

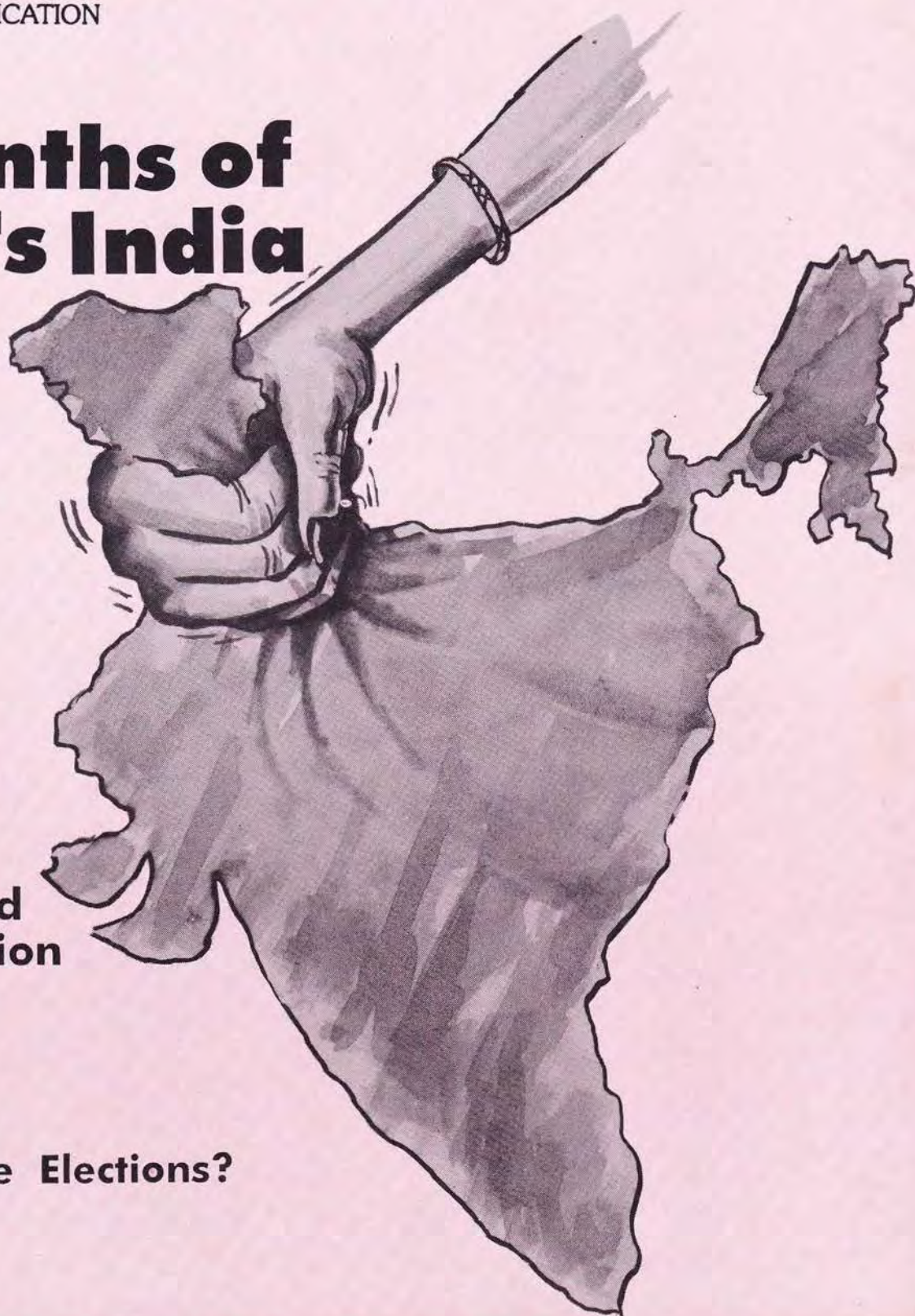
A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

# Freedom First

April-  
June 1995  
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43RD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## 18 Months of Indira's India



**Socialism and  
the Constitution**

**Why I lost the Elections?**

# Not the End of Remembering

Albert Friedlander

*On January 27, 1945, the first horrified soldier of the Red Army encountered evidence of something which was amongst the worst things in human history. It was the moment which destroyed for the whole of our century the idea that the human race was on an upward path reaching for the skies, becoming better. If the horrors of Auschwitz could happen so far into the age of progress, there seemed no hope for the human race.*

*Increasingly, during the past century, we have been told that it is difficult to distinguish between the meaningful and the trivial, between the good and the bad, between the right and the wrong. Beyond the good and the bad, we are told, we have the grey area, the twilight zone, the place where the good and the bad are mixed together. It is this twilight zone, this half-light, which separates us from that dreadful moment, we must take into account that the events of a similar nature have occurred since. Just as the world will never know the dreadful statistics about how many human beings were killed in the Nazi death camps, we will never know the truth about the Soviet gulags. We will never know the terrible reality about the numbers of people who have disappeared in a dozen parts of the world since the Nazis were chased out of power in Germany.*

*It has been said that the enormity of the holocaust was not fully comprehended at the time because the discovery of the death camps was just one horrifying event out of many which were happening all over the world. Many of them were similar in nature if not in dimension to the one discovered on January 27, 1945. When we commemorate Auschwitz, we commemorate them all - just as we commemorate all the ethnic groups which the Nazis decided to wipe out because they were not worth having on this earth. One under-reported but monstrous episode of atrocity was the series of mutual massacres carried out by extremist Croats allied to the Nazis and their Serb enemies in the north of Yugoslavia. This is of special importance now because it brings us back to the present with a bang. Many Jewish people understandably believe that the holocaust was a very special event which belongs to them. But in some moving "Words of Faith" on BBC World Service, it was a celebrated rabbi who took pains to remind his listeners that in spite of the sacred nature of the holocaust as a part of Jewish history, the poison is still with us. And he related it specifically to the "ethnic cleansing" which has taken place and is even now taking place in former Yugoslavia. We do not yet know whether and what unspeakable horrors may be discovered when civilisation finally moves back to areas from which it has been excluded.*

*(When I wrote the above, I did not name the author for fear of causing offence. But I wrote to him, requesting a copy of his text and asking if I might reprint it, he sent it to me immediately with his permission. I found the written version even more inspiring than the broadcast, and I have great pleasure in sharing it with my readers. The author is Rabbi Albert Friedlander of Westminster Synagogue, London. -IAN TICKLE, Swiss Press Review).*

Fifty years ago, a war ended; and a time of unspeakable brutalities and atrocities seemed to have come to a stop. We have given a special name to that passage through the valley of death. We call it the Holocaust; or Auschwitz; or the Shoah. We have tried to identify the poison which seeped into the world in those days; hatred, anti-semitism, xenophobia, genocide. And we have tried to separate ourselves from those evils. The world seems to believe that half a century is long enough for those memories to fester in our minds; and so we have a number of public observances and commemorative events to give these memories a decent burial. For that, strangely enough, is the effect of these observances marking Victory in Europe Day and the opening of the camps. More than renewing our memories, they will also allow us to forget.

But can one really forget any of those events which have marked our lives? All that we think we have forgotten lives on within our bodies, in our sub-conscious mind. I was a child, but still remember hiding in lofts while the nazis searched my home in Berlin. I remember being chased through the

streets, being cross-examined at the police station. I was 11 years old at that time; and I was marked for life. It has been a good life; and I trust that it will continue to be a creative one. Yet the shadow of the Holocaust has always been upon it, and many of my books and my teachings in Europe have been filled with the awareness that the evil of that time lives on in the world and has to be challenged. In America, I walked with Martin Luther King; and, in Europe, I have found myself working with the Sinti-Roma, the gypsies and other oppressed minorities. The 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia seems to me part of the poison left by Auschwitz, and the neo-nazi movements in many European countries are clear evidence that we cannot bury the past beneath a 50th anniversary plaque. The ICCJ and other inter-faith groups recognise that all religions must face this challenge.

Last week we read the Ten Commandments in our synagogue Torah portion, a text which is sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. This week's portion, Mishpatim, deals with the laws which follow upon this, particularly as applied to the oppressed,

the slaves of society, who have to be given freedom. Slaves who refuse to accept freedom are to be earmarked in their ear lobes and will continue to be slaves. "Why in the ear?" asks the rabbis, and reply: "Because they heard the call to freedom and refused to listen to it". If we do not free ourselves from the hatreds of the past, we will be maimed for life. Last summer I stood beside my friend, Heinrich, next to a memorial he had erected for his brother, Adam von Trotz zu Solz. They had been involved in the July 20 plot against Hitler, had declared their freedom from the nazi slave mentality. Adam had been slaughtered by the nazis, and his village had refused to name him on its war memorial since it viewed him as a traitor. And so on that morning, I said prayers for him and his family: the Kaddish and the El Mole Rachamin. I affirmed our belief in the shared teachings of the Torah, our knowledge that we must be united in our fight against the darkness, and the fact that a 50th anniversary of that time is not the end of our remembering. Zachor = Remember. This is the heart of religious life for all who want to move from darkness into light.

# Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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## BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

Twenty years ago, the July 1975 issue of *Freedom First* failed to appear. The then Editor, Mr. Minoo Masani was not prepared to submit to censorship imposed in the very first month of the eighteen months of Indira's India.

Newspapers and magazines have been full of articles and comments on the Emergency which Mrs. Gandhi declared on June 26, 1975. But for me who lived through those "exciting" times, it was as if I was getting a sample of the freedom movement which I missed.

Somehow, I felt that the flavour of that period was missing in the articles that appeared in the daily press in June this year, which seemed to talk more through hindsight, and hence, you will see this issue commemorating the 20th anniversary of 'the loss of freedom at midnight' (with apologies to Dominique La Pierre)!

We trust our younger readers who are now in their twenties and even thirties will get an idea of how Mrs. Indira Gandhi held Indian democracy by the scruff of its neck.

While we are proud of the small role that we played in keeping freedom alive, we take this occasion to salute all those who stood up to dictatorship.

We are grateful to Dr. Subhash Kashyap for his article on 'Socialism and Secularism in the Indian Constitution'. It's a sad story of the prostitution of an outstanding document.

Dr. Ramesh Babu is leading us towards a seminal discussion on the concept of national sovereignty, a very relevant topic in the climate of globalisation and, in particular, the new found champions of Swadeshi.

The attempt to put the printing schedule of *Freedom First* back on track continues.

**Editor**

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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 BJP-BSP intimacy seems all the more amazing as it is, in a sense "inter-caste". (Kanshi) Ram has always accused the BJP of being an upper caste party.

Comment in *India Today*, June 30.

I can understand the censors' objections to excessive sex and violence. But how can they censor laughter.

Ketan Mehta, on the censors not clearing his new film, 'Oh Darling, Yeh Hai India',  
*India Today*, June 30.

If he were to die by himself, that would be a good solution.

Ali Akbar Natiq-Noori, Iran's Parliament Speaker, voicing hope that death by natural causes could end the diplomatic impasse over Salman Rushdie's death sentence,  
*Newsweek*, June 12.

The paradox of competition is that it requires tough regulations to ensure freedom and fairness. Regulations and deregulations go hand-in-hand in a market economy wedded to social objectives.

Jairam Ramesh, *Business Today*, July 7.

Bureaucrats are least likely to make wise choices. Their money isn't at stake. They are able to use public financing to write off their mistakes whenever they are directly involved.

Jagdish Bhagwati, *Span*, July 1995.

When the men in khaki speak, governments in Pakistan listen.

*The Economist*, July 8.

The slogan (of the BJP-Shiv Sena) "Microchips Yes! Potato Chips No!" sounds pretty but is unlikely to impress investors or appeal to India's consumers.

*The Economist*, June 24.

The end of capitalism is already in sight and its conqueror will be not Marxism but the oncoming knowledge society.

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar,  
*The Times of India*, July 9.

BJP leaders love bashing foreigners and foreign investment, yet more than half of their children study in the United States or West Europe.

Tavleen Singh, *Indian Express*, July 9.

In such a vast country, with unparalleled diversities, it is not possible for a single party to rule the whole country any longer.

Ramakrishna Hegde, *The Times of India*, July 5.

I hope that the post-Emergency generation of Indian journalists, including editors, will show greater courage, should a similar misfortune strike the country again.

K. R. Sunder Rajan, a leading columnist, (who was himself jailed during the Emergency),  
*Mid-day*, July 4.

The more pressure China applies on us Taiwanese, the more we cherish freedom and the more determined we are to defend it.

Kuo-Yuan Lin, *Time*, July 10.

Privatising should not mean privateering.

Editorial in *India Today*, June 10.



*Birthday Greetings to  
His Holiness The Dalai Lama  
on his 60th birthday, July 6, 1995  
from The Freedom First Fraternity*

*"As a Buddhist, I strongly believe man's essential nature is of compassion and love. We must try to cultivate compassion. Not only to the human beings, but also to other species. As a human being we are all born the same. One should not feel that he is special or exclusive from others, rather he should be confident of doing something for others. Confidence must be based on compassion, not hatred."*

**"PLEASE HELP SAVE TIBET"**

## OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

### A Tale of Two Flyovers

A number of "flyovers" have come up in various parts of Bombay city to ease traffic congestion. Not all of them look elegant. In fact many of them look positively ugly. But they have, upto a point, fulfilled their purpose of easing the flow of traffic. These flyovers are the result of recommendations made by foreign (horror of horrors) consultants who had made a study of patterns of traffic many years ago on an invitation by the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

However, this little note is not about traffic patterns or foreign consultants. It is about about two flyovers within kilometers of each other.

The first is in a place called Bandra (E) on the Western Express Highway. It is located within shouting distance of the residence of Shiv Sena Chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray. The construction of the flyover began some years ago when the State government was headed by Sharad Pawar. Unfortunately, when it was time to give it a name he had lost power and the opportunity to give it a name fell to the RSS-BJP/SS government.

The Indira Congress which is Mr. Sharad Pawar's party would perhaps have named it after the late Mr. Morarji Desai even if the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi had no particular fondness for the late Mr. Morarji Desai. What some Indira Congress activists did the day before the formal naming ceremony was quite comic. They sought to accomplish a *fait accompli* by rushing the bridge and raising slogans naming it the 'Morarji Desai flyover'. Quite properly they were shoed away by the police for disturbing the peace.

The next day, a galaxy of the

"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



RSS-BJP/SS glitterati descended on the bridge and formally named it - after Mr. Bal Thackeray's father: "The Prabodankar Thackeray Flyover".

The other flyover whose construction also began around the same time, (and within shouting distance of my residence!) was half complete on the eve of the last elections. In other words, the northbound lane leading out of the city was completed. With Seshan looking over the State Government shoulders, poor Mr. Pawar and his government had no option but to keep quiet and let traffic commence on the single lane north bound. The south bound construction continued. A half flyover on the eve of elections could not even be given a half name.

Some time in July, the south-bound lane was completed. But it lay unused for weeks on end while the RSS-BJP/SS leaders cogitated over a name. Ultimately, they decided it was safe to patronise Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Meanwhile thousands of litres of fuel were wasted as thousands of trucks, cars, three and two wheelers entering the city continued to do so in single file across a busy traffic intersection (under the bridge) engines idling for minutes on end, negotiating pot-holed roads and polluting the atmosphere with diesel, smoke and carbon monoxide.

And on the day the other half of the flyover was inaugurated the common people were put to further inconvenience. On a busy working morning

when most people were rushing to work the entire stretch of the Eastern Express Highway was closed to traffic so that a 5-minute distance took me 60 minutes to negotiate. While we were trying to reach our offices in good time, their excellencies, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Manohar Joshi etc. were busy declaring the half flyover open.

Why do flyovers, bridges, traffic intersections, road junctions need to have names. Not many in Bombay would tell you where Hutatma Chowk is. Whatever name they may give to the International and Domestic Airports in Bombay, they will continue to be known as Sahar and Santacruz Airports.

The problem is that India's political parasites not quite comfortable governing, need something less strenuous to do and this is good pastime. Hence you have a Lenin Sarani in Calcutta, a Saddam Hussain street in Palakkad and, who knows, if the khaki clad RSS with their natural affinity for their counterparts in the Germany of the '30s we could even have an Adolf Hitler flyover if the RSS-BJP/SS regime lasts long enough.

The futility of the name giving exercise is appalling considering the tremendous cost involved and time spent on a totally useless endeavour which contributes nothing to the nation but only helps to inflate the egos of those we elect to public office.

I had the opportunity to spend a few days in June this year at the neatly laid out Theodore Heuss Academy of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in the picturesque little town of Gummersbach, Germany.

The subjects covered similarities of experience, responsibility and deregulation; what happens in societies

What struck me was the tremendous commonality of experience whether it be the avarice of politicians, the inadequacies of basic education, excessive interference of the state in economic affairs even while publicly talking of the market economy, corruption at every level of society, the delays in the judicial systems and so on. If growth in the 21st century is

A copy of the Declaration which was signed by the Asian participants is published below.

April-June 1995

## 18 Months of Indira's India

# Why The Emergency Was Not Unexpected

Minoo Masan

*On 12 June 1975 Mr. Justice Jag Mohan Sinha of the Allahabad High Court passed a judgement on the petition filed by Mr. Raj Narain against Mrs. Indira Gandhi's election to the Lok Sabha from Rae Bareilly in the 1971 General Elections. In the course of the judgement, Mrs. Gandhi was found guilty not only of several corrupt practices but of not having told the truth when under Oath in the witness box.*

*There is no question but that, in Britain or any other Western country, the Prime Minister of the day would have promptly resigned and another would have been nominated, and the law would have taken its course with an appeal to the Supreme Court against the Allahabad High Court judgement. There is a certain amount of evidence that Mrs. Gandhi's first instinct was to take this honourable course, but it would appear that she was persuaded against her better judgement to cling to her position as Prime Minister and adopt a defiant attitude. It appeared to me even then that she was making a tragic mistake.*

*Jayaprakash was in Patna. He was persuaded by Raj Narain to move to Delhi in order to spearhead a mass rally in the capital which was to demand Mrs. Gandhi's resignation as Prime Minister and to give the signal for a campaign of satyagraha including a gherao of her residence to bring about the desired result. This rally took place on the evening of 25 June.*

*This was obviously a provocation for which the Prime Minister was waiting. Within hours, an exercise which obviously had been kept ready in every detail was put into operation and, on*

*or around the midnight of the 25th, not only Jayaprakash, Morarji Desai and other national leaders of every political party, except the Congress, were taken into custody and detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), but thousands of political functionaries including some Congressmen were also rounded up during the early hours of that morning.*

*Having thus made this constitutional coup d'etat, the Prime Minister found it fit to convene a meeting of the cabinet in the early hours of the 26th and to present it with a fait accompli*

*The cabinet could, of course, have rejected Mrs. Gandhi's request for an endorsement of her move, but it did not. This is a sad reflection of the extent to which the Congress leadership had degenerated. Even before the approval of the cabinet, which she extorted in the face of a certain amount of disquiet expressed by certain members of her government, Mrs. Gandhi had been to Rashtrapati Bhavan and got the President to affix his rubber-stamp to the Proclamation of Emergency. It did not occur to the President to ask for time, as it was entirely within his right to do, and then to decide whether or not he should sign the Proclamation. In my view, which I have consistently expressed since 1950, the Constitution that we members of the Constituent Assembly drafted gave the President the power to accept or reject the advice of the Cabinet of the day. But the pattern of 'rubber stamp' Presidents had already been set by the predecessors of President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, notably, Mr. V. V. Giri, and so the President went along and gave his approval.*

I waited impatiently for the morning newspapers and noted that they were either ignorant of these developments or had been prevented from reporting them. Later in the day we learnt that Delhi had been deprived of all newspapers. This went on for two days, after which the newspapers, duly emasculated, began to reappear. Listening to All India Radio that evening we learnt of the bogus "Emergency" proclaimed by the President.

