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A Reaffirmation of Liberal Values



The Return of the State
Beijing WWC's 'Achievement'

On Writing
Plain English

The Case of Wei Jingsheng: An Open Letter

The following is an open letter from PEN, concerning the trial on December 13, 1995, of Wei Jingsheng, which resulted in his being sentenced to fourteen years in prison.

It is addressed to:

Prime Minister Paul Keating
Prime Minister Paul Nyrup Rasmussen
Chancellor Helmut Kohl
President Kim Young-sam
Prime Minister John Major
Prime Minister Jean Chretien
President Jacques Chirac
Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama
Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson
President Bill Clinton



Dissident Wei Jingsheng

"Dissent may not always be pleasant to listen to, and it is inevitable that it will sometimes be misguided. But it is everyone's sovereign right. Indeed, when government is seen as defective or unreasonable, criticizing it is an unshirkable duty."

- Wei Jingsheng

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, are writers of the developed world who are privileged to live and work under circumstances that allow us to express our opinions freely. We come together now in hopes of focusing your attention on the urgent plight of our Chinese colleague Wei Jingsheng.

On November 21, 1995, Wei, who disappeared from sight after being arrested by Chinese secret police agents in April 1994, was formally charged by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party with "conducting activities in an attempt to overthrow the government". This is a grave criminal offense, which guarantees, at the least, a long incarceration and harsh treatment - in this case, for a man who is in the forefront of the battle for human rights in his country.

As a young man, Wei Jingsheng first protested publicly against repression during the so-called Beijing Spring of 1978-79, when only the brave spirits dared speak out after the Orwellian silence and darkness in which China had been wrapped for years. All China's "springs" have failed Wei since then, but he has never failed his country, repeatedly protesting and being repeatedly and inhumanely punished for it. Now at the age of forty-five, he has served nearly sixteen years in prison for stating his opinions.

In 1993, pressure from the United States and other Western nations helped obtain Wei Jingsheng's release from prison. He immediately recommenced his campaign for democracy, was soon detained again, and, if convicted at his December 13 trial, faces potentially life-threatening punishment.

Recently, a former Chinese Communist Party official living abroad remarked that the Chinese government's policy towards dissidents would be tested in the wake of President Jiang Zemin's "summit meeting" with President Clinton.

"When Jiang came back from the summit with Clinton," said the former official, "instead of releasing Wei, the government charged him ... This proves the hard-liners still have the upper hand".

We believe that the hard-liners will continue to have the upper hand so long as they convince their colleagues in government that economic opportunities for Western business will take precedence over Western concern for democratic freedoms and basic rights. As Wei wrote in *The New York Times* after his release in 1993, they are asking:

Is it really likely that Americans would abandon an opportunity to make money just to protect the human rights of those they have befriended?

Is it really likely that the American people's determination of right and wrong could ever influence the judgement of the US government?

And Wei concluded,

It looks as if the Communist Party has answered these questions in the negative. So even though it may have realised that its own conduct might have been an error, it still firmly pursues a strategy of brinkmanship, giving ground only when absolutely necessary and always in the last five minutes...

The Chinese people's understanding of the new direction of US policy toward China leads them to believe that the party was right all these years in saying that the American government is controlled by rich capitalists. All you have to do is offer them a chance to make money and anything goes. Their consciences never stopped them from making money.

Wei's words about the United States might apply to any of our countries in their relations with China. We cannot know whether Wei Jingsheng, in the cell where he is at present confined, is aware of what happened in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, on November 10. That day, the repressive military government of Nigeria, secure in its belief that oil and profits matter more to the West than human rights, hanged the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his co-defendants on charges universally regarded as false, committing a brutal act of judicial murder. It is easy to imagine that Nigeria's indifference to belated pleas and threats was not lost on Wei Jingsheng's jailors.

We, writers living in freedom, request with the greatest urgency, that you not allow a repetition of the Port Harcourt murders to occur in China. We ask that you act to justify Wei Jingsheng's faith in our shared principles. We fervently request that every available influence be brought to bear to secure his release and that of other patriots and prisoners of conscience in China. The day will surely arrive when a generation of leadership comes to understand the necessity for tolerance as an emblem of participation in a civilized world community. Until that day, if our hopes for such a community are to mean anything, we must help and support those who work toward it. This test of our countries' concern in the matter of human rights is being observed by the whole world. We must not be found wanting thereby giving satisfaction to the enemies of freedom everywhere.

- Peter Carey, Elizabeth Jolley (Australia); Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje (Canada); Niels Barfoed, Peter Hoeg (Denmark); Jacques Derrida (France); Gunter Grass, Peter Schneider (Germany); Kenzaburo Oe, Ko Eun, Paik Nak-Chung (South Korea); Goran Malmqvist, Arne Ruth, Per Wastberg (Sweden); A. S. Byatt, Ronald Harwood (UK); Anne Hollander, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, Faith Sale, Stephen King, Susan Sontag, Robert Stone, William Styron, Amy Tan (USA).

(Courtesy: *The New York Review of Books*; 15 February 1996)

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

It is not uncommon for an older generation to deplore the fall in values from what they used to be. Nostalgia invariably manages to paint a flattering picture of an earlier period. And so it has been with every succeeding generation. In the 'sixties, I would often hear men like Rajaji, Masani, Munshi or Ruthnaswamy hark back to the earlier part of this century when not only was life very much simpler but, if they were to be believed, far nobler. By the sixties the permit-livelihood-quota raj had already started making its pernicious presence felt. By the end of 1962 India had already gone through three general elections. Each election costlier - for candidates that is - than the previous one. And as the elections got more expensive so did the methods to meet such expenses become more questionable. The Indian people began discovering that in a statist-socialist scheme of things honesty was not the best policy. The rot that was to eat into the vitals of our society had set in but not everyone chose to acknowledge it.

One group that kept warning the people of India of the disaster overtaking not only the economy of the country but the character of our people was the liberals who through the forum of the Swatantra Party kept warning the people of impending doom. In fact the very first political pamphlet released by the Swatantra Party was entitled "Towards Doom".

Much of the liberals' fears have come true. In fact much worse than even the worst fears that were then expressed. Public morality and character are today at an all time low. Politics has been criminalised and criminals have taken over public life.

It is in this context that the reaffirmation of liberal values at a Convention in New Delhi in January this year comes as a breath of fresh air - a reminder that we could still retrace our steps. We trust readers will find the cover story on the convention a refreshing change from the daily diet of scams, violence, human rights violations and chicanery of every kind.

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 most striking feature of the contest for the Lok Sabha is that none of the three major formations in the race has found it necessary to proclaim that it will lead the country into the 21st century.

Shastri Ramachandran, *The Times of India*, March 27.

The lifestyle of the Indian elite is amazing... I've never seen such opulence even in America.

Noam Chomsky, *The Times of India*, February 4.

What is a democracy that chooses the venal, the corrupt, the louts and the criminals over good men?

Editorial in the *Gentleman*, April 1996.

The Japanese are blessed with a language that offers countless ways to say they're sorry.

Julie K. L. Dam, *Time*, August 21, 1995.

American civilization cannot survive with 12-year olds having babies, 15-year olds shooting one another, 17-year olds dying of AIDS and 18-year olds graduating with diplomas they cannot read... Our generation must replace not repair the welfare state. The welfare state has failed.

Newt Gingrich, *Time*, December 25, 1995.

Calcutta has gone red as never before. Not in the Marxist way. It is the multinationals that have been at work - painting the city red (with) giant hoardings proclaiming the virtues of Coca Cola and its rival Pepsi Cola.

Editorial comment in the *OtherSide*, March 1996

We are a nation of cheats.

A disgusted mother of a student affected by the leakage of SSC question papers, quoted by Moneisha Gandhi, *The Times of India*, April 1.

I remain convinced that the factors making the drugs scene (in Russia) so much worse are political... Drugs have become a means of control, a form of government.

Alina Vitukhnovskya, a poet and journalist, *Index on Censorship*, 3, 1996

The long reign of Indira Gandhi is proof that having women at the top does not necessarily reduce the gender bias in legislature membership.

Editorial in *The Times of India*, April 8.

It was Mulayam Singh Yadavji who gave me a second life when he waived the criminal cases pending against me and when he asked me to join his party and contest the Lok Sabha polls I could not say no.

Former dacoit Phoolan Devi, *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, April 3.

We are not the Mohammed Azharuddins of Indian politics who depend on the next match for victory.

BJP General Secretary Pramod Mahajan, *The Times of India*, April 9.

The Indian economy shows a proclivity for everything black. Hawala is its most popular manifestation.

