnad contend that China, being both the main enemy and the chief national security threat to India in the foreseeable future, needs our country's immediate attention. The multiple dangers to the sovereignty of South Asian countries, in the long run, can only be tackled if India and Pakistan behave as a single unit. It is a necessary strategy that cannot be avoided, warns Karnad. He stresses the need to convince Pakistan to join India in guarding the South Asian frontiers for mutual benefit.

Ayub Khan of Pakistan was the only realistic Pakistani statesman who had similar defence perspectives regarding the need to protect our sub-continent against imperialist China

and had suggested a military alliance between India and Pakistan. Minoo Masani was the only Indian statesman who had then supported Ayub's plea for an Indo-Pak military alliance to defend the sovereignty of our sub-continent. Pandit Nehru, however, contemptuously rejected Ayub's offer and asked: Alliance against whom? China answered this question in 1962 when India suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chinese communist army.

We are today paying the price for Nehru's folly. Now, considering Pakistan's intense and pathological hatred for India, it is indeed most unrealistic to expect Pakistan to agree to any joint strategy to safeguard the interests of our sub-continent against China, however desirable it may be, especially when China and Pakistan are close friends backed by the United States.

India has now unfortunately recognised Tibet as a part of China. Does Karnad suggest that India should fight for the liberation of Tibet from China, incur China's wrath and risk yet another war when we are already facing a grave threat from Pakistan backed by all Islamic countries?

India should have stood by Tibet when it was annexed by China. The United States would have helped India as China and the Soviet Union were her bitter enemies at that point of time. Had India liberated Tibet then with the help of the United States, there would have been no Sino-Indian conflict in 1962. We are now paying a heavy price for Nehru's blunder over Tibet.

Sir Olaf Caroe who, in his various capacities in India's pre-partition Foreign Office, had sought desperately to keep China out by getting a pre-emptive hold of Tibet has thrown light on the Chinese logic of stretching their domain. "Like Tsarist Russia, Imperial China was always expansionist as opportunity offered and

strength allowed. That tradition holds in Communist China is proved by the absorption of Tibet" he wrote in a letter to *The Times* (London) of 4th November, 1954. The loss to India of a neutral Tibet was, he said, not only in terms of the remarkably low cost defence in the north east, built on the gigantic ramparts of the Himalayas, manned by a friendly Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, but also of peace with China.

I quite agree with Karnad's conclusion that only an India-ASEAN-Vietnam defence scheme can meet the joint Chinese-Islamic fundamentalist (Pakistan included) menace.

But, how does this square with Karnad's earlier plea for an Indo-Pak defence scheme against the Chinese menace?

*General Khalid Mahamud Arif, former Vice-Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan Army.

K.P.S. Gill, Director-General of Police, Punjab.

Vice-Admiral K.K. Nayyar (Retd.)

Larry Pressler, Republican Senator, U.S. Senate and author of the *Pressler Amendment* to the Foreign Aid Act.

Ravi Rikhye, well-known commentator on Indian Defence issues.

Pushpinder Singh, a correspondent for the *World Air Power Journal*, London.

K. Subramanyam, Director of the Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses.

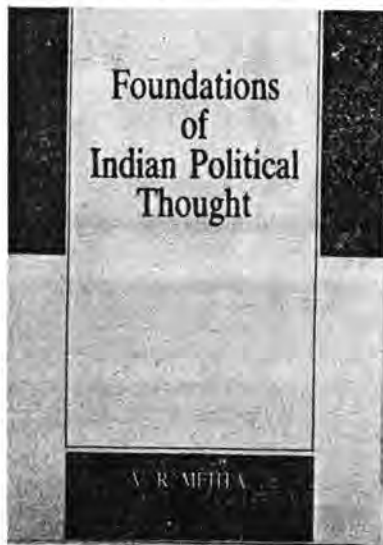
Gen. K. Sunderji (Retd.), Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army (1986-88).

A. P. Venkateshwaran, former Foreign Secretary, Government of India, and former Indian Ambassador to China, and currently, Research Professor at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

Dov. S. Zakheim, former U.S. Deputy Under Secretary of Defence & Resources during the Reagan Administration.

S. S. BANKESHWAR is a freelance journalist.

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT by V.R. Mehta; Manohar, New Delhi; 1992; pp.312; Rs.300.