### Alarming Rumours

There were alarming stories during the next two or three days about JP and Morarji being on hunger strike and even a rumour that they were being forcibly fed. I was awakened more than once in the middle of the night by anxious callers who wanted to know if it was true that JP had passed away. Not knowing the answer made this a

doubly harrowing experience. I suggested to JP's brother, Rajeshwar Prasad, that he should travel to Delhi, find out where JP was and ask for an interview with him. I also sent a telegram to the Prime Minister: "In order to avoid alarmist rumours about Jayaprakash's condition would urge that daily bulletins signed by doctors be put on the radio and through the press." Within 24 hours a bulletin signed by the doctors in the All-India Medical Sciences was in fact put out saying JP had left the hospital after treatment in a reasonably good condition.

We were later to learn that JP had been sent to the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine in Chandigarh, where he was to remain in solitary confinement till his release in November 1975.

Recalling the days when JP was held incommunicado in Lahore Fort

during World War II and how I had managed to break through the barrier and been able to write to him and send him books, I wrote to the Deputy Commissioner, Chandigarh, on August 17, forwarding a letter to JP with the request that it may be passed on to him and asked for permission to send books. My letter reached JP and I was allowed to send books to JP every now and then.

### Reversible

How to describe the situation in which we found ourselves? It was in the nature of a nightmare, and yet I would certainly not describe it as either a Communist or a Fascist dictatorship. I saw it as a limited form of authoritarianism from which one could go down the slope to totalitarianism or revert to democratic procedures. One of the more cheering aspects of the situation was that it was still reversible.

## The Role of Liberals

In such a setting, what was the proper role of a liberal democrat? It was, in my view, to eschew romanticism on the one hand and craven fear on the other. He should endeavour, to whatever extent might be possible within the limits of legality, to assert the rights of the citizen and to seek to expand the bounds of freedom; for in such a climate even normal calm and courage have a therapeutic value. The almost universal absence of courage which then prevailed is hard to imagine.

The Liberal, maintaining a sense of history, would also be aware that there were historical reasons for such developments, and that a resort to demonology explains little. Bearing this in mind, the Liberal would endeavour to find common ground between the warring parties and to heal the wounds of a divided nation.

As Editor of *Freedom First*, I found myself embroiled almost immediately with the censors. When they objected

to certain material which was meant for publication, I suspended publication and wrote a letter to our readers explaining that since *Freedom First* could not possibly accept pre-censorship, we were going to court and hoped that the courts would sustain us in our right to write as we pleased within reasonable limits. *During those days, terror stalked the land. It took me more than a week to find an attorney in Bombay who would file my petition.*

Our lawsuit went on till April 1976. Finally, a decision of the Division Bench of Bombay High Court sitting in appeal recorded a historic judgement and vindicated our stand, striking down most of the censor's objections as arbitrary and unwarranted. It asserted that the rule of law was still intact. Indeed, throughout those dark days, the judiciary proved to be the class that stood out for its courage and determination to stand by the values to which it had sworn allegiance.

All honour also to Soli Sorabjee,

my counsel, and D. H. Nanavati, my attorney, who patiently saw the proceedings to victory at great financial sacrifice.

## The Failure of the Press

By contrast, the press as a whole failed even to take advantage of the support given by the courts. Writing much later on 17 April, 1977, Khushwant Singh, editor of India's largest magazine, the *Illustrated Weekly*, and himself a supporter of Mrs. Gandhi's regime, was to write bitterly, but not unfairly, in the following vein:

"The vast majority of them knuckled under (Information Minister) Shukla's draconian laws and did his bidding - suppressing, distorting news, praising those he wished to praise, denigrating others he wished to denigrate. These very 'gentlemen' today pose as great champions of the freedom of the press and wax eloquent against others of their profession. All they do now is to indulge in heroics and pin medals on their own chests, after the battle had been won by others.

"While saying so, I must record the names of some honourable exceptions: Ram Nath Goenka, Shri Mulgaokar, V. K. Narsimhan, Ajit Bhattacharjee, and Kuldip Nayar of the *Indian Express*, C.G.K. Reddy; Rajinder Puri; K. R. Sunder Rajan (*Times of India*) as well as others attached to journals like Malkani of the *Organiser*, which were suppressed as well as A. D. Gorwala (*Opinion*); Minoo Masani (*Freedom First*); and Romesh Thapar (*Seminar*), which closed down under protest. Of the total working force of some 50,000 journalists, the number of those who put up some resistance could not have added up to more than three dozen. This handful has every right to take credit; it does not behove the others to crow about themselves..."

She is Adi-sakti prepared to crush anybody, however great he might be, who meddles with the solidarity, integrity and welfare of the country.

K. Brahmananda Reddy, March 3, 1971



Courtesy: *The Press She Could Not Whip*, Arniya Rao-B.G. Rao

## Why the Nightmare

Some time in October 1975, I was invited to attend and address the All-India Civil Liberties Conference which was being organised in Ahmedabad on October 15. While in normal times, such an invitation means nothing whatsoever beyond the merits of the occasion, this development in a situation that then existed was of a somewhat unique nature. No public meeting or conference of this nature had taken place since the declaration of the Emergency and when we met in Ahmedabad on October 15, with Justice C. J. Shah in the Chair and found the auditorium filled to the brim with the intelligentsia of Ahmedabad, there was a tremendous sense of excitement in the air. Though no law was being broken, it was believed to be quite possible that before the meeting was over, the authorities might strike back. Nothing however happened and we were able to end the Conference in a peaceful and jubilant manner.

I decided to confine my remarks to answering specific questions: Why this 'nightmare', I asked, as it had been so well described that morning? Why, as the British press had quite rightly asked, had there been so little resistance to these assaults on the people's rights and why had the people of India surrendered their liberties so easily? I went on to question the thesis that Mr. Chagla had presented that morning. Mr. Chagla had said that the Emergency declared on June 26 was the original sin from which all our present evils emanated. In one way of course he was right, but I questioned whether the world began on the 26th of June 1975? What happened on that day was the culmination of what had gone before for the last twenty-five years since Independence. The Fourth Republic in France did not fall and France did not turn to De Gaulle on a particular day by whim or caprice. The Fourth Republic fell because the politicians of the Fourth Republic had played the fool, because they were

selfish and party minded. And because the people of France were bored and fed-up with them, they threw them out and brought in De Gaulle as a powerful President. This is what I as a student of history felt was happening in India.

## Were we fit for Freedom?

Why were we where we were today? I suggested two basic causes. The first was the character of our public life, the fragility of our democracy, and the absence of an infrastructure of grass roots vigilance and voluntary organisation without which the political parties floated on top with no roots below. Did we show our fitness to enjoy the freedom the Constitution gave us? Did our politicians - there were some of them there, some of them Members of Parliament - play the game? Did we put the country before party? Did we put the country before self? Did those in office show a readiness to give up office or did they cling to it like leeches? Did those in opposition get together to give the country a united opposition and an alternative government? The answer was "No". We in opposition certainly played the fool as much as those in Government. We were undisciplined, some of us often defied the Speaker, invited contempt on Parliament and, when efforts were made by some of us to get together they were sabotaged by some of my friends who were then detained in prison. I recalled sadly the 3rd of January 1971, when our efforts to bring something that Rajaji dreamt about, "a Grand Alliance" based on an agreed programme, were sabotaged by some of those who were in prison now. All those chickens had now come home to roost.

The people of India had not shown that passionate concern for democracy that they could have done, because we who were in power or in Parliament had behaved in a way that had forfeited their confidence. I had said all this to point out that what happened on the

26th of June was not an accident but a punishment for the way we had behaved after we got our Independence.

## The Result of Statism

That, was the first cause of our plight today. The second cause had to do with the economic pattern which was embodied in our Five Year Plans since the Second Five Year Plan in the fifties. We had adopted an economic pattern which was not compatible with democracy. Statism, which we called "socialism" in India, could not for long co-exist with democracy. One or the other had to go. Many of us said in Parliament throughout the sixties that if we went on with this "permit licence raj", with the concentration of political and economic power in the same hands, Parliamentary democracy would shrivel up and die. *The ugly fruit of that Statism was reflected in the role of big business today. We had watched with pain the deputations in New Delhi between the 12 and 25 June. We had watched with nausea one business chamber or organisation after another waiting in deputation for a very unworthy purpose. It was now clear this kind of Statism was not compatible with democracy. As and when we regained our freedom, we would have to see that political and economic power were distributed in the way Mahatma Gandhi wanted.*

From: *Against the Tide* - the second volume of Mr. Masani's Memoirs.



# When *Freedom First* and *Bhumiputra* Battled the Censors

S. P. Aiyar & S. V. Raju

On June 27, 1975, when the Government issued its pre-censorship order, Masani submitted the page-proofs of *Freedom First* (He was its editor then) to the censor who deleted certain articles but approved the others. He had originally decided to leave the censored columns blank but since the Chief Minister Mr. S. B. Chavan had warned that such practices would not be tolerated, the July issue of *Freedom First* had to be skipped. Masani decided that he would continue editing the journal within the scope of the censorship rules as long as it was possible and on July 14, he submitted to Binod Rao, the Bombay censor, the material for the August issue. To the material which had already been cleared he added new items which were very carefully chosen. In doing this Masani was undoubtedly exploring the range of his editorial freedom under the limitations imposed by censorship. Temperamentally, he was incapable of acting otherwise. The contents of the issue included, *inter alia*, an article on the "Scope of the Pre-censorship Order" by V. M. Tarkunde: a reproduction of a report from the *Financial Express* relating to a petition filed by the Madras weekly *Swarajya* challenging an order of the censor; a resolution on the emergency; a quotation from Senator Church quoted by *Time* which said "Ours is not a wicked country and we cannot abide a wicked Government," and a news item from *The Times of India* which read, "Policemen's Duty to Disobey Sadistic Orders". The last item referred to a meeting of Amnesty International. There were eleven items in all; every item had a deadly thrust; but all were considered by legal opinion to be well within the purview of the censorship rules. Binod Rao not only objected to most of the items included

afresh but also to those he had cleared earlier.

Masani refused to accept the censor's verdict and filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court, which was admitted on July 18, 1975. In November, Justice R. P. Bhatt struck down the censor's orders finding nothing objectionable in the articles. The Government went in appeal and the case was heard before a Division Bench

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The Court held that except in the case of two items, "the objections urged are unrelated to any of the purposes or objects of the Censorship Order, most of the consequences contemplated are fanciful and far-fetched and the view taken such as no person acting rationally can even possibly take. Logic rebels and reason revolts at interferences so devoid of any foundation in reality or basis in commonsense."

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consisting of Justice D. P. Madon and Justice M. H. Kania and the final judgement was delivered on February 10, 1976. The Court upheld the censor's verdict only with regard to two items out of the eleven, and dismissed the appeal.

## A Landmark Judgement

Judged by any standard, the *Freedom First* case was a landmark in the fight for freedom of the Press and the citizen's Right to Know. The Court held that except in the case of two items, "the objections urged are unrelated to any of the purposes or objects of the Censorship Order, most of the consequences contemplated are fanciful and far-fetched and the view taken such as no person acting rationally can even possibly take. Logic rebels and reason revolts at interferences so devoid of any foundation in reality or

basis in commonsense."

In the course of the judgement, the Court expanded on the role of the Press and the function of censorship. It said: "True democracy can only thrive in a free clearing house of competing ideologies and philosophies - political, economic and social - and in this the Press had an important role to play. The day this clearing house closes down would toll the death-knell of democracy. It is not the function of the censor acting under the Censorship Order to make all newspapers and periodicals trim their sails to one wind or to tow along in a single file or to speak in chorus with one voice. It is not for him to exercise his statutory powers to force public opinion in a single mould or to turn the Press into an instrument of brainwashing the public. Under the Censorship Order the censor is appointed the nurse-maid of democracy and not its grave-digger.

## The *Bhumiputra* Case

Another historical judgement concerned *Bhumiputra*, a Gujarati periodical edited by Chunilal Vaidya from Baroda. The journal stood for the propagation of the Sarvodaya philosophy. In its issue of October 26, 1975, was published M. C. Chagla's inaugural address to the Civil Liberties Conference. The issue also contained a factual account of its proceedings. Harry J. D'Penha, the Chief Censor, issued a show cause notice for the confisca-

"The corruption charges against me are false. They are a political attempt to denigrate me and the office of the Prime Minister. My staying on as Prime Minister depends only on my own party and on the people of India"

Indira Gandhi,  
June 20, 1975

tion of the issue and the forfeiture of the Yagna Mudrika Press where it was printed. Chunilal Vaidya and Kanti Himatlal Shah, representing the Press, filed a petition in the Gujarat High Court and the case came up for hearing on March 22, 1976. The judgement was delivered by Justice J. B. Mehta and Justice S. H. Sheth. *Bhumiputra* won the case.

The *Bhumiputra* case marked another major victory for those who were fighting the cause of civil liberties. The Gujarat High Court went beyond the view taken by the Division Bench

of the Bombay High Court in the *Freedom First* case in declaring emphatically that the guidelines issued by the Chief Censor exceeded the scope of Rule 48 of the Defense and Internal Security of India Rule (1971) "to an unimaginable extent and throw on the people of this country a mask of suffocation and strangulation. To prohibit the publication of proceedings in Parliament or in a Legislative Assembly or in a Court of Law, to prohibit publication of reports of peaceful agitations taking place in the country, to direct that the Press shall not indicate that

the Censor has censored some material, to prohibit the publication of the names of the political detenus and the places of their detention, to prohibit the publication of the misdeeds of the ruling party or the incumbent of the office of the Prime Minister and to prohibit quotations on the ground that they shall not be torn out of context is to bottleneck free circulation of news and views which is essential for the maintenance of a healthy democracy".

From the book: *When the Wind Blows - India's Ballot Box Revolution*, S.P. Aiyar & S.V. Raju, Himalaya Publishing House, 1978.

## When Lawyers did Indian Democracy Proud

M. A. Rane

The news of the declaration of the Emergency during the night of 25/26th June 1975 was not published in the morning papers of Delhi of June 26, as electric supply was shut off in the Bahadurshah Zafar Marg where most of the presses of the newspapers in the capital were located. Most people learnt of this declaration and of the midnight arrest of a number of leaders including an ailing Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, Advani, Madhu Dandavate, and several others from an announcement on the BBC in the early morning of 26th June. In the course of that day, censorship was clamped on the newspapers all over India.

Lawyers all over India protested and abstained from attending the court on the 26th. The lawyers were led by eminent persons like retired Chief Justice Chagla, retired Chief Justice C. J. Shah, former Justice V. M. Tarkunde, Ram Jethmalani and others. A small section of lawyers among whom was Rajni Patel supported the emergency rule. Some lawyers who were members of the RSS were detained under MISA on the very first day. Those who offered satyagraha were also detained subsequently. More

**The Supreme Court of India failed the people of India in their hour of trial, when the entire country was turned into a prison house.**

than a hundred thousand persons were illegally detained under MISA on the ground that they were threats to the internal security of India. There were no acts on the part of any of these detenus to justify their detention under MISA.

Some of the earliest *habeas corpus* petitions filed in the High Courts on behalf of the detenus succeeded. The Delhi High Court released well known journalist Kuldeep Nayar and a group of old Congressmen led by Bhimsen Sachar and six others who had addressed a letter to Mrs. Gandhi protesting against the declaration of emergency and the arrest of Jayaprakash Narayan and other leaders. Their *habeas corpus* petitions were argued by Mr. Soli Sorabjee. The Judges who released them were ultimately penalised. The senior Judge of the Bench was transferred to some other High Court and the junior Judge, Justice Agarwal, who had just been pro-

moted from the cadre of District Judges was not confirmed and was reverted to his office as District Judge.

Mr. M. C. Chagla argued the *habeas corpus* petitions of Vajpayee and Madhu Dandavate in the Karna-laka High Court and got them released. However, fresh orders of detention were passed and they were re-arrested. Morarji Desai and RSS detenus did not file *habeas corpus* petitions as a matter of principle. However, petitions were filed on behalf of a large number of political detenus belonging to different political parties.

In the Bombay High Court, a number of *habeas corpus* petitions were filed and the High Court directed the detenus to remain present on every occasion in the High Court. Other High Courts also released the detenus, taking the view that wherever the detaining authority had not applied their minds or that the orders were malafide, the detention orders were quashed and the detenus were set at liberty. Such decisions were given by all the High Courts, except the Kerala High Court, notwithstanding the drastic amendment in the MISA prohibiting filing of petitions even on grounds of malafides.

Petitions were also filed on behalf

of detenus for certain facilities. Mrs. Mrinal Gore who soon after the emergency went underground and later arrested, was detained in the prison at Akola, where she was lodged along with lunatic females. More than 150 lawyers appeared for Mrs. Gore with the sole object of indicating their solidarity against deprivation of civil liberties by the Government under the emergency rule. The Bombay High Court directed the Government to transfer her from Akola prison to Dhule prison where there was arrangement for the detention of female political detenus.

The government filed appeals in the Supreme Court against the judgments of the High Courts releasing the detenus. The case known as the *Habeas Corpus Case* was heard by a bench of the seniormost five judges of the Supreme Court presided over by Chief Justice A. N. Ray. The other members of the Bench were Justices Khanna, Beg, Chandrachud and Bhagwati. With the exception of Justice Khanna, the bench upheld the constitutional validity of the Presidential order declaring the emergency and

barring maintainability of the petitions for writs of *habeas corpus* as well as constitutional validity of the drastic provisions of MISA. Each one of the Judges gave his separate opinion. An inconvenient question raised before the Judges as to whether the rule of law was abrogated and a person was shot dead without the authority of the law by an officer whether the same could not be questioned in the court of law saw these four judges fumbling for an answer who held that Article 21 was the sole repository of the right of personal liberty and as Article 21 was suspended during the emergency by Presidential order, no *habeas corpus* petition could be filed. If the majority had accepted the dissenting view of Justice Khanna and upheld the contention of the citizens, the lawyers would have been able to get released 90 per cent of the detenus detained under the MISA during the emergency.

It is worth noting that Chief Justice Ray presiding over the bench was a judge who had superseded three other judges and the other four judges of the bench were entitled to be pro-

moted as Chief Justices, if the convention of seniority was followed. Therefore, the prospects of the four Judges of the bench being promoted as Chief Justices was hanging in the balance. If any of them decided against the Government, he stood the risk of being superseded. This event actually took place, as Justice Khanna was superseded in February 1976, and his junior, Justice Beg was promoted as Chief Justice of India. There was every reason to believe that the judgement of the majority of judges in the *habeas corpus case* was the direct fallout of the supercession of the three judges that took place in April 1973, and of the power abrogated by the Union Government to itself in appointing and promoting Judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

A number of judges of the High Courts were *persona-non-grata* with the Government and were transferred against their will to other High Courts. Chief Justices Diwan and Justice Sheth of the Gujarat High Court were transferred to Andhra Pradesh. Justice Vimadalal of the Bombay High Court

## Who decides our Freedom?

As I look at the world from my country, I begin to wonder whether people who have lived in freedom are not taking it for granted and, therefore, are reluctant to pay a continuing price for it.

Solzhenitsyn put the case very succinctly on BBC television recently.

'How is it that people who have been crushed by the sheer weight of slavery, and cast to the bottom of the pit can, nevertheless, find strength in themselves to rise up and free themselves - first in spirit and then in body, while those who soar unhampered over the peaks of freedom suddenly lose the taste of freedom, lose the will to defend it, and hopelessly confused and lost, almost begin to crave slavery?'

We are a poor country, but we have soared over the peaks of freedom. We certainly have not lost the will to defend it. But the question still survives - are we not throughout the world coming close to this riddle that Solzhenitsyn has posed in his incomparable language.

C. R. Irani,

Managing Director, The Statesman Ltd.  
June 1976.