Sanjay Kapoor in his book *"Bad Money, Bad Politics"* cited in *The Times of India*, May 24

Prime Minister Rao is a cheat and a great manipulator. Be cautious while casting your votes.

West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, addressing an election rally. *India Today*, March 31.

The time is wrong, Lenin



An Historic Meeting: These lookalikes of Lenin (left) and Adolf Hitler (right) check the time while being started at by onlookers at the Arbat Street in Moscow on April Fool's Day.

Photograph courtesy: *Asian Age*

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

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

Corruption: An All-Party Phenomenon

Bofors pales into insignificance in the light of the Hawala and Gawala scams. The newspapers have been so full of these that it is quite unnecessary to use the space in this column to inform readers on the details. But there is one truth that it establishes beyond all doubt - the fact that corruption is no longer a monopoly of the Congress. Remember Mrs. Gandhi's profound statement that corruption is a universal phenomenon. I don't know about the universe but we can certainly say that corruption is an all-party phenomenon. FERA leads to Hawala, and Gawala is the consequence of sharing the loot from the public exchequer across the board from the ministers to the chaprasis. The chickens of forty years of permit-l licence-quota raj are coming home to roost. Actually cases of misuse of power to enrich oneself have been surfacing right from the time of Prime Minister Nehru. What is happening now is that the size of scams are enlarging so much so that they are not in lakhs or crores but in hundreds of crores. And the root cause continues to be controls and prohibitions of various kinds.

Some controls are necessary even if these rules provide opportunities for illegal gratification. Traffic rules for instance. Ask any driver of a vehicle who has jumped a traffic signal and he will tell you the number of times he slipped in a fifty rupee note to avoid the inconvenience of having to retrieve his driving licence from a designated police station. This kind of petty corruption is inevitable given the appallingly low emoluments of our policemen.

But there are rules and controls which are enacted in the name of social policy for example which are a source of income for our professional politicians. Prohibition of liquor is one such opportunity for politicians and law-enforcement agencies to "make money". The last thing that most Indian politicians have in their mind is get people to become teetotalers or be anxious about the poisonous tinctures that are bound to proliferate and kill many who cannot do without their daily peg or pegs.. Who cares ! What is important are the *haftas* - for that's what it is, which enables street policeman, clerks, bureaucrats and ministers throughout the country to amass untaxed wealth and live it up.

Minoo Masani repeatedly made the statement that the vote is the single biggest factor for the extent of corruption in India. And now Mr. H. D. Shourie the 'Common Cause' crusader filed a public interest writ petition in the Supreme Court for the enforcement of the Income Tax Act in so far as they concern political parties. Mr. Shourie editorially commented "There can be no doubt that our electoral process is the root cause of the high level of corruption that has crept into the entire system.

The fact is that both (corruption engendered by the permit licence raj and that resulting from the electoral process) are in reality two sides of the same coin of corruption. Drastically truncating the patronage powers of the government of the day will to a large



extent discourage those seeking office for self-aggrandizement from standing for elections.

The Quality Of Our Democracy

When a foreigner compliments our democracy, points out to the fact that we have held as many as 11 general elections, in 44 years despite the tremendous logistics problems involved and the fact that almost all these elections were relatively free we Indians react with pride. Is this sense of pride justified? In my view, no longer. The form is there but the substance is gradually disappearing. If things continue this way then in the not so distant future Indian democracy will turn out to be a charade - an empty shell.

Let's take just one aspect : respect for human or civil rights. Can it be denied that in the last few years human rights violations are not on the rise ?

No, I am not talking about Kashmir. I am talking about Kerala and the victims of the so called ISRO spy case. *Freedom First* subscribers will recall the Rama Swarup case (Rama Swarup - A Plea for Justice, Minoo Masani, *Freedom First*, January 1989) when Mr. Masani pointed out that Mr. Rama Swarup was at the time of his article in jail for 38 months charged with breaching the Official Secrets Act which the state had not been able to prove. He was released a few months later after that article was published.

A detailed report on the the ISRO

spy case was published in the *Indian Express* of March 17. The report by Ritu Sarin states that sixteen months after the case was registered, the CBI was putting its "final touches" stating that "the accused in the case were not guilty of espionage". But imagine the emotional scars on those who suffered the indignities heaped on them in the 16 long months they were incarcerated. Here is what Mr. P. Sasikumar, a scientist told Ritu Sarin: "I was known as one of the country's finest scientists but I had to endure treatment given to a third-rate criminal. And what is frightening is that if it can happen to respected members of the scientific community, it can happen to anybody else."

"All sorts of third-degree torture were inflicted. I was stripped absolutely naked and then beaten mercilessly. For seven or eight days I was made to stand. A wooden stool was kept between my feet but I was not allowed to sit. They would throw cold water in my face and hit me on my navel. They hit me so hard on my ears that even after I came out of prison, I had to take treatment..."

Need one say more...Lest, dear reader, you think this may be an exception just as Rama Swarup was an exception then may I recommend you peruse the PUCL Bulletin for more instances? Is this the kind of democracy for which the Mahatma, Nehru, Sardar Patel and others fought for?

The Benefits of Competition

We are all aware of the improvements in telecasting on Doordarshan not to mention the proliferation of channels. Much of this effort to woo the viewer is a result of competition from satellite channels like Star TV, Zee TV etc.

At a seminar on Voluntary Organisations, Mr. M. R. Pai who needs no introduction to readers of *Freedom First* made a statement which is as serious as it is humorous. He said that as a result of competing airlines, Indian Airlines hostesses actually smile!

Another example is the following extract from a report by Mr. Srinivas Laxman in *The Times of India* of March 27 on Alliance Air the newly established subsidiary of Indian Airlines:

"Senior executives of Alliance Air...will drive their own vehicles to their offices at Palam airport in New Delhi since the company is doing away with the age-old system of hiring chauffeurs."

"And those accustomed to having their office room doors being opened each morning by their personal peons, will now have to do this on their own because there will be no sepoys."

"There will hardly be any closed-door cabins, and with no peons to deliver typed messages and memoranda the "primitive note culture" is being dispensed with. If an official has to deliver a written message to his colleague, he has to do it personally," according to Alliance Air managing director Vinoo Kashyap.

"Our management culture will be open and informal, and there will be no hierarchical system with everybody having an easy access to everybody."

"We are completely doing away with class IV category of workers", said Mr. Kashyap. The staff will be hired on contract and those owing allegiance to the Air Corporation Employees Union (ACEU) and other IA trade unions will have to say goodbye to them.

Well, well! All this in a PSU. Long Live competition.

Know English, Be an MP

Mr. Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena Chief if often criticised and rightly so for the outrageous statements he makes on men and matters. However we should not fail to applaud him for his absolutely correct perception of members of legislature bodies and required competencies.

According to a report by Ruchira Singh in *The Asian Age* of April 3, Mr. Thackeray has decided to field 'Eng-

lish speaking, educated candidates so as to present an elite image of Shiv Sena at the national level.

"According to another Shiv Sena leader "the Lok Sabha is not a Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (where you can do as you want and speak what you want). At the Lok Sabha level, the laws of the nation have to be framed - our representatives have to be people who will know what is being talked about there and not squat flies."

Need one say more!

A 'Leaking' Examination System

A tabulation in *The Times of India* of April 1 tells us that between 1991 and 1996 examination papers have leaked 22 times. The latest was the leakage of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examination question papers this year. According to educationists, malpractices occur at almost every stage in the examination process. Papers leak. Rampant cheating occurs, often with the help of supervisors and invigilators. And malpractices exist at the evaluation stage as well where children of the influential are favoured, and incompetent examiners are employed.

The report draws the reader's attention to a bulletin of the SAT and GRE examinations, the world over which reads: "For students in India, there is an additional \$10.00 surcharge to pay for extraordinary security measures." This because in 1989 there was a leak in one of the SAT/GRE papers!

I remember when I was in Saudi Arabia in the eighties I had to appear for a driving licence. When I pointed out that I was a proficient driver and had a valid driving licence over 12 years old, the local RTO gave me a look of pity (I would think) and said he too could go to India and get a licence 40 years old even though he himself was only 35. He shut me up with the words: "This is not India".

SVR

A Reaffirmation of Liberal Values

Liberals in the sub-continent must be grateful to Dr. Jurgen Axer, the enthusiastic Regional Director, South Asia of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung for organising a Convention on Liberal Values in New Delhi between January 5 and 7.

The objectives of the convention were clearly spelt out:

- To present liberal values as a philosophy with a comprehensive social, economic, cultural and political dimension.
- To study the influence and incorporation of liberal values in the Indian tradition and the role that liberal values can play in modern Indian culture especially to promote a culture of dialogue and dissent.
- To discuss specific liberal concepts as a means to deal with pressing problems of modern India.
- To bring together prominent Indian personalities sharing and upholding liberal values for an exchange of ideas with prominent Asian and European Liberals.