**Reviewed by
G. N. Sarma**

The publisher has introduced this volume as "perhaps the first book which provides an overview of the (*sic*) Indian Political thought from Manu to the present day". This is very largely justified. It is an undoubted advantage to have a unified survey of so vast a field of thought. The author's qualifications are impressive and naturally raise great expectations.

The title of the book itself creates the first difficulty. Is it an examination of the ideas and concepts on which the entire structure of thought rests? Where shall we locate their sources? The author takes Manu as the starting point of enquiry and proceeds to examine and assess the ideas of various political thinkers. He does make reference to the ideas of the Vedic Age by the way, instead of giving them the rightful place as the very origin and foundation of subsequent development. The structure of Indian thought is multi-layered, each interacting with the rest, and therefore, the search for roots must go down to the last depths. The starting point must indeed be the very first and none other. The present volume, more than analysing the basic, fundamental

concepts, provides historical, though not chronological survey of Indian political thought. *Sukra* (misprinted *Surya* in the table of contents) is placed before *Kautilya*! It is now generally accepted that *Sukraniti* is a late medieval text which was, on account of its supposed authorship, mistakenly credited with antiquity. A unique feature of this survey is a chapter of Barni and Abul Fazl and a fairly elaborate account of Balbhadra Sahu, the author of *Desik Sastra* in Hindi.

A survey of such a vast subject has necessarily to be selective. The treatment of thinkers is bound to be uneven. Nevertheless one feels that an important thinker and statesman like Gokhale should have received greater attention than what he is given.

The key to the appreciation of Indian social and political thought lies, according to the author, in the concept of 'wholes within wholes', 'Oceanic circles' and Noetic and Pneumatic principles of knowledge (Pneumatic is almost invariably spelt as peneumatic and the correct spelling occurs rarely, once or twice, as if by mistake). The first two of these are easily understandable in the context of the pluralistic character of Indian society. The author acknowledges he owes these concepts to Arthur Koestler. The Noetic and Pneumatic principles, however, required greater elucidation in order to serve as intelligible clues to the understanding of Reality. As it is, their abrupt introduction has the effect of pedantry, *obscurum per obscurius*.

The author's definition of political activity is noteworthy. "The role of political activity can indeed be compared to the activity of the stomach in the human body, which is to reconcile the demands and needs of different organs of the body and to supervise productive and distributive activities in accordance with the general rules of hygiene. Political activity is a management activity of this sort which seeks to organize and conciliate various different interests, claims and de-

mands of the various wholes in society by supervising its productive and distributive apparatus."! At one stroke this takes us back to John of Salisbury (1110-1180) and leads to Koestler via Herbert Spencer.

The elucidation of the concept of *Dharma* is all important in any discussion of Indian polity and society. *Dharma* is intimately connected with the earlier concept of *Rta* in the *Veda*. *Rta* is the law, the truth of the cosmic order, while *Dharma* comprehends the ethical, worldly and spiritual aspects of the life of the individual and society, *Rta*, contrary to the author, is not inexorable destiny. "Some concept other than that of *Rta* was needed to ensure that the concept of human responsibility is not evacuated (!) under the pretext of inevitability in the process of nature. *Dharma* was one such concept". Rather than replace the idea of *Rta*, the idea of *Dharma* extended it in relation to the individual and society.

The author's complaint, in many respects justified, is that the early writers on ancient Indian polity and society exaggerated its virtues; they claimed that much of western constitutional theory and practice already existed in our past. He attributes their uncritical judgment to patriotic prejudice. His indictment is too sweeping as not all the writers he has lumped together suffer from such infirmity. It is surprising that Mehta too, has not escaped from a similar and more serious fallacy arising from a veiled antiquarianism, discovering the latest in the earliest. An example is his characterisation of Manu. "Manu linked politics to ecology also and said that in the absence of the king even the trees would be felled. In fact this last point highlights the basic difference between the Greek and ancient Indian political thought clearly. The ancient Greeks were concerned with the individual's relationship to the cosmic order in which the community is an important link but not the end. According to the *Manusmriti*, the task before the government is the regulation of relationships of the entire manifest world in

which even trees occupy a place important to the unmanifest." Besides the far fetched nature of the comparison, the language in which it is expressed can only mystify and bewilder the reader.