Four journalists who defied the censorship imposed during the emergency in 1975-76 along with their legal advisor. (From left to right) - C. R. Irani of the *Statesman*, A. D. Gorwalla of *Opinion*, Soli Sorabji, Counsel, R. N. Goenka of the *Indian Express* and Minoo Masani of *Freedom First*.

was transferred to Andhra Pra-desh High Court. And there were orders to transfer Justice Mukhi, a heart patient, to the Calcutta High Court from Bombay. Ultimately he died of a heart attack in Bombay. Sixteen judges of the High Courts were transferred and further lists of judges who were likely to be transferred were mischievously leaked out from time to time in order to "discipline" the High Court judges. Fear was the watchword employed by the Government during the emergency in order to undermine the independence of the judiciary and make them toe the line of the Government.

The lawyers of the Bombay High Court and subordinate courts in the city decided to hold meetings of lawyers by invitation to discuss the issue of civil liberties. Public meetings could not be held without the permission of the Commissioner of Police in the city of Bombay. Therefore the lawyers approached the Commissioner of Police for permission which was duly refused. The order of refusal was challenged in the High Court. The petition came to be heard by a bench headed by Chief Justice Kantawala and Justice Tulzapurkar. In this case nearly 150 lawyers filed their appearances in or-

der to show their solidarity against the Emergency rule. The petition was filed by Justice N. P. Nathwani, retired Judge of the Bombay High Court. It was argued by Palkhivala, Jethmalani, Cooper and other leading lawyers. The bench delivered a thumping judgement setting aside the order of the Commissioner and held that the Commissioner had no power to prevent such meeting of the lawyers. Pending the hearing of the petition, the Court allowed the lawyers to meet at the fixed venue in the Jinnah Hall near the Congress House and adjourn the same.

Accordingly, nearly 200 lawyers in black coats assembled in the Jinnah Hall. The meeting was attended by former Chief Justices Chagla and J. C. Shah and former Justice Nathwani. A number of armed police in their jeeps occupied the street as if 200 lawyers in black coats, by meeting in the Jinnah Hall under the orders of the Court merely for the purpose of adjourning the meeting pending the final hearing of the petition, were going to pull down the Government. Ultimately though the High Court decided in favour of the petitioner, Government appealed to the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Ray had departed from the practice of granting stay of the order in the case concerned but started staying the operation of the judgement so that no other similar case could be filed in any other Court.

Thus the large majority of the lawyers carried on a continuous open battle against the rule of emergency. They held public meetings on any excuse that was available. On Mr. M. C. Chagla's 75th birthday, lawyers decided to felicitate him, in spite of his reluctance to have such a public function. We convinced the former Chief Justice that we wanted some excuse to meet. Ultimately a crowded meeting was held in the Bar Room of the Advocates' Association of Western India, when Chagla spoke everything against the emergency.

Similarly, a Civil Liberties Conference was organised by C. T. Daru at Ahmedabad in October 1975 since Gujarat and Tamil Nadu were the only states then with non-Congress governments. The Civil Liberties Conference at Ahmedabad was attended by a large number of persons including lawyers, Gandhians and freedom fighters - such of them who were not detained. It was presided over by former Chief Justice J. C. Shah and inaugurated by Chief Justice Chagla. The inaugural speech delivered by Chagla deserves to be included in any anthology of great speeches. It is published as annexure to the second edition of his autobiography, 'Roses in December'.

During the emergency, all front rank and second members of the political parties in the opposition were arrested and detained without trial under the MISA. *It was surprising that none of the fire eating trade unions or organisations of teachers, employees of banks or LIC, associations of professionals like doctors, C.A.s or of industries raised a single finger of protest against the emergency. Even the journalists as a class or group did not show the courage to protest against the emergency.* But for the lawyers and freedom loving Judges, particularly of the High Courts, there would have been no open protest against the emergency rule. The people would have been required to resort to violence and terrorism. The Supreme Court of India failed the people of India in their hour of trial, when the entire country was turned into a prison house.

MR. M. A. RANE is a leading advocate and free lance journalist.



In India, Democracy had been given too much liberty to the people and they were trying to misuse it. The fault is ours that we were so tolerant and gave them so much of freedom.

Indira Gandhi,  
July 9, 1975.

# To Comrade K. A. Abbas from N. G. Jog

14th July 1975

My Dear Abbas,\*

You have always been a "committed" socialist, while my commitment is only to my own independent thinking and I am never taken in by creeds, slogans and programmes of 8, 10, or 20 points. Like Rousseau, I hold Reason as my King. You are a confirmed Indiraphili, which is only an intensified expression of your Jawaharlal Nehruphilia, I believe. I was second to none in my admiration and love for Jawaharlal though somehow, I have never shared that feeling for his daughter, mainly because I don't believe in the feudal principle of leadership by birthright which was the principal reason for her being catapulted into her first premiership...

"Emergency" is, of course, a disingenuous euphemism for dictatorship - a naked dictatorship - to defend which you have used all your journalistic skill and ability. Nowhere have you used the word dictatorship or even remotely hinted at it. ... You have written what you have because you honestly believe it and that belief, in turn, may charitably be traced to your Indiraphilia. Like Congress President, Barooah - and even long before him - you equated Indira with India in your autobiography...

Even before the formal declaration of emergency, she had long since made herself, to put it bluntly and literally, a dictator. Dictators never lack justification or obsequious defence. She herself now almost daily puts in a justification for the "emergency" blaming it all on the machinations of the opposition. A pack of lesser congress leaders follow her in full cry and our papers are now full of such "news". "Dictators" or promulgators of "emergency" have never lacked praise for their "shrewdness, resoluteness and political acumen", as you have put it. Mussolini was praised for instilling "self-respect" and pride among his people and for the odd reason that he made the Italian trains run on time! Hitler declared after the "night of the long knives" that the conscience and identity of the great German people was then concentrated in him - a statement which was loyally applauded by the entire German Press the next day. I myself wrote a five column eulogistic obituary of Stalin in the *Sunday Standard* for "putting the coping stone" (by his great victory over the Nazis) on Lenin's revolution, for which I felt heartily ashamed when I later read Khrushchev's shocking disclosures of his cruelty.

Nearer home, Ayub also did not lack admirers and justifiers. And to think that we ourselves should pass under a dictatorship - or "emergency" within 28 years of our winning freedom - for which so many suffered so much - however benign, benevolent and "mater-nalistic" (so to say), it may be. It goes against the grain of nationalism and shocks every fibre of my being. Was it for this that a succession of great leaders from Tilak and Gokhale to Gandhi, Bose and Nehru struggled so long and so bravely? Was it for this that our generation suffered so much? Indira blames the opposition leaders for having forced her to declare "emergency" by their efforts to "destabilise" and "disrupt" the nation. But, pray who prepared the fertile ground for such possible "disruption"? The Congress has been in supreme power for 28 years continuously. This was a significantly long period in all conscience at least to lay the foundation of a good, if not happy, life for every single Indian citizen. What is the actual position by official statistics. Over 50% of our people live below the poverty line...

We boast of Pokharan and Aryabhata, while a hundred thousand villages have no water to drink and their women have to trudge for miles together for a pail of water. The middle classes are ground between the nether stone of inflation and the upper stone of bureaucratic neglect, incompetence and corruption. The list is endless.

Indeed corruption has become a national canker which is inevitably corroding the very vitals of the nation. Many years ago and long before freedom, Jawaharlal talked of hanging the profiteers on the nearest tree, but they continued to prosper along with the smugglers, bootleggers and other anti-social tribes. It could hardly be suggested that action could not have been taken against them without the declaration of "emergency" i.e. imposition of a dictatorship - whose worst feature is not only curbing of fundamental rights and individual freedom and dignity but also the imposition of a rigorous press censorship, which prohibits the publication of the names of even those arrested.

I remember how the all-night efforts of three of our best reporters enabled the *Chronicle* to publish the full story of the arrest of Gandhiji and other national leaders under a seven column banner on 9th August, 1942. Though we came rather late that morning, the *Chronicle* beat the entire Indian Press and we rejoiced and prided on it as if it was our own handiwork. (May be you yourself worked the whole night on the story).

\*Comrade K. A. Abbas, to whom this letter was addressed, was a member of the CPI (the Moscow variety), and wrote 'The Last Page' in the *"Blitz"* - then an apologist for Moscow, now championing the BJP.

Such journalistic enterprise was out of the question this time since a rigid press censorship was made "an integral part of the declaration of the emergency". The leading papers of the capital could not come out for a day or two. I learn, because of a power failure which was conveniently confined to the Bahadur Shah Jafar Marg area - the Fleet Street of Delhi...

Every patriotic Indian welcomed and loyally supported the emergency in 1965 and again in 1971. The present emergency would have been similarly welcomed had it been solely directed towards the smugglers, black-marketers, corrupt officials and leaders and violent elements like the R.S.S., the Jamaat-e-Islami, the heinous Anand Margis. Indeed, such violent elements could have been suitably dealt with much earlier, had there only been the will to do it.

But power tends to corrupt (in the famous words of Acton) and absolute power absolutely until it inevitably arrives on the short cut of dictatorship to gag all voice of dissent. You have made much of the fact that none of the threatened eruption of unrest followed the declaration of "emergency". I wryly recall the similar gloating of Tottenham (after crushing under his iron heel the "Quit India Resolution" within a month and a half) that "the good sense of the Indian people at large had quickly asserted itself over the evil counsels of Congress Leaders".

You and I enjoyed a hearty laugh together over such an empty claim. How, alas, I have to shed a tear alone over the loss of all that I value. Our people had little material advantage or even creature comforts to boast of but they had the priceless gift of freedom under a democracy. We were proud of this "oasis" in a desert of dictatorship all round us in the developing countries of Asia and Africa. And to think that this valued oasis should be submerged as swiftly as the Padma in spate swaps the charlands in Bangladesh! And you justify it as emergency and actually hail it as a revolution; Revolution indeed!....

Unless you honestly believed that a dictatorship was our ordained fate, the logical consummation of the "tryst with destiny" as proclaimed by Jawaharlal on that memorable midnight which ushered in our freedom, you have atleast adopted a dignified silence. Or you could have explained away a situation by noting that a people gets the government it deserves, instead of becoming an apologist of the establishment, when it comes to the crunch.

The press censorship is working like a steamroller, the distribution of the issue of date July 6 of a popular and non-political paper has to be withdrawn because of a stray critical comment on the government. Even an

academic paper '*The Economic and Political Weekly*' could not come out the earlier week. *Mainstream* an avowedly communist paper and a habitual supporter of Indira (with occasional protestations to keep up its leftist image) had to confess in its editorial (July 12) that "in the prevailing conditions, it is neither feasible nor permissible to attempt an overall appraisal of the situation from week to week".

Foreign papers which are critical of Indira are impounded wholesale. I have not received my copy of TIME for the last two weeks though I am a 5-year subscriber and wrote to the distributors to black out or tear off the pages on India and send the rest of the issue. The same is the case with every foreign paper or journal however famous or respected. Surely those papers which are the least bit critical of Indira and which are read by a minority of intellectuals could, by no stretch of imagination have incited the Indian masses to riots, or set the Ganges on fire. And all the while every little support from Algeria or Libya and Timbuctoo - not to mention Moscow which promptly came out with praise for action against "Right reaction" - is broadcast on the Radio and flaunted in the cowed press.

I used to consider our young men and women who settled abroad as worse than unpatriotic. Their action amounted, in my view, not only to a brain drain but a national crime. But I had to change my opinion after meeting several of them in U.S., Europe and Japan during my tour in 1969, and again this year in Australia and Singapore.

While one sees how happy and better-off they are abroad and listens to the bitterness with which they recall their early struggle in India, one actually begins to sympathise with them and wish them well wherever they may be. Singapore especially is full of Indians not one of whom wants to return home. Why young people only? I happened to meet an old Goanese lady in Singapore who told us that she owned some property in Goa and often feels homesick, as Goanese even in Bombay do. But she disclaimed any intention of returning to India, even to claim her property.

Dictatorships differ only in degree - never in kind - whatever polite label they may assume. Please note when you next write in justification of the "emergency" - blessed word! it is a grievous assault on one's freedom and human dignity.

MR. N. G. JOG, was an eminent journalist, author and columnist. This letter is extracted from the N. G. Jog Commemoration volume "Crusaders of the Fourth Estate in India" edited by Dr. R. Srinivasan.

# An International Appeal that Went Unheard

Utrecht, 30th March 1976

Mrs. Indira Gandhi,  
Prime Minister of India  
New Delhi, India

At the outset, we wish to assure you that we have no doubt that you and your government are actuated by the highest motives, namely, the interest, welfare and social and economic progress of the people of India. We are also aware that in deciding state policies and actions, a wide variety of factors, happenings and pressures - both internal and external - have to be taken into consideration, and that in recent years, India has been facing great difficulties and problems. We realise that a great responsibility rests upon you. As Plato contended, the highest wisdom of all is that required by the statesman, who is called upon to fix both the goal towards which society strives, and the complex methods by which it may most effectively move towards them.

During India's struggle for independence, and since its achievement, its leaders have gained the admiration of thinking people all over the world, by their commitment to individual freedom and cultural values, and their meticulous attention to ends and means. We, especially in the international humanist movement, have been proud to include amongst us your dear father, the late Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, as a great humanist, who made India respected and well-known as the largest democracy in the world, dedicated, in the words of the Constitution of India, to secure for all citizens:

"Justice, social, economic and political, Liberty, of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, Equality of status and of opportunity, and to promote among them all, Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation"

These are the principles and values which are in fact the basis of the humanist outlook and way of life which the humanist movements in all countries seek to translate into reality. We shall, therefore, be failing in our duty if we do not express our deepest concern at the recent actions of your Government in the sphere of social and cultural freedom affecting the people of India.

We are extremely disturbed by the suspension of fundamental freedoms as well as the other rights relating to equality before the law, protection of life and personal liberty, and protection against arrest and detention in certain cases. We are particularly distressed to note the imposition of press censorship and the adoption of the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matter Bill as an Act of Parliament thereby making the restrictions imposed on freedom of thought and

expression during the state of emergency a part of the normal laws of the country.

It may be true that freedom of speech and publication has produced a plethora of words and has contributed little to economic progress. But it needs hardly be pointed out that the suppression of this vital freedom will render most intellectual activity politically and economically sterile, and what is worse, it could lead to apathetic conformity and cultural suffocation or violent reaction.

If one accepts the contention that Western-style democracy is inapplicable or impracticable in Indian and Asian conditions, then the real challenge is to evolve a system which would be suitable and still guarantees basic freedoms "assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation". The solution can never be one which leads to their suppression and a totalitarian form of government. We sincerely appeal to you to meet this challenge and under your leadership, lead the people of India towards a richer and fuller democracy which can be achieved only in an open society and under conditions of freedom which those who fought for India's political independence sought to secure for all its citizens. We have no doubt that the people of India will respond and be inspired by such an endeavour, given the irrepressible urge for freedom and search for meaning and truth in life which exists in every human being.

Encouraged by your repeated declarations of commitment to democracy, we urge you to lift the state of emergency, restore fundamental freedoms, release persons detained without being told the charges against them or having the right of appeal, and to remove the restrictions on freedom of information, which is indeed the touchstone of all freedoms.

We make this appeal to you with a deep sense of responsibility and a sincere concern and friendship for the people of India.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Piet Thoenes,

Chairman

for and on behalf of the International Humanist  
and Ethical Union.

*(This is an extract from that letter which Mrs. Gandhi did not feel the need to acknowledge. The initiative for this letter came from Mr. Abe Solomon, a member of the Freedom First's Advisory Board, who was then working at the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) Headquarters in Brussels. He was on the Board of the IHEU, which sent this letter. Mr. Solomon is the President of the Indian Secular Society.)*

Why did you bother to point out the Great Bear in the sky?

Why did you worry if I played in the rain too long?

Why did you love my poems, my awful poems?

Why did you take me for long walks?

Why did you tell me not to run after money?

Why did my successes make you proud?

Why did you teach me to gamble on myself, and not on cards?

When I become a father, maybe I'll know why.

And I hope I'll be a father like you.

Papa, pal, the complete man.



# Socialism and Secularism in the Constitution of India

Subash C. Kashyap

**We must openly accept and declare the hard fact that the system has failed, the constitutional values held dear thus far stand debunked and that a wholesale review is called for, that the socialist jargon should be given up, that the fundamental right to property should be restored and property laws, rent laws and labour laws should be remodeled on the lines of the free world countries.**

Every constitution represents the vision of its founding fathers and the social, political and economic ethos and faith and aspirations of the people. The Preamble to our Constitution embodied the fundamental values on which it was based and built and the aims and objectives which the founding fathers enjoined the polity to strive to achieve. These were further elaborated in the chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. The rights of the individual against the State were sought to be protected by an independent judiciary, provision of judicial review of legislation and making the validity of all laws subject to fundamental rights and according to the individual the right to move the highest court for the protection of constitutional rights contained in the Fundamental Rights chapter.

The Directive Principles specifically speak of the State securing a social order in which 'justice, social, economic and political' shall inform all institutions of the national life, striving to minimise inequalities in income, ensuring distribution of ownership and control of material resources, preventing concentration of wealth and means of production, providing equal wages for equal work, providing for the right to work and education and such other principles from the book of "Socialism". But, the Directive Principles were not designed to be enforceable and the founding fathers, were, in any case, anxious not to bind the succeeding generations to any 'ism'. Removal of

poverty, improving the quality of life and economic development were on the top of the agenda but it was felt that there could be differences of perception in regard to the best course to be adopted.

However, a country's constitution is not a mere inert document. It is a living organism of functioning institutions. It gets meaning and content only from the manner in which the people by whom it is operated, the effects it acquires from how it is interpreted by the courts of the land and the conventions and practices that grow around it in the actual process of the implementation.

## 76 Amendments in 45 Years

In 45 years, there have been 76 amendments to the Constitution of India. Some of these were brought about in reckless and wanton manner without any regard to national interest or social good. These were often motivated by power politics, populism or partisan or personal interests of the rulers. The result has been that our Constitution today is not the same that the founding fathers gave us. It has been deliberately defied and defiled in many ways. It is a sad story.

The Preamble as adopted by the Constituent Assembly, spoke of "We, the People of India", making a solemn resolve to constitute India into a "Sovereign Democratic Republic", securing for all its citizens Justice, Liberty and Equality, and promoting among them all Fraternity. Justice was

further defined as social, economic and political. Liberty included liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, and Equality meant equality of status and of opportunity. The ultimate goal was that of "securing the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation".

In the Kesavananda Bharti case (1973) the Supreme Court held by majority view that Parliament could not alter the basic structure or the basic features of the Constitution. Although the basic features were not defined or listed in the majority judgement, it was mentioned by way of illustration that the basic features like sovereignty, democracy and republican character of the polity enshrined in the Preamble could not be altered even by a constitutional amendment. The entire edifice of the Constitution was built on these features which were, in the words of the Supreme Court, so basic, eternal and unalterable that in the absence of anyone of them the Constitution would lose its identity and would not more be the same Constitution.

## The Preamble Defaced

Three years later, however, the Forty-second Amendment passed in 1976 during the Emergency *inter alia* added the words "socialist" and "secular" to the Preamble. This was done only to present a 'progressive' or pro-poor 'socialist' and pro-minorities 'secular' image before the people. 'Socialism' and 'Secularism' soon became symbols of populism and hypocrisy in our public life and mere political party

*Patriotism must now be  
newly defined and  
understood. In the olden  
days, it was just struggle and  
agitation. But now it is as  
hard as building a new  
house. It requires all the  
patience of a brick-layer and  
something more. It requires  
all the skill of a good  
engineer and something  
more. We have, therefore, to  
work hard.*

*- Rajaji*



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slogans without any content.