The Convention dealt with these objectives admirably.

In the following pages, we publish a report on the Convention by Ms. Geeta Lal, Assistant Editor of the *Liberal Times*, a Quarterly published by the Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung, South Asian Regional Office; a Concluding Statement on Liberal Values representing the consensus of the Convention; and a speech critical of protectionism, by Dr. Otto Count Lambsdorff. *Freedom First* founded by the doyen of modern liberalism in India, Minoo Masani (who unfortunately could not attend due to poor health) and dedicated to the promotion of liberal values has much pleasure in giving the Convention pride of place in this issue. *Ed.*

The Report

Geeta Lal

A New World Order based on the concept of Liberty came into being with the collapse of the Soviet System in 1989. It brought with it the hope that the forces of market economy and democracy would be strengthened and would prevail over statism and centralised planning. The emergence of the New Information Age further accelerated the process of globalisation. Geographical barriers are rapidly crumbling; awareness is increasing in the remotest of places and among the most unlikely of people. Even in the most reluctant of quarters and the most obstinate of governments, somewhere deep within there is a recognition that liberal democracy, competition and the rule of law provide the only solutions. Yet, the trends in the past six years though in some ways encouraging, still leave a lot to be desired.

The South Asian Scene

Taking a look at South Asia one finds that statism and authoritarianism in many a veiled form still poses a grave threat in many countries. Economic liberalisation and reduction

of trade barriers on the one hand have been accompanied by increasing governmental intervention in economic activities on the other. Added to this are the burdens and distortions imposed by massive government expenditures, huge subsidies, increasing deficits and wasteful allocation of resources. Political opportunism, politics of vote banks, corruption and lack of public accountability, compounded by the rise of communalism, decline in secular values, ethnic strife and terrorism have further slowed down the pace of economic reforms. To top it all, most South Asian economies have a huge redistributive bureaucracy and a political elite (with a not so elite track record) who tend to pass on still more privileges to the already highly privileged - the pretext of social justice being used more often than not as a guise for the vested interests to pass favours to an undeserving lot. All in all, the challenges are formidable and need to be met headlong. Yet, it is encouraging to note that most South Asian economies have vibrant functional democracies with basic freedoms enshrined

in their constitutions. So the where-withal is there, what is basically lacking is the conviction that pursuit of liberal principles and economic liberalisation is for our own benefit. Suspicion about Liberalism being a western concept acts as a further dampener.

The Convention

Realising that the time had come for a fresh look at Liberalism, at what it has to offer India in particular and also for renewing one's commitment to its basic tenets, a three day Convention on Liberal Values was organised by the Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung (FNSt.) in New Delhi between the 5th and 7th of January 1996. Attended by around 200 eminent economists, social and political scientists, journalists, human rights activists, academicians as also people from the business community and the NGO sector, the subjects actively debated upon and intensively discussed included Liberalism, Democracy and Human Rights; Economic Development and Liberalism.

Some of the eminent European speakers at the Convention were Dr.



Liberal Values

Otto Count Lambsdorff, former German Minister for Economic Affairs, former Leader of the Free Democratic Party of Germany and present Chairman of the FNSt.; Sir David Steel MP and President of the Liberal International, London; Dr. Jurgen Axer, Regional Director, FNSt., Prof. Dr. Hans Vorlander and Dr. Robert Nef.



Valuable thought-provoking papers were presented by eminent speakers like Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi, Mr. Salman F. Rahman, Prof. A. M. Khuroo, Mr. D. N. Patodia, Dr. Ashok Desai, Dr. Pai Panandikar, Prof. Upendra Baxi, Mr. B. G. Verghese and Justice Leila Seth. Mr. Soli J. Sorabjee, eminent senior advocate at the Supreme Court of India was the convenor of the Convention which was inaugurated by vice-president of India, Dr. K. R. Narayanan.

At the Convention, the core principles of Liberalism namely individual liberty, a spirit of tolerance, universality of human rights, pluralism, minimal interference by the state, liberal democracy, market economy and free trade all functioning under the rule of law were repeatedly stressed by the various speakers. Mr. Sorabjee stated that over the past few years, a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world. Yet, he felt that democratic liberalism cannot be compressed nor compartmentalised into a single formula or prescription; that there should be a willingness to re-examine and reconstruct institutions and systems in the light of fresh needs. Dialogue and dissent are the prerequisites

of a liberal democratic society, he felt.

Liberalism : The Indian Tradition

Liberal values which are based on an attitude of tolerance and respect for different religions, faiths and beliefs have deep roots in the Indian tradition. The Vedanta philosophy has always stressed the individual path for realisation of the self. This was reiterated in his inaugural address by Dr. K. R. Narayanan. He said that the quality of tolerance as a liberal value was a notable Indian contribution to the human rights agenda.

Dr. Jurgen Axer, however, regretted that Liberalism in India was still far from being a mainstream thought even though liberal values had moulded Indian civilisation and thought from the time of the Vedas. Viewed by some as a western foist, Liberalism in India was often regarded as an indirect form of colonialism and an assault on the indigenous culture. Yet, he was convinced that increasing globalisation within Asia would help the Asian nations in becoming more aware of their culture and rich heritage.

Dr. Otto Count Lambsdorff, said that he had always expected India to emerge as a strong nation given its rich human resources, its liberal culture,

secular parliamentary democracy with a federal structure and the rule of law. He expressed optimism that if India continues on the path of economic reforms and liberal democracy, it would be "the success story of the world." He

stated that for a Liberal, market economy and democracy were indivisible. While congratulating the Narasimha Rao government for adopting market-oriented economic policies, Dr. Lambsdorff said that the process of reforms would have to go quite deep so as to benefit the 980 million people of the country.

Universality of Human Rights

The Convention also stressed that each individual has an inherent human dignity from which basic inalienable rights called human rights follow. These are being threatened today not only by governmental oppression but by a sharp increase in the international arms trade and armed conflicts worldwide.

Sir David Steel, MP, stressed the need for the promotion of democracy, human rights and arms control as the only means of combating ethnic nationalism, religious fanaticism, racism and terrorism which are posing a grave danger to liberal democracy the world over. What was required was global recognition of the fact that the international arms trade today is as objectionable and immoral as the international slave trade in the 19th century. What one needed to discover was how to replace arms security with human security. Dr. K. R. Narayanan



criticised the arguments of major nuclear powers that there was nothing in international law prohibiting the threat and use of nuclear weapons in all circumstances, saying that life was the basis of all rights. Dr. Lambsdorff also spoke about the conviction of Liberals regarding the universal validity of human rights, saying that the struggle for human rights would remain the core concern of political liberalism.

Limited Role of the State

In the discussion on Economic Development and Liberalism, the role of the market economy, free trade and minimal state interference were repeatedly emphasised. Mr. Salman F. Rahman, President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that the series of interventions that South Asian governments had carried out so far have shown no convincing case that the judgement of ordinary citizens is in any way inferior to that of government officers. Even in cases of market failure, tinkering around by politicians and bureaucrats had introduced greater distortions and higher transaction costs. While emphasising that a democratic system was essential for the proper functioning of the market economy, he said that governments would have to impose fiscal discipline by reducing their spending and also ensure that government revenues are used for most important purposes like education, health and infrastructure. To provide incentive for performance, taxes need to be reduced and also defence spending needed to be curbed.

Dr. Lambsdorff noted that worldwide it has been seen that nationalised industries are in the red. Though a market economy does need some regulation (especially on environment and security aspects), what is really required is a "slim and strong state and not a fat state". Thus, the Convention affirmed that the most important role of

the state was to keep markets competitive and open, promote individual freedom and private initiative which unleashes the inherent potential of all human beings and brings material prosperity. The role of the state must be restricted to essentials like national security, environment and provision of necessary infrastructure. It was also the duty and obligation of the state to ensure that all citizens have access to education and basic health care. Ideally speaking, the state must create an enabling framework within which private initiative can thrive.

Social Justice and Liberalism

Very often social justice and a free market economy are perceived to be contradictory. In fact it was in the garb of social justice that highly inefficient, centrist, corrupt social economies had emerged. But it was the powerful interests groups in politics, bureaucracy and industry who benefited from controls. Education levels remained dismal, poverty abject and disparities phenomenal. Huge state machinery, state monopolies and sick public sector enterprises did precious little in terms of social justice for the masses. The benefits that trickled down to the most disadvantaged groups were but a small fraction. So the argument really does not carry much weight.