Even more fantastic is the construction of *slokas* 8 and 9 of *canto* 116, *Ayodhya Kanda* of *Valmiki Ramayana*. "Indeed this argument has a streak of existentialism in it insofar as it identifies the authentic life with the heroic life, in which the hero works with the best of motives, unmindful of the consequences of his action on others".

No such hints can be drawn from these *slokas*. Possibly the reference numbers are wrongly printed; if not they have been misread. There are also other cases of inaccuracy in the references.

Take again the author's observation on Kautilya's view of state and religion. "Religion is useful to the king because it can be a powerful instrument in the service of the state. This may sound trivial to us, but at the time when the authority of religion was respected, it was truly an attempt towards secularisation of state power." One is at a loss to make out what it all means.

The comparison between the state of the *Mahabharata* and Hobbes' Leviathan is certainly ingenious. "But the concept of the protection of the weak was missing, with the result that the state (in Hobbes) became a mightily (!) Leviathan. On the other hand, in the *Mahabharata*, the concept of the sovereign power is missing since the state is the outcome of both human effort and divine intervention, and furthermore, since it is specially charged with the responsibility of the protection of the weak, it can regulate but can never dominate others who owe their origin to different sources".

Raja Ram Mohun Roy is dismissed as no thinker at all. Footnote 8 on page 175 is an interesting example

of the riotousness of the composition and the warped judgement of the author. "Raja Ram Mohun Roy is often considered a political thinker. In our view, he is entitled to a place as a great social reformer, it is doubtful whether he could be called a thinker. All his ideas are initiation of their counterpart in the insect. Besides, there is no attempt to relate conclusion to theoretical premises." Tilak has been given some space in the volume but he too fares no better. The final verdict on Tilak is that, "His importance as a political thinker is not much". A reference to *Gita Rahasya* might have convinced the author that the underrated Lokamanya was not just a political activist but also a philosopher and that his political activism was the application of his speculative philosophy to the field of political life. This great work is not mentioned either in the bibliography or in the chapter references. The author remarks that there was, in Sri Aurobindo a sharp distinction "between the concerns of his early life and later life in Pondicherry when he had turned into a mystic." Studies on Sri Aurobindo have shown that there was no such distinction and that his life all through was an unbroken spiritual quest. His observation that Sri Aurobindo "did not take into account the consequences of unbridled nationalism", that he was not sufficiently conscious of its connections with power, commerce and technology", that he did not explore "the epistemological and metaphysical basis of his own thought", that "all the confusions of Indian renaissance are richly reflected in his *logical and suggestive works*" *ours* is superficial and unsustainable.

It would exceed the limits of a review to engage in a detailed examination of this volume. It is on the whole unrewarding both to the students and researchers alike whose interest it hopes to stimulate.

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RAISING UP A PROPHET. THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENCOUNTER WITH GANDHI by Sudarshan Kapur; Oxford University Press, Bombay; 1993; pp. 222; Rs. 150.



Reviewed by
Kannamma S. Raman

In February 1936, in a conversation with Dr. Howard Thurman, Gandhi had said: "It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world." This prophecy seemed to have come true when in 1950s and 1960s Martin Luther King successfully launched his non-violent resistance such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Prayer Pilgrimage, sit-ins and the March on Washington to protest against racial discrimination. His efforts caught the imagination of the people all over the world because he was able to carry out his struggle in an extremely hostile environment. It took enormous courage for Southern blacks to stand up for their rights in a non-violent manner in a society where few whites would consider the murder of a black man a serious crime.

The author of the book under review correctly feels that to limit the focus of attention to King's effort alone is a very elitist approach to a story which actually involved the active participation of an entire people. The

main hypothesis of this book is that the non-violent activism which blossomed in America in the 1950s and the 1960s was the result of the sustained effort of a number of earlier generation Afro-Americans who had set the climate required for the acceptance of the technique of non-violent resistance.