A large number of pieces of 'socialist' legislation mainly concerning acquisition of property by the State had already been made immune from the questioning in courts of law though processes of judicial review by being placed in Schedule 9 of the Constitution. The Forty-fourth Amendment Act of 1978 omitted the 'right to property' enshrined in Article 31 of the Constitution as a fundamental right. Above all, Section 29(a) added to the Representation of the People Act in 1989 made it obligatory for every political party seeking registration with the Election Commission for allocation of symbols etc. to pledge allegiance to the principles of secularism, socialism and democracy.

The Supreme Court in their judgement in the Bommai case regarding the dismissal of the three BJP governments held that 'secularism' and 'socialism' were among the basic features of the Constitution.

### **Socialism not Defined**

In the text of the Preamble as it now stands, the highest pride of place is given to the term 'socialist'. It stands next only to 'Sovereign' and before 'Secular' and 'Democratic'. However, the term 'Socialism' has not been defined by the Constitution. The Constitution (Forty-fifth Amendment) Bill, attempted to define 'Socialist' to mean 'free from all forms of exploitation - social, economic and political.' The Bill was, however, finally adopted as the 44th Amendment without the definition. The dictionary meaning of the word would imply, in full or in part, placing the means of production and distribution in public hands, i.e. under public (meaning 'State') ownership and/or control as against private ownership and free enterprise.

Despite successive Five Year Plans and placing the public sector undertaking at the commanding heights of our economy, after 48 years of Independence, we have not been able to

make any meaningful dent in levels of poverty or illiteracy. In absolute terms we have both of the poor and the illiterates in much larger number today than at Independence. At least 40% of our population is below the poverty line, the gap between the rich and poor has widened manifold and among the countries we have the largest number of illiterates in the world. The limit of hypocrisy is that we talk of education for all by the end of the century i.e. in the next 5 years. In fact, at the end of the century, we would be having a majority of all the illiterates of the world living in India.

Whatever else it may or may not be, the new economic policy is an admission of the fact that 'Socialism' - even our brand of democratic socialism or socialist democracy - has failed, that the policy of the public sector enjoying the commanding heights of national economy or of public control of means of production and of equitable distribution of income, was ill-conceived or in any case, was no more relevant or valid in the changed circumstances.

### **Socialism and Market Economy Incompatible**

Nobody can seriously believe that the latest panacea of the new economic policy, liberalisation programme, free market economy, etc. are in furtherance of or in keeping with Socialism. Whether one agrees with the IMF-World Bank-GOI prescriptions for solving the country's problems would depend largely on our party, political or ideological predilections and the theoretical modes and perceptions of our favourable economists but it cannot be denied honestly that there has been a total turnaround, a near absolute reversal of policies which were followed for the last four decades and more. He would indeed be a very bold man who can assert that the NEP/SAP is in keeping with any principles of "socialism" or that free market economy is compatible with a "Socialist Republic". Mountebanks may coin terms like market

socialism or socialist market economy but really there can be no marriage between the free play of market forces and concepts of social planning, social engineering and public control of the means of production and distribution.

If we are really honest about our new economic policies and ending the license-permit raj and the inefficiency and wasteful expenditure of the public sector - and much can be said in favour - it is time we give up all hypocrisy and efforts and make-believe regarding our having made no departures from the constitutional principles or Nehruvian model etc. We must openly accept and declare the hard fact that the system has failed, the constitutional values held dear thus far stand debunked and that a wholesale review is called for, that the socialist jargon should be given up, that the fundamental right to property should be restored and property laws, rent laws and labour laws should be remodeled on the lines of the free world countries.

### **Secularism**

As Justice Desai puts it, a secular state deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not connected to a particular religion nor does it seek to promote or interfere with religion. A Secular State must have nothing to do with religious affairs except when their management involves crime, fraud or become a threat to unity and integrity of the State. Delivering his judgement in the Ziauddin Burhamuddin Bukhari Vs. Brijmohan Ramdass Mehra and Bros. Suppl. S.C.R. 281) case Justice M.H. Beg said: "The Secular State, rising above all differences of religion, attempts to secure the good of all its citizens irrespective of their religious beliefs and practices. It is neutral or impartial in extending its benefits to citizens of all castes and creeds." Justice Gajendragadkar defined secularism of the Indian Constitution to mean equality of rights to all citizens as citizens with their religion being entirely irrelevant in the matter. "The State" he

said "does not owe loyalty to any particular religion as such; it is not irreligious or anti-religious; it gives equal freedom to all religions."

The vision of the founding fathers was that of a nation transcending all diversities of religion, caste and creed. They were not hostile to religion but they hoped that it would be possible to forge political unity and that religious differences would not hamper nation building. The Constitution embodied the principles of non-discrimination on grounds of religion among the fundamental rights vide Articles 14, 15, 16 & 19. By Article 25 it guaranteed that all persons were "equally entitled to free-dom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. Every religious denomination was free to manage its religious affairs (Article 26). No one could be compelled to pay for promotion or maintenance of any religion or to take part in any religious instructions; wholly state-funded educational institutions were barred from imparting any religious instructions (Articles 27 & 28). The language, script and culture of minorities were protected and no citizen was to be denied admission to any educational institution on the ground only of religion etc. (Article 29). Also Article 30 ensured the right of minorities to establish and administer their own educational institutions.

### **Distorting a basic Concept**

Thus, the Constitution could be said to have sought to establish a secular order under which the dominant religion of the majority of the population did not enjoy any special privileges or preferential treatment at the hands of the State and the religious rights of the minorities were protected in different ways. But, the Constitution was later amended to allow discrimination on communal/caste grounds and religious minority and religious majority were in practice converted into political minority and political majority.

Today, every party accuses the

other of being communal or pseudo-secular and every party considers itself to be genuinely secular. Just as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or different caste, linguistic, tribal or other affiliations and identities are used to build vote banks, the slogan of secularism is also used for the same purpose and unfortunately more in a negative sense. What is involved is not any high principle but sheer political convenience. People are fooled in the name of mosque or temple, religion or secularism.

As early as on 17 February 1948 R. R. Diwakar had move a resolution in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) to say that "the Government of India shall not recognise any caste, sub-caste, sect or religion and that in future it shall abolish the mention or entry of caste, sub-caste, sect or religion in any forms supplied by Government or in any records or registers kept by Government". The resolution was withdrawn on some assurances by the Government.

Again, a proposal to ban all communal parties was made by Ananthasayanam Ayyangar in a resolution in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on 3 April, 1948. He said that time had come to separate religion from politics, that for the proper functioning of democracy and for national unity and integrity, it was essential to root out communalism from the body politic of India. Any political party, the membership of which was dependent on religion, caste, etc. could not be allowed to engage itself in any activities except those connected with the religious, cultural, social and educational needs of the community.

### **Communal Politics and Secularism**

Shyama Prasad Mookherjee was of the view that if communalism was really to be ended, it was of the utmost importance that it not find any place anywhere in the Constitution. It cannot be that on the one hand we provide for the reservations on grounds of religion

and caste and on the other purpose ending of communal parties. Several members in the Constituent Assembly made the point that the reservations were communal in nature. Syed Karimuddin warned the minorities that if they wanted to continue communal approach and activities they should be aware that it would not be possible to prevent the majority community from propagating majority communalism.

The resolution was duly passed by general acclaim. Prime Minister Nehru said that he was prepared to take all the possible steps with all the energy at his command to fulfill the objectives of the Resolution. It is surprising that even after 47 years of the passing of this resolution and the Prime Minister's assurances on the floor of the House, nothing has been done in the direction of banning communal activities or parties. We do hear, now and then, whenever it suits the demands of partisan politics, voices against the so-called virus of communalism. On the other hand, we also find the same parties that shout the loudest in denouncing communalism aligning themselves most closely with such communal parties and taking their support for getting to power or retaining power.

If we are really serious about rooting out communalism from our body politic then along with 'secular' and 'secularism' we would have to define in the Constitution the terms 'communalism' and 'communal' as well. If we consider all those parties communal that contest elections on the basis of caste and communal affinities, probably all the parties would be covered by the definition.

At least twice in the Constituent Assembly, efforts were made to make a specific mention of 'secularism' in the Constitution. An amendment had sought to ensure that no law on the basis of religion, or applied to adherents of any one religion and left others untouched. All such amendments were

summarily rejected by Dr. Ambedkar. Later, while speaking on the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament, he made it amply clear that he did not believe that our Constitution was secular because it allowed different treatment to various communities and the legislators could frame separate laws for them.

### Are we really a Secular State?

The Constitution, recognized various religions and religious organizations. Also, the State can extend financial assistance to religious institutions and can change, regulate and end certain religious practices. The Constitution legitimizes distinctions on the basis of community and caste in the matter of services under the State and allows public celebration of religious functions of various religions. The holders of highest offices of the State and the tallest political dignitaries make it a point to publicly participate in religious festivals, to visit religious places and pay obeisance and make a demonstration thereof, honour religious leaders - Imams, Bishops, Munis, Sadhus and Swamis - at open public gatherings. Judged by all this demonstration of religiosity, are we not one of the most religious States on the globe or does 'secularism' mean for us something entirely different from what all dictionaries say it means? Are we really trying to keep religion and politics apart or have they become more inter-locked than ever before? Which party does not look at the caste and community composition of constituencies while giving tickets for elections? We all claim to be secular but our political and social behaviour is coloured by communal and caste considerations in almost all parties. Can we still say that we regard religion as a private affair of a relationship between the individual and his God? Can we honestly affirm that behind all this demonstration of religiosity, real motivations are not those of the mathematics or vote merchants.

Where there is discrimination

between man and man on the grounds of religion, where governors, ambassadors, ministers and other high functionaries are appointed or not appointed because of the community or caste to which they happen to belong by the accident of birth, where even for the highest office of the Head of the State caste and communal considerations are seriously and shamelessly discussed, where there are separate laws and codes for different communities, where the administration of places of worship can be entrusted to government officers, where under a 1925 Act, government spends lakhs of rupees for conducting elections to a purely religious body which controls huge funds and runs politics, where no government has the courage to enforce the laws in regard to misuse of religion during elections, where parties with communal denominations not only exist but participate in elections, where rights are demanded and conceded on grounds of communities, it is a cruel joke to talk of secularism.

The simple point is that religion should not be made an electoral issue and similarly the slogan of secularism should also not be allowed to be used to woo the votes of the minorities, backward castes, tribes, etc. in the struggle for political power. Unless the fundamental premises of representative polity are respected, the present electoral system changed and the role of vote banks in the political power struggle eliminated or considerably reduced, we cannot hope to root out communalism from our body politic and establish a secular order.

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The present paper is based on the author's earlier writing viz. Basic Constitutional Values, Reforming the Constitution and Delinking Religion and Politics.)

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## ENRON - An Open Letter to Mr. Munde

Dear Mr. Gopinath Munde,

As head of the committee that suggested scrapping the Dabhol project of Enron, you must be a happy man today. We all agree with you on the need for transparency. But surely transparency demands that your Munde Committee report should be made public for scrutiny.

Luckily, I have been able to get a copy of your report, I cannot cover all the issues in this column, but will focus on a few key ones.

What I find hilarious is that you do not even know what Enron's project cost is. You say the cost is Rs.4.49 crores per MW. In fact this was simply the initial estimate in 1992 and for the last two years Enron has been quoting a lower price of Rs.4.2 crores per MW. So your report first exaggerates the total cost by Rs.600 crores and then complains that it is too high. Really, Mr. Munde, if a committee does not even know the cost of the project it is reviewing, should it be taken very seriously?

One's misgivings increase on seeing that your entire basis for assessing the fair cost is a study for the advanced light water reactor (ALWR) nuclear programme in the US. On the basis of this study, you calculate that Enron is overpriced by \$700 million.

You say that, according to the ALWR norms, a gas-based plant like Enron's should cost only 44 per cent as much as a coal-based plant. Now, a coal-based plant in India like Cogentrix costs Rs.4.3 crores per MW, so your 44 per cent rule means that no gas-based plant should cost more than Rs.1.89 crores per MW. Anything significantly higher will be a scam.

Some power experts will say this is ridiculous. But let us accept your 44 per cent norm. As an honourable man, you will surely insist that gas-based plants costing much more than Rs.1.89 crores are a scam and should be scrapped in all states, especially those ruled by the BJP.

This will cause some discomfort to your colleagues, but as an honourable man, you must press your case. The BJP government in Gujarat has just okayed the Gujarat Torrent power plant at a cost of Rs.3.51 crores per MW, almost double what your committee regards as reasonable. So I hope you will immediately denounce the Gujarat chief minister as a scamster and demand police action.

You must send a telegram to the BJP chief minister in Rajasthan. The Ramgarh gas-based project in the state has been cleared at a cost of Rs.3.4 crores per MW. According to the logic of the Munde Committee report, this chief minister too is a dirty crook and I trust you will expose him thoroughly.

BJP chief minister of Delhi, Madan Lal Khurana is keen on expediting the Bawana gas-based project, which is vital for meeting the capital's future needs. Competitive bidding has taken place for this project and the lowest bid is around Rs.3.5 crores per MW from Reliance. By the norms of your committee,

this too is a scam and I hope you will instruct Mr. Khurana to immediately abandon the project.

Oh yes, Maharashtra has held competitive bidding for the Nagothane project, and here again Reliance is the lowest bidder at Rs.3.6 crores per MW. A scam at your doorstep! I trust you will cancel the project at once. I trust you will also demand a police inquiry into all Maharashtra ministers who are supporting the project. This will include chief minister Manohar Joshi. It will also include members of the Munde Committee, including yourself. But as an honourable man, I am sure you will happily go to jail in order to vindicate the high moral principles enshrined in your report.

While you mull over that moral dilemma, ordinary readers will doubtless ask me why your calculations look so zany. I myself don't know. Maybe the comparisons will look less ridiculous if you add transport and storage costs, but even so your norms look wonky. It seems that in your attempt to select only those figures most unfavourable to Enron, you have made an ass of yourself.

**If your report were really transparent, the last para would run as follows: 'We must cancel the project rather than renegotiate to maximise our political advantage. True, cancellation charges could be Rs.1,500 crores and damages even more. But this will come not out of our pockets but those of Maharashtra taxpayer. This is an excellent, non-transparent way of using taxpayers' money to finance our next election campaign. And please don't give us any moral lectures on this score; the Congress has milked the exchequer for ages and we are just catching up'.**

Many people will be impressed by passages in your report quoting the World Bank as saying the project is unviable, that liquefied natural gas (LNG) is too expensive a fuel and that a base-load station of 2,015 MW by 1998 is too big for Maharashtra. But, Mr. Munde, these remarks were made by the World Bank in 1992 and 1993. Why do you say nothing about the Bank's views today? Perhaps because the Bank's remarks would be totally different today. In 1992, the Bank objected to an LNG-based project of 2,015 MW due in 1998. After hearing these objections, the MSEB set aside the second and main phase of the project and sanctioned only the first phase of 695 MW, based not on LNG but distillate oil. So the 1992-93 criticisms of the Bank on plant size and fuel simply do not apply.

Alas, Mr. Munde, you have missed a golden opportunity for a fair assessment of Enron, which is badly needed. Less biased but pertinent questions can be asked about Enron's costs; about loading the port cost on the power project; about the backloading of its tariff. I personally believe Enron's price is on the high side, India was in a weak negotiating position in 1992, when the proposal first came, but can drive a much harder bargain today. So the project should be renegotiated to bring down the power price, reverse the backloading and give a 30-per cent equity stake to the MSEB. This will give the state power it badly needs at a reasonable price. It will avoid cancellation charges of Rs.1,500 crores and perhaps more in damages. It will avoid India being declared a credit risk by bankers, a development that will increase our borrowing costs by hundreds of crores.

You say, Mr. Munde, that you wish to send the message that India cannot be taken for a ride. That is an admirable message. But it can equally well be sent by tough renegotiation, without suffering the high costs of cancellation. However, renegotiation will be less macho and vote-catching than cancellation.

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar

August 6, 1995.

(COURTESY: Swaminathan S. A. Aiyar and The Times of India)

# The Sovereign Nation State At the Crossroads of History

B. Ramesh Babu

Jurisdictions or ambits of authority are territorial and also functional. Loyalty or a sense of obligation is a varying mix of sentiments, habit and compulsion. The Sovereign Nation State has been the key-stone of the arch of inter-national society for over four or five centuries. It has over time become the very foundation of world politics, the conceptual para-digm in our minds. The sovereign state has become not merely the most crucial unit of action and power on the world scene but also the very prism through which scholars as well as common people perceive the global reality. It is my contention that the time has come to cast aside the cerebral fetters imposed on all of us by the sovereign nation state paradigm<sup>1</sup>. We should look beyond the blinkers of the by-gone era that are blocking our vision and holding us back from taking a fresh look at the radically altered global reality that is still changing rapidly in front of our eyes. Theory and reality should not be out of synch with each other beyond the parameters of creative tension. Otherwise theories will become meaningless and utterly useless as tools of explanation, analysis, prediction and finally, for management of reality with a view to make it "better".

Change is the law of life and it is the constant and most enduring companion of man. Its content and extent, pace and context, and role and reach do vary from time to time. Every once in a while the cumulative effect of change during a relatively short

**Forces of sub-national disintegration like ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism; linguism; tribalism; and casteism etc. are raising their ugly heads. Unification of Vietnam and Germany; break up of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia; unhinging of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe; and the sad saga of "ethnic cleansing" in former Yugoslavia are only the more dramatic and cataclysmic of the radical transformation sweeping the globe.**

period of time add up to such a radical and substantive transformation that there is a *crescive*<sup>2</sup> break from the past. We do not have the choice of going back. Countours of the coming era may be hazy, its constituents unclear or even contradictory, but the break from the past at times is crystal clear, almost audible! We know in our bones that things have changed irreversibly. The evolving new situation need not necessarily be an improvement over the past, nor the worse in comparison. Change and progress are not synonymous, nor are they mutually exclusive. They are distinct and separate.

## An Era in Transition

The post-Gorbachev world represents an era of such a *crescive* transition to a new and uncharted future. We see a plethora of unsettling events and developments, a lot of pushing forward and pulling back. Consequently, the political geography of the world is being redrawn in opposite directions

simultaneously. The complex mix and confusing flux is yet to gel into a new pattern. It is too early to predict as to which of the changes will endure and which will prove to be transitory. Only time could possibly sort out the jigsaw puzzle of the evolving global reality. In the meanwhile the nation state is getting sucked in by diverse forces of trans-national integration at one end (European community, ASEAN, NAFTA, etc.). At the same time, the nation state is being pulled apart and undermined from within by forces of sub-national disintegration at the other end of the spectrum.

## Cataclysmic Transformations

Forces of sub-national disintegration like ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism; linguism; tribalism; and casteism etc. are raising their ugly heads. Unification of Vietnam and Germany; break up of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia; unhinging of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe; and the sad saga of "ethnic cleansing" in former Yugoslavia are only the more dramatic and cataclysmic of the radical transformation sweeping the globe. A plethora of new separatist movements are piling up on top of such hardy perennials like those of Kurds in West Asia and Kashmiris in South Asia. Basques in Spain and Buddhists in Tibet, and the Irish in UK and the communists in Philippines etc. The cumulative effect of such a dual transformation (supranational integration and sub-national disintegration) of varying intensities is playing havoc with the existing institutions and structures (i.e. jurisdictions) and the

<sup>1</sup> Paradigm = Example, Pattern

<sup>2</sup> Crescive = Increasing, Growing

sense of obligation they normally command and receive (i.e. the loyalists). It is common knowledge that normally the extant jurisdictions and corresponding loyalties reinforce each other with the passage of time. When cataclysmic changes occur, this mutually reinforcing dynamic between jurisdictions and loyalties is undermined by ambiguity and may even become dysfunctional. This unsettling process could gather a reinforcing momentum of its own. Among the crucial consequences of the ongoing dual transformation is the growing mismatch between the responsibilities and capabilities of an overwhelming majority of the so-called sovereign nation states. In fact, most of them have become, in the words of Daniel Bell, too big to tackle the small problems on hand and too small to deal with the big challenges confronting them. The former USSR and present day Russia, Cuba, Canada, India and even USA can be cited as examples illustrative of the macro-challenges and micro-dilemmas facing the nation state today.