People have different starting positions in life. Many are excluded from opportunities and do not even have the means to cope with crises. Society cannot turn a blind eye to the problem of poverty and illiteracy because these in themselves are a violation of the basic human right to a life of dignity. Hence a liberal social policy should aim at providing the most disadvantaged with access to adequate opportunities and building of a social safety net which would strengthen their ability to cope with crises and compete in a free market. Poverty alleviation, however, does not mean charity, but

strengthening the initiative of the poor to succeed as equals. In fact, new approaches are required to redirect social spending to the most disadvantaged groups in a way that strengthens their own initiative instead of stifling it.

Most speakers at the Convention strongly stressed that it was the duty of the state to enforce compulsory primary education, access to basic health care, provision of adequate physical infrastructure, equal access to opportunities, environmental protection and above all the rule of law which would aid in the proper functioning of a free market economy which in turn would ultimately lead to the elimination of poverty.

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India's New Liberalism

The new Liberalism that has come to India is a fusion of western Liberalism and Gandhi. When the Swatantra Party was formed and I was drafting its programme, that is how I put it in an article in *Life* magazine - that two streams of thought had gone into the making of this effort, Western liberalism as they understand it plus the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

What are these teachings that we graft on to liberalism or fuse with liberalism? First, that ends and means are interlined: that if we want a decent society our methods must be decent. Secondly, as Gandhiji used to say repeatedly, "that Government is best which governs the least." Minimum government. The essential thing is to leave people free. Thirdly, Trusteeship, that those who have the good things of life, those who have wealth must use them for the good of the community. While we have a good time with what we have, we must not be devoid of a social conscience or a sense of social obligation.

Minoo Masani



A Reaffirmation of Liberal Values

The Convention adopted the following statement which is a reaffirmation of Liberal Values. The affirmation, though brief, deals with real issues that have considerable relevance to the lives of people everywhere.

Basic Liberal Principles

The Convention affirms the core principle of liberalism, namely individual liberty and the freedom of the individual to pursue his own path towards the realisation of his own human potential. This freedom is not absolute but carries sound responsibility and it must not interfere with the freedom of others.

Liberalism is based on an attitude of tolerance, respect for different ideologies, opinions and beliefs. This is why the term "liberal" is used so widely with a positive meaning. The term is used when people display openness, tolerance and a willingness to allow others to function in their own way.

Liberal values have deep roots in the Indian tradition. The Vedanta philosophy stresses the individual path for the realisation of self and an attitude of tolerance, especially religious tolerance, which has been a hallmark of Indian culture.

The Convention stresses that the concept of freedom must be broadly applied. One of the core principles of liberalism, the principle of individual liberty must be put into practice in all spheres of life: political, social, economic, cultural. Liberalism thus advocates universality of human rights and minimal state interference; it advocates democracy to safeguard political freedom; it advocates the market economy and the rule of law to limit the power of the state and other powerful groups and to protect the poor and the disadvantaged. Freedom is not complete if one of these elements is missing. Political Liberalism is therefore not to be confused with *laissez-faire*.

Democracy, Human Rights and Liberalism

The Convention stresses that each individual has an inherent human dignity, from which basic inalienable rights called human rights follow. Human rights are a universal birthright. Those who say that human rights are a western concept, unsuited to other cultures, just aid those vested interests who want to maintain their power and privileges.

Human Rights are threatened not only by governmental oppression, but also from a sharp increase in armed conflicts worldwide. These are fuelled by the international arms trade. The Convention stresses the need for a UN system to oversee and control the arms trade.

Democracy translates individual liberty into political reality, allowing individuals to express their political ideas, to participate in the political process, to associate with others. Liberalism thus stresses the need for pluralism, free flow of ideas, free access of the citizens to information, freedom of expression and a free media. It recognises the need for a wide variety of interest groups who participate in the political process in peaceful competition. The role of the State is to help maintain the rule of law and ensure that the rules of the game are followed by all.

To prevent misuse of power, Liberalism advocates a separation of powers between different institutions. The independence of the judiciary is especially important, since it is the custodian of the values enshrined in the constitution.

Economic Development and Liberalism

Liberalism advocates a market economy. It is not opposed to regulation but believes that state interference should be minimal. It allows the individual the freedom to put his own ideas into practice. This freedom unleashes the inherent potential of all human beings. This has made possible the staggering increase in material wealth during the last two centuries in those countries that opted for a market economy. The benefits of the market economy get compounded when linked with free trade.

The rule of law is essential for a market economy. The right to property gives individuals independence. It is therefore a pillar of liberty. It is essential to give the poor a chance to benefit fully from market opportunities. Left to its own devices, markets often produce concentrations of economic power. The state therefore has an important role to keep markets competitive by prohibiting monopolies and other forms of market dominance and by keeping access to markets open. The government needs to be strong - but not fat! - to enforce the rules of the economic game.

The state has another important task with regard to social and physical structure. Development needs an educated and healthy population, and it is the duty of the state to enforce universal compulsory primary education and to ensure that people have access to basic health-care. The market will not provide this on its own. The provision of physical infrastructure like roads, railways, power, etc. has to be organised by the state. The state also has a duty to



ensure environmental protection. This responsibility does not mean that the state has to do everything itself. The kind of role that the government has to play in an economy will depend on its state of development. Ideally, the state should create an enabling framework within which private initiative can thrive.

Social Justice and Liberalism

Freedom is a universal human desire, but so are security and equality. These are often perceived to be contradictory. Liberalism puts freedom first. Poverty alleviation hence does not mean charity, but strengthening the initiative of the poor to succeed as equals. Poverty alleviation can be achieved through the principles of the market economy.

But people have different starting positions in life. Many are excluded from opportunities and don't have the means to cope with crises. Society cannot turn a blind eye to that problem because it threatens the human dignity of

the individual. Hence a liberal social policy should aim at providing the most disadvantaged with access to opportunities and building of a social safety net that would strengthen their ability to cope with crises. The State should not try to abolish income inequalities, but would focus on the most disadvantaged groups and ensure that they survive and compete on an equitable basis.

In many countries, however, social policy has created a huge redistributive bureaucracy that dispenses patronage to politically influential interest groups under the pretext of social justice, while only a small percentage of the funds actually reaches the most disadvantaged groups. A phenomenal amount of resources thus get eaten up, thereby destabilising public finances, harming economic development and burdening future generations. New approaches are needed to redirect social spending to the most disadvantaged groups in a way that strengthens their own initiative instead of stifling it.

Protectionism - The Modern Face of Imperialism

Otto Graf Lambsdorff

Opponents of free trade often adorn their arguments with moral principles - woolly though they may be. It is a matter of regret that the advocates of free trade are less keen about playing the moral card - although they would be much more entitled to do so.



Dr. Otto Count Lambsdorff

In this day and age, the idea that protectionism may have something to do with imperialism might not be immediately obvious. Indeed, the reverse may seem to be the case. Free trade meaning unrestricted capitalism at the international level - is said to be the *fons et origo* of all imperialist evils. All the same, an unbiased look at the history of the free trade idea may teach

a different lesson. The fact is that the Free Trade Movement of the 19th century was the first to cast shadows of moral doubt upon imperialism.

In the pre-liberal era of mercantilism, wars and conquest - the standard form of exploitation at that time were the inevitable consequences of underlying economic ideas. It was not until the beginning of the liberal movement, particularly in England, that a policy emerged which not only denounced imperialism as immoral but also aimed at undermining its economic foundations.

The Manchester Liberals

This approach was heralded in 1776 by Adam Smith who, in his classic work, *The Wealth of Nations*, openly sympathized with the American colonies in their efforts to seek

independence from Britain. It was the Manchester Liberals of the 19th century, now wrongfully scorned, who forged the ideas of free trade, general prosperity, peace and anti-imperialism into a major movement. In a letter written in 1842, Richard Cobden, one of the masterminds of the 'Manchester Liberals' made it quite plain that he was not interested in mere economic advantages for his own country, or even in establishing a "bourgeois class of capitalists" (as the Manchester Liberals are often said to have intended). He wrote: "... the colonial policy of Europe has been the chief source of wars for the last 150 years."

At the end of the struggle of the Free Trade Movement stood a world in which an end to wars, colonialism and imperialism seemed to be within



grasp. In 1919, John Maynard Keynes gave a graphic description of this situation in his book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* :

"What an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of Man that era was that came to an end in August 1914.

"The greater part of the population, it is true, worked hard and lived a low standard of comfort, yet were to all appearances, reasonably contented with its lot.

"But escape was possible, for any man of capacity or character at all exceeding the average, into the middle or upper classes, for whom life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comfort and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchies of other ages...