The book is divided into six chapters excluding the introduction and the conclusion. In the introduction, the author defines the need and the objectives of this study. He broadly lays down the parameters of this study by stating the various factors which played an important role in the creative development of Gandhian ideas among the Afro-American groups. These include the role played by their leaders (such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey and A. Philip Randolph), the Afro-American press (such as the *Negro World* and *The Crisis*), the visits of Afro-American leaders such as Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays and C. H. Tobias), the visit of committed Gandhians to America (such as Lala Lajpat Rai, C. F. Andrews, M. Slade and R. R. Lohia) and also the deeply entrenched Christian faith in most members of this group.

In the first two chapters, the author traces the growing awareness among the prominent Afro-Americans for the need to forge an international solidarity of the coloured people. This led to their sympathising with the struggles launched by the coloured people in countries like Egypt and India. He also explains as to how, ever since Gandhi took over the helm of the Indian National Congress, 'watch the people of India' became a persistent theme in Afro-American journals. This in turn created a deep understanding of Gandhian methods of resistance. It was made possible as they related the Gandhian method to the familiar sayings in their Christian faith - the liberating role of Jesus and the preachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

The third chapter brings out the

growing debate among the Afro-Americans about the efficacy of the Gandhian method in a hostile and alien environment. This chapter also reveals as to how most of the top Afro-American leaders felt the need for a Gandhi of their own - a man of his moral stature and conviction, to lead them in their fight against all kinds of humiliation and discrimination.

In the next two chapters the author traces the development of the close connection between Indian and Afro-American leaders due to the regular visits of a number of black leaders to India and a number of committed Gandhians to American shores. This created an awareness in a large number of Afro-Americans about the Gandhian notion of *satyagraha* based on the principles of truth, non-violence and love. It also explores the various attempts made by some of the prominent leaders such as A. P. Randolph to resist oppression through Gandhi inspired non-violent techniques such as boycotts, marches and sit-ins.

The sixth chapter shows the growing solidarity of the Afro-Americans and the increasing support

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of the Indians to their cause. It also logically moves up to the final culmination of the struggle, i.e. in the Afro-Americans finding their own Gandhi in the fresh seminary graduate Martin Luther King - the man who was to later launch one of the most determined struggles against discrimination.

In the concluding chapter the author validates his hypothesis because, on the basis of the available information it can be safely said that King's strategy and success were the results of the sustained effort of a number of leaders for almost half a century.

The book also has detailed notes and an exhaustive bibliography which should be of interest to any scholar interested in Gandhian thought, peace movements or social change.

There is no denying that Kapur's book is a compilation of valuable and

difficult-to-obtain material which makes it essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the struggle that the Afro-Americans have launched since the beginning of this century. The book is a noteworthy addition to the growing literature on the subaltern approach to history.

However, the analysis would have been more fruitful if the author had explained that the Gandhian notion of *satyagraha* caught the attention of the Afro-American leaders not only because of their spirituality but also due to their well-entrenched western consciousness. In fact, the black struggle was an extension of the dreams of the Founding Fathers who envisaged a new republic where all men would be equal in the eyes of the law. Moreover, the language that Gandhi spoke was appealing to the westerners because he himself has been deeply influenced by western thinkers such as Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau. So, though it is true, as the author suggests that the techniques

of struggle for transformation may be shared across geographical boundaries, it can succeed only if the political culture of the country is receptive to the technique in question.

A little more analysis of the reasons for the increased consciousness of the blacks especially after World War I which was ostensibly fought 'to make the world safe for democracy' would have made this whole exercise more fruitful. This is important because the end of the World War I period, which almost coincided with the rise of the Gandhian period in the Indian national movement, saw some of the worst riots and pogroms inflicted on the blacks. This resulted in the blacks, especially in the Northern cities, trying to harness their political strength to pressurise the governments at all levels to do more for black Americans. Even in the South, the blacks were getting very restive - but were relatively subdued due to severe restraints and often threats of violence. In this context, non-violent struggle did appear to be an attractive instrument of protest. Further, the changing international trends and shifting American opinion enabled the broadening of the campaigns to demand rights and to end discrimination.

There had been various experiments with the Gandhian technique of non-violence undertaken by people decades before the Montgomery bus boycott. This could have been better highlighted and assessed in the context of the involvement of the black people. The book then would have been a more rewarding experience for the reader than a mere chronological enumeration of the various people who had either written about Gandhi or visited India and thus came in direct contact with him.

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G. Y. Dharap
Jalgaon

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Amrik Singh
New Delhi

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