#### **"Needed New Forms, not reforms"**

Another and a parallel fault line that is traversing the jurisdictional framework structuring the globe is the crucial question of legitimacy of the governments in office, i.e., the ever growing disjunction between power and authority at all levels of governance. Even at the best of times there is a discernible gap between the two, and they are invariably at logger heads with each other. However, all jurisdictions are endowed with a degree of flexibility or range of resilience. In this respect, the sovereign nation state occupies a unique historical position of wielding a monopoly of power and authority within and without. Power is often wielded by the State (and all other jurisdictions) to assert its authority and also to reinforce the credibility and legitimacy of the latter. But, when

the internal dissensions and external pressures "cross the limits" of [to use the jargon] the "retractable range of systemic elasticity," the governing institutions begin to lose their relevance, efficacy and legitimacy, even if they linger on or continue to stay in place. At such times, what the world needs is not "reforms," but "new forms," as Buckminster-Fuller remarked. It is my contention that we are already at such a historic denouement. Restructuring the architecture of global power so as to bring it closer to global reality is the overarching need of the day! Maybe I am overstating my case a bit, but I have a nagging feeling that the diagnosis is not off the mark, nor premature. In the modern world things happen before we know and long before we realise their true import or significance. Future often descends on us much before we hear its approaching footsteps. Toffler diagnosed the phenomenon long ago as "future shock." The sovereign nation state as we used to know it is heading willy nilly towards the turbulent seas and is put on a voyage it is unprepared to embark upon.

Scholarly literature on international relations and politics conceptualised the global situation in the 17th century as the "World of Sovereign States" and later in the 19th century modified it as the "Modern State System." The latter term was gradually embellished with qualifications, by superimposing sophisticated layers of "transnational forces" and by reinforcing it with a criss-cross of "sub-national" dimensions at the other end of the spectrum. It is hoped that thereby the resultant "theory" could catch up with the international reality obtaining in the early 20th century. But, the modified and updated concept of modern state system has become such a hotchpotch that scholars and analysts find such a qualified and hedged-in type of formulations to be wholly inadequate to comprehend or

encompass the complex web of world politics today. The term "modern state system" lacks conceptual coherence and is too diffuse to be of more than limited utility to explain, analyse or predict — the three normal functions of theories.

At the same time to conceptualise the contemporary global situation as "world politics" seems to be unrealistic, inaccurate, and even premature. Nor should one underestimate the staying power of the nation state or the force of its assertion of sovereignty. This is particularly so because politics is traditionally understood by scholars and citizens in terms of "contentions within specified territorial/jurisdictional units of governance." Maybe the academic relevance of such a narrow and constricted approach to the study of politics needs to be re-examined. However, this is not the place to embark on such a digression.

#### **The Forces Fuelling Transformation**

At this stage, a listing of the diverse forces fuelling the contemporary transformation of international reality may be in order: (a) Ever expanding reach of international law, its norms and practices; and the ever increasing ambit of international organisations at the expense of the "domestic" jurisdiction of the nation state as it is understood till now. (b) Integration of nation states into "regional" inter-national structures of varying degrees of coherence. (c) Globalisation of markets and marketisation of economics. The goal of never ending economic growth sought by peoples and nation states alike and endlessly growing global interdependence are at odds with the vertical organisation of the structure of power in the world. (d) Even providing for national security has become a shared responsibility and a collaborative operation, which is more often than not contingent upon the policies and even the politics of other states. (e) Advances

in science and technology are compelling even the reluctant states and peoples to go along with the mainstream of developments or be left out. The technology of coercion is no more the monopoly of the Sovereign Nation State. Terrorism and the so-called "low level" violence are rampant all over the world. They have become pervasive and are gaining permanency and even legitimacy! (f) The media of communications (radio, television, etc.) do not respect international boundaries. The nation state cannot even ration information, let alone prevent citizens from learning "facts" and "truth" from outside ("extra territorial") sources. (g) The global environment or the ecological balance of the planet has suddenly become crucial for the welfare of mankind tomorrow, nay even today. Nation states cannot be allowed to do whatever they want; but there are no effective and agreed ways of making them fall in line or even curbing them. Rich nations get away with it, while the small and poor nations are constrained to refrain from polluting the environment. (h) Cross cultural influences are spreading and near universalisation of lifestyles, the so-called "Americanisation,"<sup>3</sup> is taking place and gathering pace. At the same time, even the dominant countries/players like USA, Japan, Germany, France, European community, ASEAN, NAFTA, etc. are being compelled to "adjust" in varying degrees to the new and changing international reality. As a scholar from India, my preference will be in favour of containing the "primacy" of the powerful and making them "bend" toward greater justice for all peoples everywhere and lesser privileges for the rich and better endowed. One should realise

that the nature and extent of interdependence in the world is such that the affluent and the mighty need not and cannot get away with it all. But, this requires the other states and jurisdictions on the world scene to play the cards with skill and sincerity, courage and conviction.

On another plane, the nature and the actual distribution of power<sup>4</sup> across the globe is impinging heavily on the sovereignty of the nation state. The bipolar, multi-polar and unipolar nature of distribution of power in the world has serious and distinctly different implications for each nation state or jurisdictional entity. The decline in the primacy of military power in the post cold war world and the concomitant rise in the relative importance of economic power have altered and continue to modify further the prevailing power equations among nations. This process has been underway for sometime and will go on for a decade or two. It will take a while before nations (i.e. their leaders and peoples) realise its significance and implications in full. Habits die hard, especially habits of mind.

Furthermore, the sovereignty of a state is also constrained by the actual and objective realities of power within. The rise of ethnic and religious sub-nationalisms in recent decades has led to the fragmentation of authority and erosion of national consensus in many a state around the world. This problem or challenge is not confined to the so-called third world, where the historic process of nation building is yet to be completed in many a state or territorial jurisdiction. Even the affluent and long established nation states in the West and North are not free from the daunting challenge of eroding national consensus. The intractable and ever growing underclass of poor, needy, unemployable, sick, elderly and youth unable to enter the labour market etc; the resurgence of racial preju-

dice and bigotry; the lurking danger of being engulfed in their own waste and the prospect of living in a polluted and ecologically degraded environment; and many other seemingly insurmountable problems do not auger well for them.

In addition, the gathering appeal and hence the legitimacy of narrower and more intensely emotional sub-national identities are emerging as potent rivals to the historically powerful sense of nationalism that was coterminous with the nation state. The contemporary global situation is further complicated by the fact that professional and other elites in many developing countries find attractive career and political prospects in promoting sub-national loyalties. The snowballing of passionate demands for reservation of jobs, seats in professional colleges and emergence of quotas (formal and informal) for even elective positions for backward classes, and women etc. in India are symptomatic of the malaise afflicting the already wounded national consensus. Internal rivalries among these elites and leaders of the sub-groups further accentuate the problems confronting the governments in office at the national level in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

### Legitimacy of the Nation-State Questioned

Movements of social protests and issue politics in most countries (including those in the West and North) are questioning the very legitimacy of the nation state, not merely the authority of the rulers in power from time to time. Consequently, the authority of the State tends to degenerate into power, and governments resort to coercion to shore up their position. This ironically, results in a further decline in the legitimacy of authority. Successive rounds of the process triggers the spiral of eroding legitimacy of the State. Such crises of confidence are further accentuated by the poverty of "leadership," or the abysmal decline in the quality of

<sup>3</sup> See the author's "The Americanisation of the World: Myth and Reality," *Freedom First*, No. 422 (July-September 1994): 23-27.

<sup>4</sup> Power is defined here as the capacity of a state (or jurisdiction) to persuade another state (or jurisdiction) to do what the latter would otherwise not do. Power, naturally, can be military, economic, political, diplomatic, cultural, etc. and/or any combination of them.

leaders available around the world. Leaders of stature are notable by their absence in most countries. Public and elected offices are being "occupied" by the puny, i.e., by individuals who can only be described as "followers of their following!" The only discernible difference among them is that some are more helpless in their "followership" than the others in the fray!! Ironical as it may seem, "popular" governments degenerate into being so instantly popular that they cease to "govern!" While all and sundry quote Abraham Lincoln's famous dictum of government of, by and for the people, everyone forgets the fact that the government has to be exercised over the people.

The cumulative and mutually reinforcing impact of these and other forces (including those I did not mention or failed to perceive) at work over the years has, in my judgement, qualitatively and irrevocably altered the global reality. The process will continue for at least a few decades into the next century. The sovereign state has lost much of its elan, majesty, and its *raison d'être*. Patriotism and nationalism seem to be losing their bite and even their bark! The world is in the process of transiting from international politics to global politics. We are not there yet; but we are moving inexorably in that direction and it seems that the momentum is gathering as years roll by. Yet, it is certainly premature to bury the sovereign nation state! Maybe an interplanetary attack from outer space could tilt the balance. Then, the earthlings may join hands across the national boundaries to forge a new patriotism spanning the earth. But even that would be parochial and hence shackled with the perennial disjunction between authority and legitimacy because it could at best be the patriotism of humans on behalf of mankind (assuming that woman-kind would not be unkind to such a formulation!) inevitably excluding

the other living (animals, insects, trees, plants, etc.) and non-living things, mountains, oceans, rivers, etc.). The Western (Judeo-Christian) philosophy has to go a long way before approximating the ancient Hindu and Buddhist conceptualisation of the whole planet earth as one family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) and of the earth itself as but one transient abode of life as we know it in the cosmos that is truly eternal, i.e., beyond the mere human conceptions of time and space!

Returning to the earth, we can easily recognise the contours of the historic transformation underway. Local, sub-national, transnational and supra-national structures of governance are gaining in salience, credibility, legitimacy and visibility. These institutions are growing along territorial as well as functional lines and often we find in them a mutually reinforcing mixture of both the trends. A more adequate conceptualisation of power and authority reflective of the new ground realities in the world is very much needed. That is a stupendous task and calls for a lot of research and reflection by many scholars around the world. It will be my endeavour to do my bit of thinking and writing with a view to pave the way for such a conceptualisation, a new paradigm stretching beyond international politics and falling short of world politics. Maybe we can build on the federal principle and conceive of a structure of governance that provides for representation to sub-national as well as supra-national jurisdictions along with some direct popular representation, conferring legitimacy on new territorial jurisdictions and at the same time honouring the democratic principle of universal adult suffrage. But, this is one of the "undertilled" areas of research and reflection in social sciences.

DR. B. RAMESH BABU is an Academic Fellow in International Relations at American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, India.

### Minorities is Not a Nice Word

Peoples would get on better together if they stopped talking about national minorities. George Orwell used to say that we are defined by the words we use, particularly in politics, and minority is not a nice word. It is unpleasant for the simple reason that it implies comparison with a majority - and such comparison is unnecessary and superfluous.

Take the Swiss example. Switzerland has three main language groups, German, French and Italian. The German language is spoken by more than two-thirds of the population. It is by far the largest of the three groups, and the Italian speakers make up by far the smallest group. But they are all equal. The three languages have equal rights, as do those who speak them. Where a distinction has to be made between them, words such as 'group' or 'community' are used. This avoids any suggestion of comparison. There is never any feeling that any language group is a less valuable component of the country than any other. There is no suggestion that one of them is a minority to be considered over and against a majority.

Though there are countries of many different sizes, they are all sovereign and have equal rights in international law. They all, for example, have one vote in the United Nations General Assembly, and they may all be elected to the Security Council. No one would suggest that Fiji and Haiti have less rights as members of the international community than India or Nigeria because the latter are much bigger and more populous. So it should be with ethnic, language or any other groups within a country. A tribe with ten members is as valuable a part of society as one with 100,000 members. Neither one of them should be described as either a minority or a majority.

Vocabulary is important, and we should be careful about adopting the words of our enemies. For democrats do have enemies in today's Europe. These include those who indulge in 'ethnic cleansing' in ex-Yugoslavia. They also include people who make racist propaganda and those who encourage people to hate their neighbours because they look different or speak differently.

Ian Tickle in *Swiss Press Review*.

'Why only Europe, Mr Tickle, you will find them every where. We have a surfeit of them here in India. Many of them, tragically in positions of power - Ed.'

# Why I Lost in the Recent Karnataka Assembly Elections?

Bhamy V. Shenoy

The recent outcome of the Karnataka assembly election results in which the ruling Congress (I) was thrown out and Janata Dal was brought back to power has been interpreted by most as an indication of the wisdom of Indian voters and also as an expression of Indian voters having achieved democratic maturity.

## Is the Indian Voter Really Mature

If it is the case, how can we describe the success of Janata Dal which was defeated in the last election and whose leaders did not perform responsibly while in the opposition since their defeat? As their own leader Ramakrishna Hegde has often said that his party has been depending upon just one agenda of Mandal and reservation. How can one describe the success of Bangarappa and nine of his followers when his government was considered as the fountainhead of corruption by his own party members and was brought down?

Karnataka voters have thrown out tweedledee and brought back tweedledum. It is not that they did not have a choice. There were any number of independent candidates. Voters could have elected them to show their anger and frustration with the professional politicians. This is one macro-view. But let us now take a micro-view to find out how voters have been actually influenced.

My own experience of contesting the election from the Chamaraja constituency of Mysore city as an independent candidate and losing the election by a big margin proves my hypothesis that Indian voters are not interested in

the election, do not care who wins and often do not even know whom they are voting for. One retired KAS official who wanted to vote for me changed his mind in the last minute to vote for a candidate because on his way to the polling booth, his people gave him his voting registration number!

## Real Issues Don't Matter

In my constituency, there are eight major slum areas and the votes there are controlled by petty feudal lords who are usually small time politicians. They are not influenced by what the policy of liberalisation is doing to the economy, whether the poor are getting kerosene regularly, whether the condition of roads is good or in what way the reservation policy will affect our educational institutions in the long run. They are swayed by how much money they will get or what position

they can secure after the election. I was hopeful that their votes will be more than neutralised by the active participation of literate and educated voters in my constituency. But my hopes were belied.

I had contested in the assembly election in 1989 also from the same constituency and secured just 550 votes. This time I could get 2,260 voters. The surprising thing was that even many of my supporters were not shocked by my defeat. When I contested the election in 1989, I was not known in the city. I had returned from the USA where I had stayed for more than 22 years, only in 1987.

But in 1994, the situation was entirely different. With the help of many leading intellectuals, scientists, top level retired army officials, retired bureaucrats and professionals, I had taken

## Dr. Bhamy V. Shenoy - The Candidate

Dr. Shenoy has a B.Tech. from IIT, Madras and a Ph.D. from the University of Houston, USA. He has had 25 years of energy industry experience in USA, UK, Italy, Ireland and India, interacting with the World Bank in Washington DC, International Energy Agency in Paris, OPEC in Vienna, European Community in Brussels and visiting many OPEC countries all over the world.

Since returning to India in 1987, Dr. Shenoy has been devoting all his time to voluntary service in consumer movement, environmental protection, education and energy studies.

As a consumer activist in Mysore, there is not one significant area to which he has not contributed. He has

assisted the City Corporation as an honorary adviser, advised Zilla Parishad in the preparation of its Five Year Plan, studied the kerosene supply problem for the District Council, worked with the Forest Department in planting trees, helped solve LPG problems through Oil Advisory Committee, campaigned for unification of taxes, etc. He is a member of the Governing Councils of Manipal Institute of Technology and S.V.S. College, Bantwal. He has also contributed to the field of education by training teachers.

He has also interacted with the Planning Commission, ONGC. (He was a member of the advisory committee to the Chairman on exploration), GAIL, IOC, Madras Refinery, etc. on energy-related subjects.

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interest in solving every significant problem faced by the citizens in Mysore whether it was in the area of environment or consumer protection or communal harmony or education or civic amenities or power or corruption.

### **Money Power Still a Factor**

During the campaign, I did not want to match my political opponents in terms of spending money. While they spent anywhere from Rs. seven lakhs to Rs. twenty lakhs (despite the much publicised observance of moral code of conduct because of Seshan), I spent less than Rs. 14,000/-. But with the help of friends, we were able to visit more than 30,000 house and talk to more than 70,000 people. We did not ask just for votes. We spent some time in each house and discussed the problems faced by them. Thousands of voters had promised to vote in my favour after understanding why I was contesting. If just 50% had kept up their promise, I would have easily won.

As a part of the campaign, I had published a booklet 'Decline and Fall of Mysore: Who is responsible?' I was able to sell more than 3,500 copies of that booklet. Someone read that booklet voluntarily came forward to help me in the campaign. The message in that booklet was very clear. Unless literate and educated people take interest in politics, we cannot improve living conditions in Mysore.

### **'Bribe and Manage' is Easier**

80% of my constituency are literate and 40-50% are readers of newspapers and are reasonably well informed. My strategy was to concentrate on this literate body and to take my message to them. I also spent a lot of my time on members of Rotary, Lions and Round Table clubs, industrialists, employees of leading industries, shopkeepers, educationists, medical and engineering students, etc. This is the segment of the society which is capable of understanding how professional politicians are duping them and this is also the segment of the society

whom I can easily communicate with and convince of the need to bring in dedicated and motivated professionals to bring about a revolution in our political system.

I was obviously wrong in my assumption. A shopkeeper was frank enough to admit that if we really root out corruption, he could not earn his living. For the sake of argument and to show others how moral we are, many of us may talk against the present corrupt system. But many of our traders and industrialists have learnt the art of managing the system and continuing to make money. They may even agitate for unification of taxes and show anger against the political system which is bringing all kinds of irrational rules and regulations. But in the final say, they prefer a system where they can bribe and manage rather than one where the rule of law prevails.

### **The Real Betrayers of Democracy**

When the average percentage of voting is around 65% in the state, Chamaraja Constituency which has the highest percentage of literate people has managed to have the lowest percentage of voting, just 52%. In other words, our literate class which should be able to vote taking into consideration the merits of the candidates, did not even bother to perform their duty and betrayed their city. There was greater participation of voters from slum areas rather than from better neighbourhoods. I was hoping that since the literate class is fully familiar with the lack of well-defined election agenda on the part of political parties and the lack of determination to implement what little they have, not only would they canvass for me, but would publicly come forward and endorse my candidacy.

### **Missing from Voters List**

But for a handful of well known Mysoreans like Dr. S. L. Byrappa, Dr. G. T. Narayana Rao, Dr. Laxmana Rao, Mr. T. S. Satyan and Mr. Venkata Rao, others were hesitant to come

forward, to support me publicly. Most of the leading intellectuals had privately assured me that I can depend upon their support and votes. Ironically most of those who had publicly supported me could not finally vote for me because their names were missing from the voters' list. Is this just accidental or is there a sinister design?

I also observed another interesting phenomenon during my campaign. While all the people living in slum areas are registered, many people especially highly educated (principal of a medical college, retired judge, etc.) and also those who are transferred often are not registered.

The attitude expressed by some of the BJP sympathisers clearly shows how immature we are as far as democracy is considered. Some of them did not even know who the BJP candidate was but it did not bother them. Few even told me that they would vote for BJP even if the candidate is worthless. Some of them assured me the vote after hearing my name. They had assumed that I was a BJP candidate!

### **What's the Quid Pro Quo**

Even many educated voters did not know what is expected of their legislators. One doctor assured me of her vote if I could get two dustbins by the side of her house. Another housewife wanted my assurance that once elected, I should come and clear the garbage in front of her house. Many were going to vote for certain candidates because they had received certain favours like getting admission for their children, or sites, or getting their licences approved, etc. Very few were aware that a legislator should try to bring about a systemic change by enacting the right kind of legislation, so that all are benefitted, the rights of minorities are protected, communal harmony is maintained, the minimum wants of the poor are met and the society as a whole prospers.