"The projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions and exclusion, which were to play serpent to this paradise, were little more than the amusement of his daily newspaper, and appeared to exercise almost no influence at all on the ordinary course of social and economic life; the internationalization of which was never completed in practice".

The Emergence of Protectionism

However, the disaster that struck in 1914 and which put an end to this liberal vision was no accident. Its opponents had already been imperceptibly capturing lost terrain. In Germany, it had started in 1878 when Bismarck abandoned free trade, a move in which he was unfortunately soon joined by many liberals. Almost all of the European powers then followed suit. Worse, though, than free trade's foes, then and now, were its false friends. The moral high ground to which the Free Trade Movement of the 19th century had laid claim must have been

the reason why even those who otherwise had very openly attacked liberal ideas no longer broadcast their hostility so much in public.

To this day, even the most vocal critics of economic freedom rarely venture to come out in open support of protectionism. More often than not, opponents have adorned themselves with borrowed plumes and have professed free trade while actually paving the way for other concerns that were of no help either to the high moral goals of the Free Trade Movement, or in practical terms, to free trade as such. It may be one of the ironies of history that it was the imperialists of all people - whom the Manchester Liberals had fought tooth and nail - that were the first to make use of this camouflage. Countless others were to follow in their footsteps, each doing their bit to ensure that the term free trade would lose some of its moral radiance and no longer shine so brightly as it had once done. This was due not so much to the idea of free trade as to its abuse.

Free Trade Distorted

Sir John Seeley, probably the most eminent literary protagonist of aggressive imperialism in England at the end of the 19th century, provides us with a telling illustration of this in his book, *The Expansion of England*, which was published in 1883. He writes: "Commerce in itself may favour peace, but when commerce is artificially shut out by decree of Government from some promising territory, then commerce just as naturally favours war". According to Seeley, therefore, free trade would need an expansionary state to advance itself. Competition between states would then be merely a consequence of competition in the economy. This being so, "inseparable from the commercial stimulus was the stimulus of international rivalry.

"The object of each nation was now to increase its trade, not by

waiting upon the wants of mankind, but by a wholly different method, namely by getting exclusive possession of some rich tract in the New World".

Here, Seeley paints a distorted picture of the principle of free trade, but a picture that still obsesses many politicians. They raise their voices every day.

It is worthwhile taking a closer look at their modern guise. If we do, we will find the same old errors in attractive new wrappings. Let me, however, make it clear straightaway that the imperialism based on conquest as practised by the world powers in Seeley's days is - hopefully - only a marginal problem nowadays. Modern imperialism based on protectionism proceeds with much greater subtlety. Nonetheless, in their core, the arguments used to justify it are the same.

For example, the proposition that a free market presupposes a uniformly organised political area is an assumption which forms the very foundation of Seeley's theory. Strip that theory of its martial trappings, and you will find a concept that recurs in many of the would-be market-driven ideas put forward by the Eurocracy in Brussels.

An Imperial Demand

And what about the *European Commission* which keeps harping about "harmonisation" as the prerequisite of a single market? In the field of European product regulations, at least, harmonisation has been put on a leash by the judiciary, but it seems to be the case of "action for action's sake" in the areas of social and fiscal policies. And yet, it is precisely the great merit of free trade that it has a favourable impact on the rules of politics themselves even under conditions of competing political systems. I would even go so far as to claim that comprehensive harmonisation of fiscal systems will,



in the long run, result in higher tax burdens for all of us. In the past, the prospect that public revenue might fall owing to an exodus of capital has imposed at least some constraints on finance ministers.

Also, there is reason to doubt that harmonised rules do in fact always yield lower transaction costs. Will this really hold true in future if these harmonised rules are themselves exempted from competition?

In short, it is true to say that free trade does not necessarily need harmonised rules, but that political rules need free trade. Hence, we should be wary of Seeley's imperial demand that uniform market conditions be imposed "from above" even in this modest and still peaceful form.

And there is another of Seeley's imperialist notions that we still find lurking in many people's minds even today. This is the belief that free trade itself promotes political expansion, since it is said to need this for its survival. Down the years, many attempts have been made to underpin this untenable proposition by a misuse of economic theory. It has never worked.

Leninist Theory Wrong

The Leninist hypothesis to the effect that the capital market economy's chronic surplus production requires the prising open of new outlets is a case in point. This theory ignored not only *Say's Law* as formulated by the French economist Jean-Baptiste Say in 1803 according to which production always creates its own demand, so that there can be no general oversupply of goods and services in a genuine market economy but also the fact that, even in Lenin's days, most of the capital exports and most of the growth in the exports of goods by European powers went to the allegedly monopolized and saturated markets of Europe, America and Australia, rather than to the colonies. What is more, the colonies

proved from the outset to be not so very profitable, or not profitable at all. Any profits made from the colonies were mainly based on speculation or unconcealed government protection.

Frequently, there was an openly protectionist idea behind it, namely the idea that ensuring the supply of raw materials would allow a country to become largely self sufficient - and, hence, better able to hold its own in economic wars with other major empires. Malicious commentators might see parallels in today's efforts to establish large trading blocs (NAFTA, EU, etc.) which were originally meant to serve the goals of free trade, but are increasingly sealing themselves off from the rest of the world. Be that as it may, the casual link postulated here by Seeley between military expansion and a supporting systematic form of free trade went far to ensure that those countries most in need of free trade adopted the most hostile stance towards it for so long.

Since the 1960s, the buzzword of "eco-colonialism" has come to be the battle cry of the persons south of the planet (mostly former colonies only too familiar with the practical side of Seeley's propositions) as against the rich west.

It is easy to appreciate how developing countries came to equate free trade with the "might is right" idea. But it is not correct in economic terms. As its early European history shows, free trade was always an instrument of the weak.

Workers' Support

In the struggle of the Manchester Liberals around Cobden, it was mainly the workers who gave their wholehearted support to the cause of free trade. So Third World countries, too, should have become devout free traders. Yet, until well into the 1980s, it was generally the rich industrialised countries that backed (verbally, at least)

the open-market principle in their development policies, while the poorer countries were deeply distrustful of any form of free trade. The fact that industrialised countries were never too keen in practice about opening their own markets to the Third World helped further erode the high moral ground associated with the free trade principle.

Ultimately, in the early 1980s, came ideas like those of former UNESCO Director General M'Bow, who argued that protectionist control of the international media market was necessary to protect Third World politicians from what was said to be unfair reporting by the Western media.

Just as such a "new world information and communication order" would only have helped stabilise oppressive regimes and prolonged persecutions, any other protectionism too would only have prolonged hardship and misery.

Protective Fences No Answer

Another argument frequently heard - and thought up, unfortunately, by a German, Friedrich List - to the effect that "infant" industries in underdeveloped countries need initial protection if they are to become competitive in the long run, has had disastrous consequences. As I have pointed out elsewhere, "no improvements take place behind protective fences". Quite the contrary. We may be very sure that firms thriving behind such fences are not those that become the most competitive companies, but those that have the best connections in political circles. Or, as the American economist Henry George put it at the end of the last century:

"What are really infant industries have no more chance in the struggle for governmental encouragement than infant pigs have with full grown swine around a meal tub".

And yet it seems that the faith of



all those economists with a high opinion of themselves - namely that economic forces will always prevail against erroneous ideas in the long run - is proving true after all.

It seems that in many Third World countries - and this is particularly true of Latin America and Asia - reform processes geared to the market economy and free trade are evolving much more dynamically than in the so-called First World.

The Indian economist Jagdish Bhagwati, who teaches in New York, even speaks of an "ironic reversal", meaning, that it is now the rich countries of the "North" - which in the past always pressed for "more market" in international trade - that have now come to doubt its blessings, while countries of the South are increasingly becoming convinced of its benefits.

Imperialist Logic

One reason why economically weak countries in particular are now beginning to discover that free trade has something to offer them may lie in the moral quality - or rather moral defect - of protectionism. Whatever way you look at it, protectionism is always an inexcusable aggressive act against other human beings and nations. It is an attempt to secure one's own advantage, not by way of voluntary cooperation, but by coercion. And it is invariably used to impose on other people a policy they do not themselves want.

This is clearly in line with imperialist logic. It is also in line with imperialist logic that this inevitable fact be glossed over with empty moralising phrases. Sir John Seeley provides us with a fine example in the old imperialist style when he writes that the Indian states grabbed by Great Britain were mere "robber states", so that the Empire had also been conquered and established from a "philanthropic desire to put an end to enormous evils".