### **The Press Couldn't Care Less**

With one exception, all newspa-

pers completely ignored my candidacy. Even when I was prepared to pay, one newspaper was hesitant to accept my advertisement and I had to make many calls before I could buy space. No newspaper bothered to find out and publish what the stands of different candidates on various important issues were. When a candidate-public meet was held in Mysore for the first time and many professional politicians could not answer questions from the public properly, only one newspaper bothered to cover this important experiment in democracy.

The most significant revelation newspapers could make was that the voters would vote along caste lines! If that was indeed the case, being the only prominent Brahmin candidate from Chamaraja where there are more than 20,000 Brahmins, I should have got

many more votes. In any thriving democracy, media should play a dominant role by bringing to public attention the background of the candidates. But this was totally absent.

#### **There's Still Hope**

Despite the above pessimistic analysis, there is still hope for our democracy because out of 81,000 voters, atleast 2,260 supported my candidacy! More importantly, without the incentives of money or political largesse after the election, more than 100 volunteers came forward to support my ideals. Even without a great effort, I was able to raise more than the required amount to finance my campaign. In fact, I must have been the only candidate who is able to save money out of campaign financing to help other independent candidates in this and future elections!

## **Is it worth the expense?**

Instead of criticising the proposal to send a 30-member team of MPs abroad at an estimated cost of Rs. One crore to study the implementation of Hindi in government offices in India, it should be welcomed as a step in the right direction.

At present, Hindi is sought to be promoted through measures like asking Banks to reply a percentage of letters in Hindi (which the bankers already well versed in creative accounting and window dressing of balance sheets do by acknowledging complaints in Hindi to boost statistics) or asking Indian Airlines staff to speak in Hindi one day in a week while its copilots and air hostesses are not even on speaking terms!

The delegation should study how other nations have tackled the problem of multiple languages successfully. For instance, the democratically correct and financially prudent Swiss have recognised German, French, Italian and little spoken Romanish as *national* languages while only the first three have been adopted as *official* languages, thus obviating the necessity of printing all government documents in a language spoken only by a small part of the population.

In African countries like Kenya and Zambia, the people are proud of their native languages, but use English extensively in order to promote tourism and to develop international contacts.

Many European countries encourage the study of English while encouraging their own languages, realising the growing internationalisation of the world and acceptance of English as an universal language.

As elected representatives of the people, our MPs should study at first hand these new trends by going abroad, if India is to become a mature democracy by realising that not only in human relations, but also with regard to languages, what Rabindranath Tagore said holds good: Respect given and respect taken settles the account between man and man.

M. R. Pai

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## Readers' Response:

### FREEDOM FIRST - THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE

The January-March '95 issue of *Freedom First* was received a couple of days back. All I can say about the issue is that it was worth waiting for, all these months. The series on the current politics in India is excellent, nicely capped by Sharad Joshi's article on Statism.

Reading this article on Statism, I recalled the famous words of Dorris Lessing: "...if a race or stock or species has once become enfeebled by soft living and a belief that it is owed a living, then while physically such individuals may later adapt a vigorous use of themselves, mentally, this is almost impossible, except for a few of more flexible. Self-pity will be their disease - a disease of the will, not of flesh". (Sirian Experiment). It is going to be a long and an uphill task to wean the people away from welfare and to make them self-reliant.

And, anyway, how committed is our government to market orientation. It is well-known that the government turned towards market economy not so much through conviction but because of pressure from the IMF. Even in his first budget announcing a market oriented economy, Dr. Singh announced a grant of Rs. 100 crores to the Rajiv Foundation while the current budget allots more than twenty percent of revenue deficit to welfare measures. At any rate, I find it hard to regard a budget which taxes the citizen, directly through taxes or indirectly through inflationary measures eighty percent of his income (Total expenditure Rs. 172,151 crores against a National income of Rs. 213,573 crores). Most of it is spent on salaries and perks of politicians and bureaucrats and on the inflated commissions of the project contractors. Educating the public on the futility and wastefulness of government spending is a continuous task, and I do not think that the aims of *Freedom First* have yet been achieved.

Besides, *Freedom First*, is a vehicle for liberal ideas. The social structures and our ideas about society change from day to day. What we regard as ideal today may not remain so tomorrow. Liberal ideas of today may appear staid tomorrow and new ideas may emerge. A continuous dialogue is, therefore, needed to make this possible. It does not seem likely, therefore, that the task of *Freedom First* will ever be complete.

Y. D. Altekar, Pune

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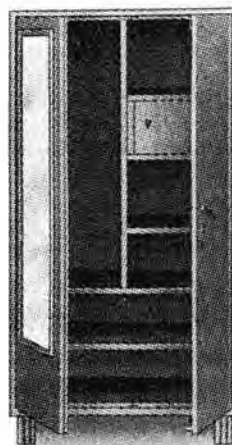
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# Too much Politics, Too Little Citizenship

Minoo Masani

This is the second and concluding part of this article based on Mr. Masani's 1969 Rajaji Birthday Lecture, delivered in Bangalore.

The first part of the lecture dealt with the poor credibility of our political parties and politicians, the causes for the decay in the public life of our country, the lack of discipline in our national character, the politicisation of all aspects of our public life, and described the government of India as a "meddlesome but weak government".

In this, the concluding part, Mr. Masani discusses the virtues of a democratic system, imperfect as they are; the 'we' and 'they' syndrome, the need for people to exercise their citizenship rights and responsibilities, even while pleading for a strong but limited government.



## A Paradox

So we have this paradox, that we have a meddlesome, busybody government stopping everyone from doing something. There is a jingle of A. P. Herbert's, the refrain of which runs: "Let's stop somebody from doing something; Everybody's doing too much!" On the other hand, the jobs that they themselves have to do, they fail to perform. What are their jobs?

- To defend the country, which they have failed to defend. Thousands of square miles of our territory are under enemy occupation.
- A second obligation is to maintain law and order, to protect the life and property of the citizens. This we find being violated from one corner of India to another.

In America they call it "grass roots" democracy-voluntary action at the level of the village, the farm, the countryside, the town. We can call it "rice roots" action in our own country. Hundred of voluntary organisations are required to work for causes, to fight various evils, to expose them. Each one of us has the obligation to participate in one or the other of them. Passivity is the enemy of freedom. Of all classes, I think, the class of businessmen and the class of intelligentsia who are privileged, who have the knowledge and the weapons have failed the country most. But there is also failure on the part of every one of us. Whatever our walk of life, even the humblest can contribute.

- Thirdly, to give justice - and justice delayed is justice denied.
- Fourthly, the infrastructure - to provide the foundation on which people can build the economic structure - water, irrigation, power, roads, transportation, communications. These are the legitimate functions of government.

Walter Lipmann, in his book "The Public Philosophy" wrote many years ago something about the dilemma now facing us and the perils that are now ahead of our democracy. He said:

"If the people find that they must choose whether they will be represented in an assembly which is incompetent to govern or whether they will be governed without being represented there is no doubt at all as to how the issue will be decided. They will choose authority which promises to be paternal in preference to freedom which threatens to be fratricidal. For large communities cannot do without being governed. No ideal of freedom or democracy will long be allowed to stand in the way of their being governed...."

A continuing practical failure to govern will lead - no one can say in what form and under what banners - to counter-revolutionary measures for the establishment of strong government. The alternative is to withstand and to reverse the descent towards counter-revolution".

Now this is very true. Pakistan, Indonesia, Ghana, Greece - all these countries have practiced what Mr. Lipmann forecast when faced with the choice. They decided to forego freedom but to have government.

It seems to me that, in the years to come, our people are going increasingly to be faced with this unfortunate dilemma. As a democrat, I would de-

\* Mr. Masani's fears proved only too real when, 5 years later on June 25, 1975, Mrs. Indira Gandhi abrogated democracy by declaring an internal emergency, which lasted for the next 18 months.

plore the scrapping of democracy but it is a real danger and does not depend on our wishes. It depends on the objective situation and whether we can, even now at this late stage, save our democracy.\*

### **'We' and 'They'**

So far I have attacked the politicians, and all of you must be feeling relieved and happy. You must be feeling very virtuous and superior, saying: "Good; they are all rotters, but we are good people. We love our country." May I at this point, however, ask you to "turn the searchlight inwards", to consider your own responsibilities in this unfortunate set up? Are you sure that you are not just as guilty as we politicians? After all, who elected us to Parliament? Who has put the present Government in office over and over again over the last twenty years? All of us, including you. Too many people in our country grumble for five years and then they go and vote for the wrong people or the wrong party. They seem to believe that democracy begins and ends with five yearly plebiscites to legitimise the government of the day.

### **'We' are all Guilty**

This talk of "we" and "they" is very dangerous talk. To blame 'them', the politicians or the government, for everything is not fair because we all have to share the guilt and the responsibility. A kind of void is there among us. People waiting to be led, waiting for a sign. The younger generation is singularly uninterested in public affairs, contemptuous rightly of their elders who have made a mess of affairs. They do not feel any respect for us. Every time the Government's powers are enlarged, more things can be done by 'them' to "us". They make the things we buy, the news we hear, the radio we hear, the rules we observe, they run schools and colleges, they are usually faceless. What I am trying to suggest is that this 'we' and 'they' is all wrong. We are all 'they'. If 'they' are guilty, then each one

of us is guilty, even if he is not a politician. The daily exercise of vigilance is the price of liberty.

In America they call it "grass roots" democracy voluntary action at the level of the village, the farm, the countryside, the town. We can call it "rice roots" action in our own country. Hundred of voluntary organisations are required to work for causes, to fight various evils, to expose them. Each one of us has the obligation to participate in one or the other of them. Passivity is the enemy of freedom. Of all classes, I think, the class of businessmen and the class of intelligentsia who are privileged, who have the knowledge and the weapons have failed the country most. But there is also failure on the part of every one of us. Whatever our walk of life, even the humblest can contribute.

A long time ago Dean Swift wrote: "Whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together". But the common man has to assert himself and do something. And this brings me to my conclusion.

### **What Do We Do?**

The question is: What do we do about this? It is not to depress you, but to warn you, to alarm you if you want, because there is cause for alarm, to awaken you and to ask you to assert yourselves if you do not want this country to be destroyed.

All that is necessary for bad men to triumph is for good men to do nothing. Some people turn to fashionable talk of military take-over. It is fashionable among young people many come to me and say: "Why don't we go in for a military takeover? It is an easy way of shedding our responsibilities and washing our hands of them. May be it

is a short term form of relief. But, after a while, all evils recur along with additional evils, as our friends in Pakistan are well aware of.

The problem with military dictatorships above all is the problem of succession. In a democracy, with all its faults, the people have the right to change the government, to learn by their mistakes, and to do it peacefully, without violence, without disturbing the social fabric. Once you have an authoritarian regime, military or otherwise, there is no peaceful succession. Every success is bloody, difficult. That is why Winston Churchill, a very great democrat, who had tasted both the joys and the bitterness of democratic functioning, said when he was asked what he thought of democracy: "Of all the known forms of Government, democracy is undoubtedly the worst- except all the others!"

### **The Need for a Public Philosophy**

What we need is a public philosophy, a way of life, something which holds our people together. As I mentioned, in Israel and Japan, there is such a public philosophy, a way of life.

Let me spell out very tentatively some aspects of public philosophy for your consideration.

I would say that the first and fundamental task in every walk of life in India today is to modernise without turning our back on our tradition but to modernise fast, because we are lagging behind sadly in the human race. The younger and more dynamic elements amongst us who appreciate the processes of technological change and of social advance should assert themselves and cut across party labels if they find that these come in the way.

### **The Real Divide**

If I may say so, the real divide in our national life today is not between "left" and "right"; two utterly meaningless words from which all sense has been drained long ago, words that are mostly used for covering up totalitarian

\* The Swatantra Party, of which Mr. Masani was then the President.

communist propaganda. There is no 'left' and no 'right' in our national life today. There is, however, a divide between liberal and modernistic forces on one side and obscurantist, communist and totalitarian elements on the other. That is why recent efforts such as those aiming at a merger of my own Party' and the Jan Sangh are in my view unrealistic and misconceived and are bound to fail, because there is little in common between the liberal and non-denominational way of life in which I and most of my colleagues in my Party believe and the tenets of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh which dominates the Jan Sangh. I was interested to read this morning in the newspapers that my friend Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee of the Jan Sangh agrees with this and has given a quietus to these rather misguided efforts.

Now modernisation does not mean trying to catch up with the West by attempting to ape and imitate the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century which was based on iron and steel and coal, which belong to what is called "the age of fossil power" which the advanced countries have now left behind. Today, acute thinkers in the United States are describing the present American age as "the post-industrial society." One of them has described today's American society as entering what he calls the "techno-tronic age, the age of technology and electronics and space. Now, if we try to copy the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, we shall always be a century behind, and the distance between us will continue to widen. The only way to catch up with those in the vanguard would be to bypass the old Industrial Revolution by applying the latest advances of technology to agriculture and the processing of raw materials, transport, communications and power on the one hand and to the problems of human organisation and management and population on the other. That is one part of the public philosophy I

would like to place before you.

### Strong but Limited Government

The other is to replace our present meddlesome, omnipresent and weak government by a strong government that keeps to its proper task. This involves a double process of cutting politics and government down to size and the creation of strong governments at the centre and in the states. You might say this is a self-contradictory process. Let me, however, try and explain that *strong* government and *big* government are two entirely different things. A *big* government can be a flabby and ineffective government trying to do everything and doing nothing, like our present government. A *strong* government, is a purposeful government handling defence, law and order, justice and infrastructure and doing these jobs well, which our present Government is not doing. So it is a double process of cutting the government down to size and making it more virile, just as men and women who are too obese go to naturopaths on the one hand to slim and on the other hand to become more vital and healthy. That is the process through which our governments ought to go to become thinner and more active and more purposive. Now, this would mean the government withdrawing by and large, from the economic field, a policy of decontrol and handing over to people's enterprises those State enterprises which are making phenomenal losses today. Today's papers,<sup>2</sup> incidentally say, that the Minister of Steel expects that Hindustan Steel Ltd. will make a loss of, only, Rs.40 crores in the current year!

This would mean that Government must concentrate on its own obligations defence, law and order, justice, infrastructure, education. On this subject a Chinese philosopher, twenty six centuries back, named Kuan Tzu, said some pertinent things which I cannot resist reading out to you. He said: "If you plant for a year, plant a seed. If for two years, plant a tree. If

for a hundred years, teach the people. If you plant a seed once, you will reap one harvest. If you plant a tree, you will reap ten harvests. If you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests... If you give a man fish, he will have a single meal. If you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life."

Now the only way to guard against the misuse of power is to limit it, to tame it. Before the government is allowed to enter a field or to act, there must be a demonstration of the need, and continued accountability to the people for what it does.

### 'Rice Roots' Activity

The next part of the proposed public philosophy is the need to develop better communications and greater participation and rice roots voluntary activities. This means an end to what I talked about earlier, the 'we' and 'they' complex; the shrug of the shoulders, the helplessness of the private citizen. Today, grass roots activity is altogether lacking. There is the absence of an infrastructure of voluntary organizations to supplement parliamentary government at the top. This makes government too strong, because there are no alternative channels of influence. This also creates a gulf between the youth of this country and the political leadership. It is mostly in the hands of old people, handicapped by outdated views and old methods. There is need for modern, dynamic, sports-loving, joy-loving politicians. It is not easy to reconcile voluntary activity with strong government, but there is no inevitable conflict between the two. Indeed, a strong Government can co-exist with strong people's initiative and strong individual liberty.

Finally, since citizenship does not come naturally, there is the need for training. Today, it is interesting that only the totalitarians train their followers. They alone believe in having disciplined, trained cadres. In India, for instance, the only parties that trained their people are the Communist Parties and the

<sup>2</sup> January 18, 1969.

R.S.S. No democratic party upto now has bothered to think of training its cadres to become better disciplined, more vocal, more convinced people. There is a crying need there. Management and Industry have grown wise to this. In the last ten years, there has been a tremendous amount of management training going on all over India. There is no such corresponding development in our politics, which I described earlier as the most backward sector of our national life.

Despite an awareness of the grim problems I have outlined, I am an optimist. The first reason for my optimism is that we in India have kept the democratic dialogue going. This lecture today is only one little example. So long as free discussion can go on and the voice of the people is not throttled, there is hope.

#### **Faith in the People**

The second reason why I am

optimistic is that I have faith in the people. I have faith in their patriotism and in their intelligence. I think our people have great reserves of talent and skill and vitality; otherwise they would have been dead long before these twenty years could pass. We have a peasantry that is shrewd, endowed with robust common sense and simple faith, love of the land. We have a labour force which, given leadership and training, is as productive as any in the whole world, whose needs are small and simple. We have a small but growing band of professional executives and managers who have technological equipment. We have young men, modern and willing, uninhibited. We have patriotic Armed Forces prepared to lay down their lives for the country.

#### **Who will Save India?**

If you ask me then, in spite of this discouraging picture that I have given, "who will save India?" I will say among those who will save India are the thou-

sands of hard-working, dedicated teachers of both sexes who are paid miserably but who stay after school hours to help backward children and troubled boys and girls. We shall be saved by young doctors and nurses who do not quit at the end of their shift in hospitals but continue to serve the sick. We shall be saved by young men who risk their security and their savings to launch a business. We shall be saved by parents who deny themselves their needs to give their children the education that they themselves were denied. We shall be saved by hardworking women, social workers and fund raisers, by the young men in uniform prepared to lay down their lives for the country.

*(Concluded)*

\* Based on Mr. Masani's Fourth Rajaji Birthday Lecture, delivered under the auspices of the Gokhale Institute of Public Opinion, Bangalore, on January 18, 1969. Mr. Masani was then a member of the Lok Sabha.

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## Debate

# Doctored Text Books

A.K.R. Hemmady

Blaming our 'British Masters' for all our ills happens to be a pet ploy to gloss over our own follies ('Doctored Text Books' by RS, *Freedom First*, Oct-Dec '94). If Elliot and Dawson's Muslim history of India is biased - 'designed to paint Muslim rule in rather lurid colours' - may I venture to say that our assessment of history taught in schools, before and after Independence, is also biased. While Vincent Smith's history is seen as an attempt 'to preach the message that the historical heritage of India naturally culminated in British rule' and that William Lee-Warren's 'The Citizen of India' seeks to 'spread the gospel of Western intellectual superiority', any attempt to question the Aryan invasion theory is dubbed obscurantist, although this theory was foisted on us to prove the very same Western superiority.

Elliot and Dawson have drawn their material from Muslim chroniclers who came along with the invaders or were employed by Muslim rulers. The Muslim rule, except that of Akbar's was worse than lurid. "Islam spread from the Arabian peninsula eastward to China and westward to Spain, but it was always by the sword - sometimes allied to diplomacy" (Ian Tickle, *Freedom First*, Oct-Dec, '94).

According to a non-British and non-Indian estimate: "Muslim conquerors killed more than six million Hindus, the number of Jews killed by the Nazis. Of course, they had a bigger number of victims to pick from, and they had centuries while the Nazis had a few years. But then, they didn't have the technology, nor the total control of the

country. They did not have the means to be as thorough. Among the systematic killers, like Ghazanavi, Ghor, Teimur, Babar, there was a clear drive to physically finish *Kafirs*. Fortunately, they didn't have gas chambers, but they had no inhibition in using all killing apparatus at their disposal. The Bahamani Sultans made it a point to kill one lakh Hindus every year" (Keonraad Elst, 'Ayodhya and After').