There is no doubt that modern protectionism, too is a policy that directly harms people in other countries. Currently, the Federal Republic of Germany is debating legislation designed to prevent cheap foreign labour from gaining access to the German building industry. The justification given is solidarity with German building workers faced with high unemployment in this sector. This law will do great harm to the German economy.

Even more surprising, though, is the fact that nobody even mentions the Portuguese and other workers who will lose their livelihood as a result. "Social" rhetoric, it would seem, has managed to conceal what is a political outrage. This only goes to show that there has been little change in the principle since Seeley's days.

I have, in some detail, outlined the parallels between the classic imperialism of the Seeley type and the subtle forms of modern protectionism. This might suggest that our knowledge has made no real advance since the 19th century. It has of course. At least when it comes to the moral glossing over of the aggressive politics of keeping other nations in tutelage, the protectionists of our day have in fact had a creative impact.

Fair Trade Fraud

Their latest battle cry goes to prove this: *Fair Trade*.

This term was employed once before, at the end of the 19th century, by British protectionists who paid lip service to free trade, but believed it could only work if all others also abided by the rules. If they did not, it would be necessary to reciprocate by taking counter-measures. While we need not waste too much time on this idea, it must be understood that if it were taken seriously, we would have to put off the start of a free trade policy to the end of time. Thankfully, it is not usually

meant in earnest. Mostly, the counter-measures are not really designed to enforce free trade, but to promote one's own protectionist interests. Just take the Clinton Administration's dispute with the allegedly protectionist Japanese about the market for automotive parts. The stated objective was to force Japan to accept free trade, the actual goal was to ensure quotas for American manufacturers on the Japanese market.

Economically speaking, any reciprocal counter-protectionism aggravates the damage done by the original protectionism by adding one more protectionist act. Milton Friedman compared this scenario to two people sitting in a boat. One of them drills a hole in the bottom of the boat, which slowly starts to sink. To compensate this damage, the other drills a second hold. Anyone doubting the truth of this metaphor should study the history of the American policy of reciprocating counter-protectionism between the two World Wars that culminated in the infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930.

The consequences of this Act was the abolition of the most favoured nation clauses in almost all industrialised countries and an international trade war based on national egoisms, a trade war that resulted in a 1938 level of international trade that was 60% below the 1929 figure. The resulting worsening of the Great Depression may even have contributed to the rise of totalitarianism in Europe and to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Fair May Not Be Free

It has to be admitted, though, that those who adorned themselves with the label Fair Traders in the late 19th century with their notion of 'reciprocating counter-measures' did at least offer a clear cut - though false - idea. Today's fair traders have spotted this blemish and removed it. Clear ideas, after all, can be countered with clear



arguments which may make life difficult for purveyors of false ideas. Vague ideas, by contrast, can hide from criticism. This is the effect exploited by today's fair traders.

After all, the word 'fair' has a nice ring to it, and nobody can seriously object to fairness. The term 'fair trade' might, of course, be interpreted as meaning free access for all to all markets. But in such a case, the term 'fair' would have nothing to add to the term 'free'. So it would be superfluous. In reality, the term 'fair trade' is a vague notion used to legitimise *ad hoc* intervention in free trade if the results of free trade are somehow felt by somebody to be "discriminating" or "detrimental". Behind it is an - equally vague - concept of economic justice. But that has nothing to do with real justice.

In fact, it resembles the concept of social justice that the great liberal, Nobel Prize winner Friedrich August von Hayek subjected to merciless criticism. While justice without an adjective refers to a standard of justice that postulates equality before the law and clear limits to power, economic or social justice refers to nothing at all.

All it does is help justify a policy to engage in an unprincipled service of special interests at the expense of the public at large. In this context, the American publicist James Bovard speaks of a 'fair trade fraud', a sham policy pretending to work in the interest of the general public, but in reality, representing a "gunboat economy" which is detrimental, most of all, to the majority of a country's own consumers*.

Recently, we have had some heart-rending variations on this theme. These related to demands for social standards and concerns about the environment.

Imposing Universal Standards?

As far as social standards are concerned, these are unfortunately not

only demanded at UN summits, which do not (yet?) have too much of an influence on politics. They are also the subject of heated debate within the WTO - international free trade's most important body - in the form of the so-called "social clause".

Let me mention at least some reservations with regard to this type of clause. If the WTO is serious about the idea of international competition, it will have to realise that it is the very diversity of rules that is essential to this competition. Conversely, imposed "universal" standards will in reality only reflect the protectionist interests of those who gain the upper hand in the negotiations, while other countries will reap the disadvantages.

But, quite apart from the economic argument, there is a moral one as well. Hardly anyone seems to be bothered by the fact that, in view of the diversity of people and cultures in the world, it is impossible to expect universal standards anyhow. Even in such apparently obvious cases like *banning child labour*, for example, the consequences may be disastrous. In some countries, such a ban could mean starvation and hardship for those supposedly protected by such a ban. We may well wonder: Is this not just one more piece of imperialism lurking round the corner, trying to impose the values and standards of certain - mostly more prosperous - countries on others?

Eco-Imperialism

The same question needs to be asked when it comes to ecology. It is not entirely without justification that the buzzword "eco-imperialism" has emerged in some Third World countries. Let me make it quite clear from the outset that, free trade is the best environmental policy there is, because the protectionism we often see practised by industrialised nations forces poor countries to over-exploit their natural

resources. Also, free trade can generate the prosperity in Third World countries that lifts people out of destitution and enables them to afford an awareness of their natural environment. There is a risk that universal rules for the environment will undermine this very process.

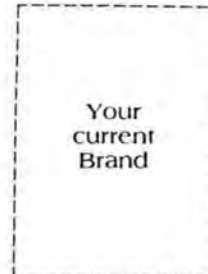
In any case, the countries of the Third world will feel kept in tutelage - most of all when we consider that, ultimately, these countries are expected to limit their economic capacities, because we, the industrialised countries, are polluting the air. For all the necessity of having environmental protection, we should not forget this moral component.

Opponents of free trade often adorn their arguments with moral principles - woolly though they may be. It is a matter of regret that the advocates of free trade are less keen about playing the moral card - although they would be much more entitled to do so. Free trade needs all the moral force - and moral support - it can get to overcome the opposition. Free trade must recall the simple wisdom pronounced in 1860 by the leader of the German free trade movement, John Prince-Smith: "To introduce coercion into the economic process would be tantamount to putting arbitrariness in the place of justice".

Free trade faces opposition from strong and egoistical interest groups. Even options that make economic sense - such as risking unilateral free trade measures in a protectionist world - take courage and considerable power of persuasion. It may be quite helpful in this context to remind our contemporaries that, hidden in any form of protectionism, there lurks a little piece of highly anachronistic imperialism. Indeed, protectionism is the modern face of imperialism. We would be much better off without it.

* See *Freedom First* No. 426, James Bovard, "The Fraud Called Fair Trade".

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The Return of the State

Beijing WWC's 'Achievement'

Sharad Joshi

What separates the two gender roles is neither power nor pelf, but the degrees of freedom that mark the difference between the life of a man and that of a woman. Women, compared with men, have fewer occasions for making a choice in their life time, fewer options available and, on the few occasions they have a choice, a narrower field of choice.

The Fourth World Women's Conference (WWC) held in Beijing last September got noticed because Hillary Clinton paid a brief visit there and kicked up some dust on the human rights situation in China. The Chinese authorities helped by dealing handsomely with the NGO adjunct of the Conference, shifting it to the backyard of Huiarou, 50 kms. away and mucking up the working and hospitality arrangements there.

The high sounding 'Platform for Action' (Platform) that was adopted at the conclusion of the Official Conference and the Declaration adopted by the NGO Conference (Declaration) evoked little comment and no debate whatsoever. It would appear that the world at large was simply unaware of the Beijing Conference or could it be that the literate and articulate community is convinced that neither the deliberations nor the resolutions of international women's conferences merit attention.

Personal is Political

With each succeeding women's conference, women at large and the women's movement in particular appear to be losing ground. In Mexico (1975), it was the brilliant galaxy of charismatic feminist leaders that cornered the limelight - activists, writers, thinkers who had shaken the very foundations of the Marxist theory of class and Engels' analysis of the origin and resolution of the women's question that had held the center-stage for almost a century. The world could not ignore the libbers, nor the bra-burners. 'Personal is political' became the war cry.

The official gathering paled into insignificance by comparison.

At Nairobi (1985) through Copenhagen (1980), the situation had undergone a significant change. That conference is remembered for the 'forward-looking strategies' adopted by the official meet. State action, support, commitments became the anchor-sheet of the feminist movement. Till date, those commitments remain unfulfilled and even the grandiose Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has not been ratified by over 90 member-states. But that did not discourage the feminists at Beijing from preparing an even more ambitious agenda for the period before the next (Fifth) Conference.

At Beijing, the official meet devoured the NGO meet and this latter got totally marginalised. An old Sanskrit verse goes: "A woman is a protegee in childhood of her father; in youth of her husband; in old age of her son, and hence, doesn't deserve freedom". The feminists at Beijing ordained, "The State shall replace father, husband and son and be the protector of women all through their lives as they distrust freedom".

The representatives of governments have gratefully endorsed the feminist demand for state sponsored empowerment of women as a plank against their own imminent disempowerment.

Salvaging the Defunct State

That the State as final arbiter, planner and sultan of the licence-per-

mit empire is disastrous not only for the economy, but also for society and polity is universally conceded. The differences of opinion are largely about the pace and agenda of structural reforms.

However, a small segment of the population that did rather well under the old system is, understandably, trying to oppose the unshackling of the economy. Thus public officials, organised labour, black-marketeers, smugglers and political leaders are all determined to oppose freedom of enterprise and the disempowerment of the State.

They have suddenly developed sympathies for the downtrodden and the exploited, after having fattened on them for half a century. They have also developed a ferocious pride in nationalism and 'swadeshi' monopolists.

These opponents of free societies have found new accomplices inside the precincts of the United Nations itself. Specialised institutions and organs that proliferated in the heyday of 'development through state-planning' assisted by various UN agencies are nervous that their empires, future expansion, promotions and privileges are threatened. Having irretrievably lost the economic argument for the proliferation of the State, they are inventing other holistic arguments for their survival, expansion and continued dominance. Environment, population and social development were the planks at international conferences at Rio-de-Janeiro, Cairo and Copenhagen respectively and now at the WWC

in Beijing.

The 'Declaration' as also the 'Platform' finalized at the Beijing Conference reflect a commonality of converging interests bordering on conspiracy. The UN officialdom which comprised the secretariat of the Conference, the NGOs which gathered at Huairou and the delegates and ministers who participated in the 'official' conference had a vested interest in according governments of the world open-ended mandates for expansion and proliferation.

'Parkinson's Law' has been the model for the UN for decades. Having patients is considered an entirely unnecessary adjunct for the establishment of an expensive hospital in any organ of the United Nations. The NGO women who gathered at Huairou unlike their charismatic predecessors at Mexico consisted mainly of salaried employees subsisting for their NGO activities on massive and continued funding from public institutions. The native women of Beijing played second fiddle to the glittering official Conference and they had little choice. They owed their very presence at the Conference to government approval and sponsorship.

Government Replicas

Lacking the deep convictions of yore, NGOs have become replicas of governments - red tape, wastage, inefficiency, lack of expertise and all - except that they cannot collect taxes and hence have to depend for their very survival on continuous and substantial funding from this or that national or international program. Disempowerment of governments

would sound the death knell of most NGOs. Governments must realise that, sooner or later, they will have to mend their ways; but they have sufficient faith in the cupidity of the populace at large to be sure that they can manage to continue to proliferate for some time more talking of health care, ecology, education, safety nets, women and jingoistic slogans.

Feminists in governmental and NGO stables became aware that economic reforms, whatever their advantages or disadvantages for women at large, constitute a serious threat to their very subsistence and have, therefore, been putting up stiff resistance to all measures of liberalisation. Diverse governments have been quick to realise the potential of the women's cause in serving their own objectives of self-interest. The women's policy announced by Sharad Pawar's government in Maharashtra is merely an uncouth example of this phenomenon.

A Parallel UN

Had the parties concerned shown sufficient restraint and grace in their machinations, they might have just pulled off their gambit. Unfortunately for them and fortunately for the women and the world, in their collective avariciousness, they tried to bite more than they could chew.

The women gathered at Beijing included in their agenda practically everything under the sun and arrogated to themselves the right to deal with all problems of the globe including poverty, inequality, injustice, unemployment, environmentally destructive growth, war, sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia(!) and other forms of discrimination and violence against women. They permitted themselves to formulate recommendations, views and demands on military expenditure, the World Trade Organisation, health, education, multilateral debts, working of international institutions, labour standards, trans-boundary movement of hazardous, toxic and radio-active material, use of science and technology for peace-

ful purposes, intellectual property rights, methodology of national accounting, developmental models, media, economic sanctions, relative merits of different medical systems, HIV/AIDS, children's education, to name just a few.

The basic question is: What should be the legitimate agenda at a Women's meet and what should be the scope of a policy on women?

The Women's Question

The women's platform is certainly not an arena for reopening all and sundry questions that have been settled or are being dealt with elsewhere in specialised and recognised forums. Howsoever important the question of special discount rates for housewife telephone calls, the question will have to be debated by the International Telecommunications Union and not by a women's conference which ought to be used for examining areas where general progress can mean regression or of little advantage for women. It has been noted that the recent prosperity in rural Punjab has actually lowered the quality of life of women and that in many cases, women benefit much less from mechanisation. These are the areas women's conferences should concentrate on rather than go on general fishing expeditions.

The women's question can briefly be stated as follows: While gender is, biologically and psychologically a matter of degree rather than of kind, division of labour is determined on the basis of gender as if it were a matter of kind. This results inevitably in quite a few round pegs in square holes and vice versa. Engels attributed the allocation of domestic work to women to biological factors and postulated in all seriousness, unbelievable though it may sound today, that socialisation of domiciliary functions - community kitchens and creches, will bring the dawn of women's emancipation. It is more likely that women got domestic duties as residual work. Men were obliged to take to the sword in sheer self defence as hordes of plunderers took food, riches and women for their procreative value and simply mowed



Illustration Courtesy: Newsweek.

down men, much as the male offspring of milch animals are slaughtered by good husbandry men.

Societies could survive despite the inefficiency of gender division of labour since all of them treated the domiciliary sector as being outside the purview of competitive markets. The only way in which the ham-handed gender division of labour can end is by a general dismantling of all barriers and restrictions so that such women as are inclined to undertake non-domiciliary work could do so on their own merit and so would men have the possibility of opting for traditionally non-masculine roles. Liberalisation is the antidote to gender division in labour and the key to women's liberation. It is inconceivable that women's liberation presupposes a restrictive society!

Unfortunately, simple and obvious solutions are not to the liking of busybodies who wish to make a career out of the perpetuation of a problem. Thus it was that poverty eradication became big business when all that the poor needed was that the world get off their backs. Thus it was that the lesson of a millennium that no country has been able to control its demographic rate without upward mobility and that affluence is the best contraceptive, was brushed aside by the Cairo Conference. Women activists have greater interest in building their own empires on the pretext of the misery of women. In this, they have found enthusiastic

accomplices in various national governments and international institutions.

Lacking Real Freedom

There is no denying that women in general have a quality of life which is inferior to that of corresponding men folk; but the difference is not measurable in terms of income, property or power without making scientifically inadmissible presumptions. An empirical test was devised in which both men and women were asked two questions: What gender would they prefer, were they to be born again? What compensations in income, property or power would they expect to reverse their choice? An overwhelming majority of them opted for male birth. Most of them would opt for the male gender even at a substantial sacrifice of income, property, power and other elements the UNDP report uses to prove that women are disadvantaged.

What separates the two gender roles is neither power nor pelf, but the degrees of freedom that mark the difference between the life of a man and that of a woman. Women, compared with men, have fewer occasions for making a choice in their life time, fewer options available and, on the few occasions they have a choice, a narrower field of choice. What women lack are degrees of freedom and not the outer symptoms of freedom - real freedom and not a new cage as gilded and as spacious as men's. The gender division of labour amounts to sorting by attributes

and, hence, imposes lesser degrees of freedom. A quantitative statistical method would have been more appropriate i.e. complete freedom to all individuals, men as also women, to choose their mode of life according to their own unique preferences.

Studies in Scandinavian countries have shown that many men resent being forced to play the gender role as much as most women. Both men and women would opt for a less rigid family structure where specialisation is based on overall aptitudes and yet is not watertight and monolithic. The present male dominated family would be replaced by a wide range of families with diverse ways of accommodating the needs of individuals and permitting them the realisation of their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations. This evaluation would happen only under systems that demand efficiency. This can happen only in a market oriented system, which is such an anathema to the NGO women.

Liberalisation may be conducive to women's liberation but is poison to the careers of NGO activists. The Beijing NGOs, therefore, proceed to formulate demands which would have been laughed at were the subject matter not so serious and tragic. Women are disadvantaged; they are found to be particularly lagging in positions of economic and political power, so let them be empowered no matter if the world community is moving towards disempowerment of the existing power structures.