Will Durant in his 'Story of

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Although the God has failed, children of Maharashtra will continue to be told (till this book is revised): "The Russian Revolution is an epoch-making event of the century. History looks upon it as a great event. All the workers of the world have common interests. Love of one's country does not come in the way of the interest of another country. This was a new view-point given by the revolution. The great message of the revolution was to free men from all kinds of slavery." What the Russians did in Baltic countries is not highlighted! In short the message is - Communism is more sacrosanct than nationalism.

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Civilisation' avers: "The Mohammedan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilisation is a precious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within."

Swami Vivekananda has remarked: "Temple after temple was broken down by the foreign conqueror, but no sooner had the wave passed that the spire of the temple rose up again. Some of these old temples of Southern India and those like Somnath of Gujarat will teach you volumes of wisdom, will give you a keener insight into the history of race than any amount of books" ('Complete Works', Vol. 3, p 289).

Our secular historians try to rationalise the depredations of Islamic rulers in the hope of forging a Hindu-Muslim unity which has been eluding us through riots since 1893. Thus Romila Thapar tries to convince us that Mahamud Ghazanavi was not a religious fanatic but a mere mercenary marauder having plundered our temples for their wealth (Communalism and Writing of Indian History). Romila must have been inspired by 'Glimpses of World History' wherein Nehru assures us: "As a matter of fact, Mahamud was hardly a religious man. He was a Mohammedan, of course, but that was just by the way". If someone makes such a statement today in Pakistan, he is likely to be sentenced to death for blasphemy by the Islamic Courts. For, Mahamud is revered by Muslims as a devout Muslim who calligraphed Quran texts 'for the benefit of his soul' and refused a sumptuous ransom which Hindus were ready to pay for the return of the idol. He broke the idol instead.

RS mentions a geography textbook scandal 30 years ago in Maharashtra. But things have not improved much. The reference is to a XI Standard book on Human Geography



# PAPER TIGER

In a way, yes. In a way, no. There's nothing paper-tigerish about us in our unbiased views, our fearless news coverage and editorial policy. But paper is our business and we have that strength and drive associated with tigers in tanks.

**The Statesman**  
The paper people trust

by Pandey and Fernandes (1992). Hydrel power generation is quoted from the Energy Statistics Year Book, 1982 and world fish production from the Year Book of Fisheries, 1983. The United Arab Emirates was founded in 1971 from Trucial States but a map in this book still persists with Trucial States in 1992. I do not know whether the political map of erstwhile USSR has now been revised in the latest edition of this book, if any.

However, it should be a matter of great satisfaction for the parents of school-going children in Maharashtra that by the time their children pass the SSC (X) examination, these kids will have greatly enhanced their knowledge of history. They will know who the following persons are and what they did: Samuel Adams, John Adams, Marie Antoinette, Abbesieyes, Maragaret Bondfield, Bismarck, Bobuef, Columbus, Calonne, Charles I & II, Cornwallis, Cartwright, Cunningham, Crompton, Cavour, Oliver Cromwell, Carbonari, Didero, Danton, Francis Drake, Davy, Engels, Queen Elizabeth, Fourier, Benjamin Franklin, George I & II, General Gage, Garibaldi, Henry III, James Hargreaves, Patrick Henry, John Hancock, James I, Jefferson, various kings (Alfred, John, Richard, William, Ferdinand), Marx, John Macadam, John Kay, Robert Owen, Robert Livingstone, Lafayette, Louis XIV, XV and XVI, James Madison, Mazzini, Matternish, Montesquim, Micado Mutoohito, Necker, Napoleon, Thomas Paine, Queen Marg, Rosseau, Robspierre, Simon-de-Montford, Stephenson, Roger Sherman, St. Simon, Turgot, Voltaire, Victor Emanuel, Robert Walpole, James Watt, Washington, Arthur Young, Napoleon III, Frederick William, William I, Surendranath Bannerjee, Firozshah Mehta, Ranade, Humé, Wederburn, Vasudeo Balawant Phadake, Dadabhoy Naoroji, Wyomeshchandra Bannerjee, Badrudin Tayabji, Lord Dufferin, Tilak, Chaphekar Bandhu, Curzon, Aga Khan, Lord Minto, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Azad, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Gopal

Krishna Gokhale, Bankim Chandra, Anand Mohan Bose, Bhupendra Datta, Aurobindo Ghosh, Savarkar, Shyamji Krishna Varma, Birendra Ghosh, Hemchandra Das, Senapati Bapat, Sardarsinghi Rana, Madan Lal Dhingra, Wylie, Khudiram Bose, Kingsford, Lord Hardinge, Rasbehari Bose, Subhas Babu, Annie Besant, Ramswamy Iyer, Wadia, Montague, C. R. Das, Gandhiji, General Dyer, Udham Singh, Motilal Nehru, Vallabhbai Patel, Ali Brothers, Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and a few others whom I may have missed in the IXth Standard history text-book by the Government of Maharashtra.

Out of about 90 pages in the book, 65 pages are devoted to : War of American Independence, French Revolution, Socialism, Democracy in England, Unification of Italy, Unification of Germany (not the one after the fall of Berlin Wall), Russian Revolution (not the present dissolution into various states). While this little boy plods through (carrying on his shoulders the heavy burden of enhanced syllabi in other subjects also) this gallery of rogues and reverends of Monarchy, Democracy, Revolution and Socialism, he is expected to absorb the ideas behind : Mayflower Compact, Pilgrim Fathers, Boston Tea Party, Philadelphia Congress, Declaration of Independence, First Estate, Second Estate, Third Estate, The Social Contract, Tennis Court Oath, Das Kapital, Communist Manifesto, Wittan, Town-Moot, Charter of Rights, Magna Carta, Petition of Rights, Bill of Rights, Habeus Corpus Act, Reform Bill, Chartist Movement and Tariff Union.

The remaining 24 pages are devoted to India's struggle for freedom starting from the birth of Indian National Congress with just a passing reference to 1857. Keeping 24 pages out of 90 (26%) for Indian history is like reservation for the backward class plebeian history. Europe dominates the history taught in Maharashtra; even in the chapter devoted to India. The his-

tory of Maharashtra is missing - a laudable non-parochial self-effacement ! In the midst of various revolutions, our own social revolutionaries - Jyotiba Phule, Dr. Ambedkar and the greatest of them all, Swami Vivekananda - have been forgotten. It is also strange that these committed historians (secular socialists) have forgotten the son of the soil - S. A. Dange and his contribution to the Comintern and his quietude during the Quit India Movement.

Although the God has failed, children of Maharashtra will continue to be told (till this book is revised): "The Russian Revolution is an epoch-making event of the century. History looks upon it as a great event. All the workers of the world have common interests. Love of one's country does not come in the way of the interest of another country. This was a new view-point given by the revolution. The great message of the revolution was to free men from all kinds of slavery." What the Russians did in Baltic countries is not highlighted! In short the message is - Communism is more sacrosanct than nationalism.

RS views with serious alarm the so called doctoring of history text-books by BJP governments and cites the Bipin Chandra Committee's report which has held that a Madhya Pradesh text-book had : 'introduced communal notions ... in many cases ... this was due to incompetence of the authors, their lack of awareness of major historical writings and their reference on outdated texts and text-book materials'.

Let's examine the credentials of Shri Bipin Chandra and Company. The Government of India allotted the project of writing the 'History of the Freedom Struggle' (1937 to 1947) to the Indian Council of Historical Research. According to 'The Week' (3.2.91), this project commenced in 1974 and was slated to be completed by 1984 resulting in the publication of history in ten volumes. The first volume by Dr. P.

N. Chopra (Non-Marxist) was published in 1985 and was branded as 'unsaleable', although it earned a royalty of about Rs. 2 lacs. This volume was reviewed as such by a Marxist dominated review committee. Dr. Chopra was shunted out of the project and his second volume rejected by the review committee in 1987 - reason, it was too sympathetic to the Congress and not interested enough in the trade union movement. Dr. Chopra's reaction was : "I could not be a party to suppression of historical facts. That is why they turned against me."

The members involved in this project are heavy weights in Indian

historiography : Prof. R. S. Sharma, Dr. S. Gopal, Irfan Habib of AMU, Bipin Chandra and K. N. Panikkar. After 16 years and Rs. 2.5 crores only 2 volumes were completed (by Dr. P. N. Chopra, one published and the other rejected). *The Week*, says : "Right from the beginning ICHR has been in the hands of communist historians. They had more than an academic interest in the period under study, since the communists are accused of betraying the freedom struggle and of siding with the British during the Quit India movement. Their idea apparently was to get the project shelved so that they could bury their past, or interpret the period from Communist angle ..."

The government closed the project in 1991 because nothing came out of it except the first volume.

Remember the 'Time Capsule' of Indira Gandhi which was dug up during the Janata Government regime? It is said that this capsule was prepared by the same team from ICHR. A typical case of the pot calling the kettle black. Whatever may have been the fault of the British Masters, they did not intervene when Shri Minoo Masani's famous book 'Our India' was made compulsory reading for us in our school days during the early forties.

MR. A. K. R. HEMMADY, a retired Deputy Director General of the Geological Survey of India, and a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

## "Swatantra Economy is Failing"

Jay Dubashi

Readers will recall Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil's Rajaji Birthday Lecture on the Swatantra Economy a summarised version of which appeared in the October-December 1994 issue of our journal.

Dr. Dubashi has, as will be seen from his letter, raised basic doubts on the future of the liberalisation process which implies the relevance of the concept of the market economy itself. We thought that considering that these are views expressed not by a mildewed marxist but by someone who has all along vigorously opposed the permit licence quota raj and statism generally, the letter should be published for debate. We are grateful to Dr. Dubashi for permission to publish his letter for this purpose.

We invite your participation in this debate.

"Dear Raju,

Thank you for sending me a copy

of your latest pamphlet, The Swatantra Economy by Gangadhar Gadgil. I always read with great interest whatever Prof. Gadgil writes, though I do not always agree with him, just as I do not always agree with Minoo or, for that matter, anyone else.

It seems to me that the so-called Swatantra economy is failing in India, not succeeding, just like the Swatantra Party. Even liberalisation is failing. In a recent opinion poll sponsored by *India Today*, nearly two-thirds of those polled said that the reforms had made the rich richer, were responsible for inflation and had fuelled corruption, exactly opposite of what the government has been telling us, and what organisations like the Rajaji Foundation have been propagating.

Take your own party - I am sorry I forgot the name - which you tried to float just before the elections, and which drew a blank. I am told that Sharad Joshi was badly defeated in both the

constituencies he fought. Have you tried to find out why? Joshi was all for GATT, while most of us opposed it in its new avatar of WTO. Joshi was trounced while BJP won two states. Are the voters against WTO and globalisation, and if so why?

I suggest that your Foundation pay more attention to why the Indian Voter is rejecting liberalisation, and even more so globalisation, rather than have people like Gadgil deliver bookish lectures on these themes. In a democracy, the ultimate sanctity for any idea is its acceptance by the common man. Even the Marxists have realised this, but not apparently the Swatantrites!

With kind regards,

Sincerely Yours

Jay Dubashi

# A Mausoleum for Mahalonobis

Jay Dubashi

Ever heard of something called HEC? The letters stand for Heavy Engineering Corporation, a huge ailing government owned company that has been put on sale and will come under the hammer on June 2, if there is a buyer foolish enough to buy it.

HEC is not an ordinary company. It was supposed to be the core of the Nehru-Mahalonobis model when it was founded as a kind of mother unit to make machines for other factories. It was as much a symbol of Nehruism as the farm collective was a symbol of Stalinism in Soviet Russia. When HEC closes down, maybe on June 2,\* it will mark the end of Nehruism good and proper, just as the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 marked the demise of Stalinism.

Mahalonobis was neither an engineer nor an economist and knew little about machines, just as Stalin knew little about farming. But he was a clever man with figures, who could spin out a plausible tale for the likes of Nehru and others, who too were neither engineers nor economists.

Mahalonobis hijacked India's five year plans with the help of fancy models that led to expensive and useless plants like HEC at Ranchi. It was his models and plants, backed to the hilt by leftists like Manmohan Singh, that messed up the Indian economy for 40 long years and brought the country close to bankruptcy.

Manmohan Singh now sings another tune but his old friends have not forgiven him. They gang up together from time to time and issue statements criticising this and that, and pouring scorn on the reforms. I am not a great admirer of the reforms myself, but I

was not an admirer of Mahalonobis either.

Somebody had to clean up the mess he and his men left behind and the Rao government is doing it. They are, of course, not doing a good job of it, but something is better than nothing, until there are fresh brooms to sweep the whole thing clean.

But I do not understand with what face these leftists can criticise the reforms, or the attempt at reforms. They themselves were at one time in full charge of the economy and what did these so-called eminent economists do? Among the gentlemen who issue learned statements from time to time, one is a past member of the Planning Commission, another a former chief economic adviser to Indira Gandhi. These men were all over the place - they ran the Planning Commission - the eye and the ear of the prime minister, no less; they ran public sector undertakings, including units like HEC; they recruited their own kind for organizations and agencies advising the government; and they occupied key positions in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They doled out licences, cooked up Budgets year after year and begged funds from Washington, London and Paris.

And what did they do with all the power they had? They ran the economy into the ground, and made India the laughing stock of the world.

But for these worthies, India would be a leading nation in South Asia, with incomes closer to those of Spain than Bangladesh. There would be fewer slums and no starvation deaths. What credibility do these people have, that we have to put up with their views, amounting to diatribes, on foreign debt and Enron, on budget deficits and inflation?

It was during their regime that inflation soared from 5 per cent in the fifties to 8 per cent in the eighties, and growth was frozen at 3 to 4 per cent, among the lower in the world.

They were not, of course, alone, they had friends elsewhere - in Africa, in Latin America, not to speak of Britain and China. They wrought havoc there too, before they were found and bundled out. The London School of Economics, where most of them studied and taught, not only destroyed the British economy but that of half the world, before the virus was isolated and destroyed.

These were also the men who were responsible for peppering the country with HECs in the name of self-reliance. India will be building more steel plants in the next five years than it did in the last 50 - and without a single HEC. It is good that HEC is finally being put to sleep, but so should the Planning Commission which should be turned into a mausoleum for P C Mahalonobis as a kind of warning to future generations.

Courtesy : *The Sunday Observer*, 28 May, 1995.



\* The HEC is still in limbo. Its precise status as a manufacturing unit is unclear.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF AN IDEOLOGY: AMBEDKAR'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT;** by M. S. Gore; Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1993; pp.361; Rs.200)



**Reviewed by  
B. L. Munekar**

The movement of untouchables under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has been a perennial source of interest to scholars of different social science disciplines. For Ambedkar's movement was unique and virtually had no precedent in as much as, in modern India, it was the first organised struggle of the untouchables, for the untouchables, and by the untouchables. This is not to suggest that his movement lacked a broader objective, or that non-untouchables did not join his movement. What I want to emphasise is that the primary concern of his movement was the problem facing the untouchables which, according to him, must be fought primarily by the untouchables.

Ambedkar's birth centenary in 1991 provided the most appropriate occasion to the scholars to analyse various aspects of some of both Dr. Ambedkar's personality and his movement. Regrettably, some of the attempts are fragile. It is however not the case with

the book under review. Professor Gore's attempt to study 'Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought' in the framework of the 'social context of an Ideology' is a valuable sociological treatise. The most important single distinguishing feature of Gore's endeavour is that he has characterised Ambedkar's movement as a 'protest movement,' obviously accompanied by an ideology of protest. In other words, Gore uses, 'protest' itself as an analytical framework to examine Ambedkar's approach to social transformation of which complete abolition of untouchability and 'annihilation of caste' constituted the core. It is this protest framework that enables one to understand and even appreciate Ambedkar's critique of the efforts of early and contemporary social reformers directed towards the eradicating of untouchability.

Gore's methodical study begins with a conceptual framework. It gives an explicit and extensive treatment to the 'concept of social movements'. Thus, following Rudolf Haberle, Gore states that "social movements are collective attempts to bring about a social change or to create an entirely new social order". Now every social movement has its own ideology. Gore gives a simple, broad, and yet a comprehensive definition of ideology as 'a system of ideas which gives legitimacy to an existing or proposed system of relationships, and correspondingly supports an action programme to sustain or subvert the prevailing system". He rightly maintains that an ideology is a system of ideas on which an existing arrangement of social relationships is based and which is under attack, as well as the new system of ideas which is seeking ascendance and on which a new structure of social relationship is sought to be founded. These values may be progressive in nature or otherwise. Here, by 'progressive' values I mean a system of values that carves

for establishment of a more equalitarian social order. Thus, whatever one's affinity and respect for spiritual Hinduism, its tangible manifestation in terms of social arrangements and institutions may hardly be acceptable to an awakened human conscience. The caste system is a prime institution of 'practical' Hinduism. And one hardly needs to repeat here its disastrous consequences for the all low-castes, particularly the untouchables.

Ambedkar's movement therefore has to be a protest movement. Thus, as a protest movement, it was opposed to the existing social order and, as a progressive social movement it desired for a new social order based on liberty, equality, fraternity, and social justice. Ambedkar's movement thus perfectly fits into Gore's framework when he rightly generalises that the "movements of change tend to be in favour of those currently deprived and against those who are currently underprivileged".

But Gore takes this point further. He argues that a protest ideology is also a form of communication. Therefore, he finds the communication paradigm developed by Robert Merton of particular relevance in studying the social context of an ideology. He, however, modifies the original paradigm viz. Who says What to Whom and with What effect into Who Protests against Whom for What reasons to What ends and with What means? For any one who is closely acquainted with Ambedkar ideology and movement, the paradigm is self-explanatory.

Part II of the book contains three chapters. In Chapter 3, Gore gives a detailed account of the evolution of the ideology of Ambedkar's protest movement in its first phase approximately covering the period from 1920 to 1930. This was the period Dr. Ambedkar attempted to educate, and enlighten his people, through his journalism, meet-

ings, conferences, satyagrahas, attacking the Manusmriti. By educating, agitating and organising his followers he shattered centuries of inertia and sensitized them to the gross injustice they suffered from.

Dr. Ambedkar all along maintained that the untouchables constitute a distinct political minority and hence demanded all constitutional rights, privileges, and concessions that a political minority deserves. Keeping this in view, in Chapter 4, the author discusses at length Dr. Ambedkar's political struggle to win these privileges. In this the longest chapter on 'Ambedkar and the National Political Scene', Gore obviously deals with Dr. Ambedkar's views on the shortcomings of the country's freedom movement led by the Indian National Congress as also his encounter with Gandhi. Ambedkar was particularly critical of both the Congress and Gandhi for two reasons; one, they do not give due priority to the programme of the eradication of untouchability; and secondly, he accuses the Congress and Gandhi for their partisan attitude towards the Muslims vis-a-vis the untouchables inasmuch as the former were given greater political safeguards than warranted, while the latter were denied due political representation. It is due to this resentment that Dr. Ambedkar steadfastly demanded 'separate electorate' for the untouchables in the Round Table Conference in 1932, though it was contrary to his own position in 1928 when he argued in his witness to the Simon Commission that 'if the principal of adult franchise is accepted there need to be separate communal electorate for the untouchables, he, however added that they must be granted separate reserved seats in the general constituencies'. It is a matter of regret that most of the political followers of Dr. Ambedkar who concentrate on the Gandhi-Ambedkar controversy on the 'Poona Pact' seem to be unaware of this fact.

Chapter 5 explains, in an inte-

grated manner, the Ambedkar ideology the thrust of which is 'the emancipation of the untouchables'.

In part III (Chapter 6 and 7), Gore makes a slightly unusual attempt of evaluating of Dr. Ambedkar's position as a social analyst. For this, the author selects Ambedkar's critique of both Hinduism and Buddhism, and that of Hindu Social order. Gore rightly maintains that though Ambedkar "recognised that all human beings are not equal in all abilities, he asserted that they had a right to equal opportunity, social dignity and equality in civic and political life. That was his (Ambedkar's) point of departure, whether as a political activist or a social analyst'.

The last Para (IV) contains three chapters viz. Ideology and Interpretation of History, Social Location and Ideology, and summing up. In Gore's formulation, there are 'two levels of linkages - one between the social location of the individual leader and his political ideology, and the other between ideology, and the perception and interpretation of historical processes. For studying the Ambedkar protest ideology and movement Gore uses the former approach. In conclusion, Gore says that "Ambedkar's social location in the low caste, low segment of Indian Society sensitized him more to the iniquitous social arrangement, and made him impart a greater sense of immediacy to the achievement of social equality within Indian Society that to the goal of freedom from foreign rule. His interpretation of India history was thus markedly different from that of Nehru, a nationalist Leader'.

The other approach was employed to analyse the ideological stances and social location of three different leaders of Maharashtra - Jyotirao Phule, Vitthalrao Shinde, and Babasaheb Ambedkar and to show how 'social location in terms of caste status tended to influence the ideological stances adopted by each of these leaders'.

One of the several novel features of Gore's study is the extensive use of original sources in Marathi on Dr. Ambedkar and his movement.

While concluding this review, a couple of other points with the 'Conceptual Framework' appears to be perhaps more elaborate than required. Secondly, one would have expected Gore to say something more on Ambedkar's critique of Marxism, particularly in view of the confusion among most of Ambedkar's elite followers. Thirdly while dealing with Ambedkar vis-a-vis the national political scene Ambedkar's differences with the ideology of both the congress and Gandhi's ought to have been more sharply focussed.

These apart, Prof. Gore deserves to be complimented for producing an exhaustive and illuminating study of Dr. Ambedkar protest ideology and movement, one of the most distinguishing events in the socio-political history of 20th Century India.

DR. B. L. MUNGEKAR, is Reader in the Department of Economics, University of Bombay.

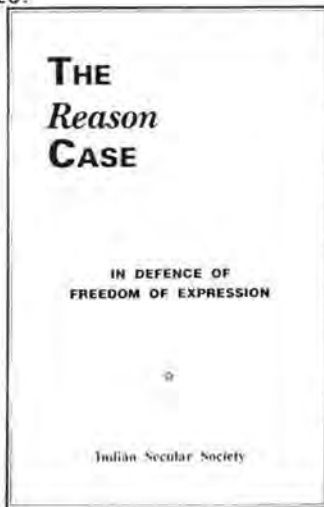
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THE REASON CASE edited by V. K. Sinha; published by The Indian Secular Society, Pune:1995; pp.64; Rs. 20.



**Reviewed by  
Lionel Fernandes**

In 1933, a case was filed in the Court of the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, against Dr. Charles L. d'Avoine, Editor of *Reason*, the official journal of the Rationalist Association of India, on the ground that he had made statements calculated to outrage the religious feelings of Catholics and Muslims.

The impugned passage, which appeared in the September 1933 issue of *Reason*, reads as follows: "Some religions, Catholicism for instance, actually teach that devotion to ceremonial observances and orthodoxy are immeasurably superior to 'good works'. Catholicism holds that moral offences are trifling matters compared with any deviation from the faith taught by the Church. The average Catholic would attach more importance to not eating meat on a Friday or not attending Mass on a Sunday than to moral obligations of a serious nature. We see this also with the average Mussalman who is very particular about washing his fingers and toes before saying his prayers, about assuming the correct posture and position, while he would commit the most grievous offence the moment after he has said his prayers."

In his detailed judgement, the learned Magistrate observed that "The accused may be wrong in stating the Catholic or the Mohammedan point of view. But it is his view that morality as such plays but a secondary part in the religious beliefs of the uneducated and uncultured classes.... The article merely represents the writer's views on 'Religion and Morality'.... I therefore acquit the accused."

Dr. d'Avoine's acquittal was widely greeted by the press, as it vindicated the right to freedom of expression at a time when restrictive and authoritarian tendencies were making themselves felt both in India and abroad. What mattered was not the correctness or acceptability of an author's views but his unfettered right to express them in a manner consistent with ethics and sound conventions. If this right was whittled down, all liberal discourse would soon come to an end and censorship would become the order of the day. Even if a writer's opinion strike some individuals or groups in society as outrageous, the proper reaction would be to counter those opinions by well-reasoned arguments and not to muzzle the writer or otherwise penalize him. The '*Reason*' case established this principle unequivocally.

Having said this, it needs to be borne in mind that where sensitive and controversial matters are involved, a measure of abundant caution is in order. Or else one's efforts at reform could be counterproductive. One should not lampoon or trivialize a faith and then proceed to criticize it. Criticize it by all means, if you will, but criticize the real thing, not its caricature. In the passage quoted above, d'Avoine exceeds his brief when he states categorically that Catholicism puts ceremonial observances and orthodoxy above morality and good works. The Vatican would surely deny such a proposition. It would be another matter if he has stated that many Catholics put observances and orthodoxy above morality and good works.

Perusing some of d'Avoine's writings included in the booklet under review, this reviewer is left with the distinct impression that d'Avoine has a chip on his shoulder vis-a-vis Roman Catholicism. He has not a good word to say on the Faith of his forebears. It is as though the Catholic Church stood for all that is undesirable in society and in the history of mankind. According to him, the Church has not contributed anything to the humanization of society or the betterment of human race. It is a bastion of dark and reactionary forces and needs to be exposed and discredited. d'Avoine's style is laced with irony and is a virtual philippic against the Faith into which he was initiated in his early years but later abandoned in favour of Rationalism.

This reviewer is of the considered opinion that Rationalism can also turn into a new form of orthodoxy when it becomes apodeictic and assumes the air of infallibility. Reason has its limits and pitfalls no less than Faith and we should be modest enough to admit it. There are many dimensions and facets to the human psyche, and analytical discursive reason is only one of them, though an important one. Human life would be greatly impoverished if one were to proceed on cold logic alone. It seems to have escaped d'Avoine that altruism, mysticism and poetry are by no stretch the conclusions of a syllogism!

All this is not to deny d'Avoine's sovereign right to say exactly what he wants and as he wants. It is only to point out certain undertones in his style of writing and the overall thrust of his literary endeavours, while sounding a caution against installing Rationalism on the dogmatic throne in place of Faith. One would have liked the general run of social animals to be mature enough to make the most provocative statements in good humour. But unfortunately this state of affairs has not yet been reached and such statements stir up a hornet's nest every now and then. Yet the effort to question smug beliefs that do not help the human spirit to

grow must go on, and some public-spirited individuals need to provoke and not merely placate the *hai pollai*. d'Avoine has rendered yeomen service in this regard.

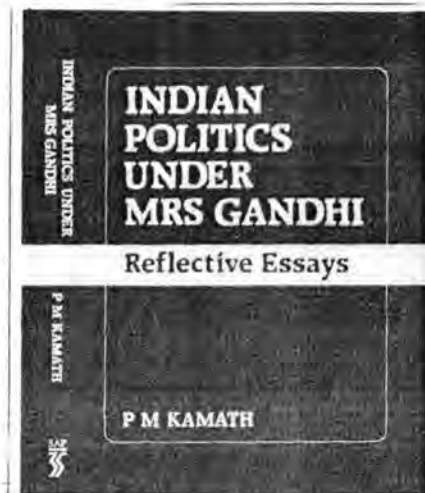
The Indian Secular Society has performed a very useful and vital task in bringing out this publication. The struggle against illiberal forces is a perennial one and has great contemporary relevance against the backdrop of what is happening in our own society. The article by Justice R. A. Jahagirdar is a lucid exposition of the legal implication of the original 'Reason' case and the applicability of the same in the last decade of the twentieth century. The biographical note on d'Avoine helps the reader situate the writer's problematic within its peculiar existential context and shows d'Avoine as no mere armchair critic but a deeply humane social activist. Excerpts from d'Avoine's writings give amplitude and depth of our understanding of his statement of defence presented in the Magistrate's Court. The text of the judgement itself, as also the reactions to it from the domestic and foreign press, highlights the various issues involved in the basic right to freedom of expression and is of great educative value. Also useful is the inclusion of the very first editorial of 'Reason' appearing in July 1931 and a brief history of the Rationalist movement dating from January 1930.

One would have liked the proof-reading of this otherwise handy and readable booklet to have been done with greater care so as to avoid gaffes like the one on page 44 where the printer's devil has played mischief with the text of the Chief Presidency Magistrate's judgement to make it read as follows: "Most of the religious reformers also say that the followers of a particular religion have failed to realise the true massage (sic!) of their prophet or religion .." But such orthographic peccadilloes must be set off against the overall valuable contribution made by the Indian Secular Society to the

struggle against obscurantism and fundamentalism of every hue.

Dr. Lionel Fernandes, teaches in the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Bombay and has written extensively on religion, politics and secularism.

**INDIAN POLITICS UNDER MRS. GANDHI: REFLECTIVE ESSAYS**, by P. M. Kamath, South Asian Publications, New Delhi; 1993; pp:176;Rs.150.



**Reviewed by  
Krishan D. Mathur**

Indira Gandhi's reign of 17 years was a turning point in the newly formed democratic government in India. Not that a new constitution was written or the elections abandoned, but the role of the legislators and the interests of the executive were diverted to serve personal interests rather than the interests of the country as a whole. Indira's democracy was a democracy with an authoritarian twist. In her administration the elected representatives and appointed executives followed Indira's line to secure responsible positions and lucrative emoluments. Kamath's essays uncover a few incidents that opened the gates of a turbulent India to bribery and corruption that hurt the interests of the people greatly.

Indira Gandhi became India's Prime Minister in 1966 after the sudden demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Indira's ascendancy to the premiership is attributed to the support given by two members of the so-called Syndicate Nijalingappa and Kamaraj, who thought that a young lady could be easily molded to serve their ambitions and interests.

Indira Gandhi outmaneuvered the "king-makers" of the Syndicate. In order to overthrow the Syndicate, Indira sought and gained the support of the minorities: the scheduled castes, the Muslims, and the communists. This policy led to the nationalisation of banks, and abolishing of the privy purses of the princes.

Differences between Indira and the Syndicate created a permanent split in the Congress Party from 1969. Dr. Kamath examines the consequences of the split - the communal character of her support base, infiltration of the communists in the Congress Party, and the disappearance of the opposition from power not only at the centre but also in the states. The support of the communists was responsible for India's tilt towards the Soviet Union.

The dominance of Indira's Congress (I) in the centre and in the states made India a dictatorial democracy, where the elected representatives danced to the tune of the Prime Minister.

Increase of power led to further stringent measures. The worst was the National Emergency measure that resulted in the arrest of opposition leaders, press censorship, and eventually responsible for the defeat of Indira Gandhi in the 1977 elections.

Kamath also reflects over the regime of the Janata Party which succeeded Indira's Congress party, but lasted only 3 years, 1977-80.

Indira Gandhi was back in power again. This time even the justices of the Supreme Court whose decisions tended to repudiate government policies were punished. There grew a trend among Indira's sycophants to change

the parliamentary form of government to the Presidential form, which would apparently make Indira all powerful. But this did not happen. Mrs. Gandhi got embroiled in the Sikh syndrome, an attempt to divide the Sikhs, which led to her assassination in 1984.

Kamath's analysis shows how dangerous it is to introduce dictatorial machinations in a country where democratic ideals have been firmly established.

Kamath's analysis misses one significant factor: a comparison of the Indira's party with the Janata Party. The defeat of the Janata Party within three years does not indicate that the Janata party was a good choice by the people. I hope that Dr. Kamath will deal with this aspect in his future publication. Nevertheless, this is a well-written book, and is recommended for any one interested in India's political development.

MR. KRISHAN D. MATHUR is a Professor of Politics, University of District of Columbia, Washington D.C.

### Consumerism and Dowry

The worldwide rush to consume has had an unhappy impact on traditional customs in many countries. One of the most tragic examples comes from India, where the practice of dowry - money and presents given by the bride's family to the couple and to the groom's family - is being turned into a continuing extortion that goes on years after the wedding. The groom's family wants all those consumer goods they see advertised on television, so they keep asking for more and more from the bride's family. If her family does not produce, the bride may be tortured, even murdered. There is, according to *The Washington Post's* Molly Moore, "a dramatic escalation in reported dowry deaths and bride burnings." One Indian newspaper editor, M. J. Akbar, says, "Dowry is a form of theft legitimised by marriage. It's economic bondage. And when the woman stops being frightened by torture, the only option is to burn her".

*The Washington Monthly*, May 1995.

**INDIAN BIRDS** by R. K. Gaur, Brijbashi Printers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 1994; pp: 120; Rs.695.



Reviewed by  
E. D'souza

India is blessed with over 1200 species of birds, from the national bird the colourful and graceful Peacock, to such highly endangered species as the Great Indian Bustard and Jerdons Courser, to the elusive Himalayan Quail of the UP Himalayas, and that very rare Blackneck Crane of Ladakh. Every Indian has cause to be proud of this rich God given heritage.

Undoubtedly, that great ornithologist, the late Dr. Salim Ali painstakingly researched and searched and produced reference books on Indian birds, widely read and used by professionals and amateurs as well. The good scientist that he was, every possible species found on our sub continent was meticulously described and precise colour sketches made. But it was more of a reference work for those interested in ornithology and birding. Lieutenant General R. K. Gaur, PVSM, retired, of the Garhwal Rifles, a 'pahari' himself, has followed in the footsteps of the adventurous British Officers of the pre-1947 Indian Army, who travelled widely throughout the length and breadth of the country especially in remote wilderness areas, painstakingly record-

ing details of all forms of wild life observed, the non-availability of sophisticated cameras and colour film notwithstanding. Lieutenant General Gaur is of that mould. During his distinguished Army service he trekked extensively in the wilds of North East India and Ladakh recording faithfully on colour film the riches of nature. I recall suggesting to him to send in an article to *National Geographic* of his travels in Arunachal Pradesh.

He describes himself modestly as an amateur photographer and a deeply committed wildlife buff. The quality of the photographs tells otherwise.

This excellent publication is not only a valuable acquisition for its picturesque beauty, but equally a reference book of Indian Birds. It is on par with M. Y. Ghorpade's classic "Sunlight and Shadows", an unusual presentation of Indian wildlife through black and white photographs of a master craftsman.

Many may question Gaur's decision to record on film some of the commoner garden birds and avifauna of the much photographed Bharatpur's Keoldeo Ghana sanctuary. This is essential in a publication which is used as a reference work. Each species depicted in colour has an accompanying write-up, not in ponderous scientific language - but in sufficient detail to meet the needs of one interested in Indian birds, of their habitat, characteristics, habits, calls, courtship play et al. There is little doubt that this methodology helps. Equally useful is the Bibliography on Page 116, the Glossary pertaining to avifauna on page 117, a map of India, uncomplicated, indicating the main bird sanctuaries, and an index of the main bird species depicted.

The foreword has been written by General S. F. Rodrigues, erstwhile Army Chief who, during his tenure as a divisional commander in Ladakh, developed an interest in nature. When he

became Chief of the Army Staff, he caused to be set-up in Army HQ an Army Eco Cell which was formalised by his successor the late General Bipin Joshi. The relationship between General Rodrigues and Lieutenant General Gaur began when both served in the Ladakh Himalaya. General Rodrigues's willingness to write the foreword is obviously based on mutuality of interest.

Like a good Army Officer, logic being his strong point, Gaur follows the foreword with a crisp and precise introduction of four pages suitably illustrated on "India : The Bird Haven"; three pages on the main bird sanctuaries of India viz. Sultanpur in Haryana, Keoldeo Ghana in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, Chilka in Orissa, Nelapattu in Andhra Pradesh, Rangathitoo near Mysore Karnataka, and Vedanthangal in Tamil Nadu. The accompanying text covers all aspects pertaining to these sanctuaries: best season to visit; facilities available locally; how to get there; and the source for information. The Author

then takes us into the Dos and Don'ts of Birdwatching and Photography, before he arrives at the *raison d'être* of his book.

To many bird lovers denied access to such inaccessible areas as Ladakh and Arunachal, there is a veritable feast in store of rare photographs of such species as the Himalayan Griffon Vulture soaring effortlessly in high altitudes, our rich heritage of pheasants like the Monal and Khaleej, the very rare Blacknecked Crane in the breathtakingly stark habitat of the Ladakh Himalaya, and the perky and alert Mongolian Plover. In addition, he has been able to capture vividly on film the much admired but increasingly rare and beautiful Siberian Crane wintering in Keoldeo Ghana, the Great Indian Bustard in its habitat in the grasslands of Rajasthan, and the graceful Flamingos of the Rann of Kutch in flight.

The colour reproductions indicate first rate and professional scanning. The print is easy to read. The attractive

dust jacket shows a desert wheatear alighting to feed its chick in Ladakh, and a medium egret in its breeding plumage.

Lieutenant R. K. Gaur deserves to be commended for his painstaking efforts to record for posterity our rich and wide variety of Indian avifauna on superb colour photographs. His startling clear pictures bear the stamp of a professional which he claims he is not.

For all lovers of nature and especially birders who need to know in understandable terms all about this priceless heritage, Lieutenant Gaur's lavishly illustrated book backed by easy to read yet comprehensive enough text, is a buy for the price, and an acquisition for the coffee table or as a welcome and appreciated gift for a friend in India or abroad.

Major General (Rtd.) E. D'souza is an ex-Secretary General of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature in India and Regional Councillor East Asia for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

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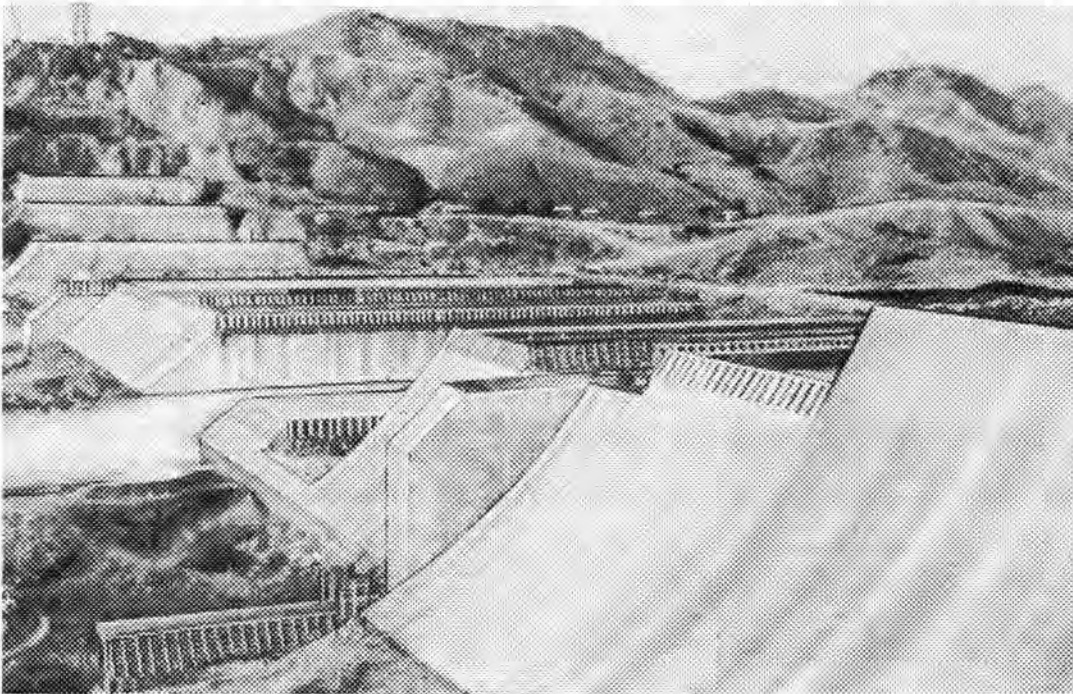
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