Measurement of Women's Work

The NGO women of Beijing call on all governments to "measure and value women's unwaged work and to include it in the accounting of each nation's Gross National Product". What difference does it make to any woman whether her work enters the national accounts? The paradox was brought out long back by Prof. A. C. Pigou: "If a bachelor marries his maid, the national income would go down as the wife would cease to receive her maid's wages." There is a serious accounting problem involved here that has been tormenting macro-economists. The Beijing Conference was hardly the appropriate forum for that discussion!

Abolition of Division of Labour

Secondly, the problem created by gender division of labour is sought to be resolved by abolishing the division



A farmer is busy cooking his meal at the "anti-Beijing Conference" organised by the Shetkari Mahila Aghadi meeting at Shivaji Park in Mumbai.
Photo Courtesy: *Times of India*.

Are Crusaders Scared Of Losing Their Jobs?

Tavleen Singh

Years ago, when I first became interested in politics, one of the first unwritten rules I learned was that you did not, under any circumstances, make the mistake of attacking anyone who claimed to represent the Left. If you did, you could be absolutely sure that someone or the other would charge you quite soon with being a CIA agent. Left-wing politicians in those halcyon days, before the communist empire crumbled into dust, flaunted their red flags and rigid dogmas like badges of honour. Just as they flaunted their grubby clothes, cheap shoes and cheaper cigarettes. Their political and economic ideas, even then, used to sound as if they had seen better days, but if you dared write this, you could be in serious trouble. It was politically incorrect. Just as politically incorrect as saying that there could be anything good about the RSS. Well, much has changed since then, many red flags lie in tatters and many once mighty countries lie among the debris of shattered economies, so the Left-wing politician is a less exalted creature these days, but a funny thing has happened.

The space that he once occupied is now occupied by a raggedy conglomerate of people's movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), minority and caste groupings and various other alleged agents of social change. They also believe they and their views are sacrosanct.

It is not just politically incorrect to criticise these neo-Leftists but also unwise. You would have noticed last week, for instance, if you weren't completely riveted by this column, that in one that appeared alongside, your humble columnist was under venomous attack, albeit as an unnamed media czarina. "Such commentators (i.e. your truly) on society attempt to rise not by great thoughts or deeds but by putting down others. How much easier life is for such representatives of the chattering classes to call Medha Patkar a lunatic, politicians scumbags and retire to their boudoirs to flagellate a new bunch of political activists the next week".

Strong stuff! Alas, though, almost completely inaccurate. I have no wish to rise in society. I have no aspirations to great thoughts or deeds, do not have a boudoir to retire to and, although I did call politicians scumbags, I did not call Ms. Patkar a lunatic. What I did say was that her economic ideas (globalisation and multinationals are responsible for India's poverty) were dangerous because she had the power to spread them among the illiterate villagers she seeks to represent. I pointed out, when I criticised her, that most of our poverty developed and grew at a time when we had almost no multinational investment and when globalisation was not a widely used term anywhere in the world. My reason for daring to criticise Ms. Patkar was that the ideas she articulated, in what seems to be her election manifesto, were being propounded by various other bodies working in rural India.

I had heard from several sources that various NGOs, especially women's NGOs, were busy spreading this particular kind of economic thought among illiterate village women who had no idea what globalisation meant but were going round saying things like, "*Hum globalisation ki vajeh se gharib hain.*

(We are poor because of globalisation). If this is not dangerous disinformation I don't know what it is.

And, yet it is being spread far and wide because our neo-Leftists appear to believe that globalisation will mean instant, increased consumerism. This they consider a very dangerous thing because for some reason, that I have personally never understood, most of the do-gooders we see wandering about India's villages all appear to share the view that prosperity is synonymous with evil. They believe that it is better for people to live in dire poverty than for them to aspire to owning such things as refrigerators and colour television sets. This is consumerism, they will tell you, this is the evil West trying to destroy our culture and civilisation. They do not, however, tell you how a man subsisting on one meal a day and living in the most wretched poverty imaginable can aspire to culture and civilisation anyway.

It is almost as if they fear that if the villages do one day get electricity, roads, telephones and modern communications, they will be rendered jobless since they will have to think of new forms of doing good. In any case, their activism takes the form of opposing virtually any project that is likely to bring development or modernisation to an area. And the opposition is non-negotiable.

There will be no dam or there will be no railway, no road or whatever. Instead, we will allow you to build whatever you want to as long as the people are fully compensated and there is minimum environmental damage. Most of the do-gooders you meet also seem to share the view that foreign money is evil and, yet, most of them have no hesitation at all in accepting vast funds from abroad themselves.

But, theirs is the begging bowl syndrome. They would rather that India remained poor and demanded that the rest of the world continued to subsidise our poverty through aid and donations rather than we get foreign investment. It is a line of thought that I have always found hard to follow just as I find it hard to understand how Narasimha Rao's economic reforms can be held responsible for India's poverty. Can we be seriously expected to believe that five years ago, before he came along, our villages enjoyed a higher standard of living? Did they have jobs and homes and enough to eat? Did they have electricity and clean drinking water and enough schools for their children? We keep hearing about the collapse of the social welfare system, yet nobody can really tell you when this system actually existed. When was this idyllic time when our people's needs were fully met by our welfare-conscious state?

These are things we should be talking about but, as I said at the outset, we are dealing with people who consider themselves beyond debate. Just like the old-fashioned Leftists used to. Perhaps, they would learn a few lessons by studying what happened to them.

COURTESY: MS. TAVLEEN SINGH and the *Indian Express*.

of labour itself. The dominant family pattern of today was not ordained by anybody but was forced on humanity by the environment of violence that came with the production of food surplus in agriculture. The Beijing women proceed to be the new "Manu" setting down new laws for a participatory family in which there will be "equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women" and "a harmonious relationship". The implementation of the new family is to be encouraged, promoted and ensured by governments of member states.

There are few defenders of the existing mainstream institution of family where babies are straitjacketed into one of two roles on the basis of their reproductive organs. The system is unfair to both but proved useful for gestation and bringing up of babies during a most turbulent period in the history of mankind. From that point of view, women could be considered as the principal beneficiaries of the institution of marriage. In an epoch where the number of young men willing to enter matrimony is steadily declining (in the UK, it is already down to 30%), will irresponsible tinkering with the institution of the family signal the breakdown of the family? And finally what makes NGO women so sure that all women on earth share their dreams of husbands sharing in washing, cooking and diaper changing?

The Beijing NGOs have gone on to do something even more bizarre. The feminists of yesteryear maintained stoutly that the women's question defied 'class' analysis. Their successors are devising a new stratagem: empowerment of women as if they were a class or a backward caste.

'Mandalisation' of Women

Women's access to health and education is improving much faster than in the case of men. Time when they will be more or less level is not too far. The right to wages and property rights are, on the other hand, unlikely to change much in the near future. The operative part of all Declarations on empowerment, therefore, concerns reservation in educational institutions,

jobs and elected posts in panchayats, state assemblies and parliament. In brief, the Beijing women ordain the "Mandalisation" of women, all women being treated as a backward caste and the state according them privileges in order to make up for past repressions.

This is to be accomplished by "transforming the social, economic and political structures" i.e. through the active promotion of participatory families and opposition to the model of globalised market economies. "Mandal" or any other scheme of reservations in favour of a disadvantaged community looks very attractive

The Mandalisation type of empowerment of women is likely to benefit only the creamy layer amongst women. Such empowerment in semi-feudal societies is quite illusory in that it can produce an Indira Gandhi and a thousand bride-burning incidents at the same time

in a statist environment where any enterprise is risky, unless the entrepreneur has the right contacts, and public sector jobs/political posts as attractive as the 'magic lamp' of the 'Arabian Nights'. They demand little skill, involve no responsibility or risk and are well cushioned with sumptuous pay, allowances, perquisites and pensions. All schemes for empowerment of backward communities have little relevance in a free economy. Even in the present situation, the artificial empowerment through reservations will bring little good to the communities concerned except the direct beneficiaries thereof.

If women, like men, are individuals and not faceless parts of a class-like monolith called "women", any action program which treats them as a community can result at best in reverse injustice. Whether reverse injustice brings any good for Mandal communities or not, it can bring no good to women.

The Mandalisation type of empowerment of women is likely to benefit only the creamy layer amongst women. Such empowerment in semi-feudal societies is quite illusory in that it can produce an Indira Gandhi and a thousand bride-burning incidents at the same time. Such empowerment may not even be desired by some women. Experience shows that the empowered members of repressed classes including women cease to belong to their original set and comport themselves exactly like those they replaced and often worse vis-a-vis their own group.

The experience in Maharashtra shows that the women who accede to seats of power through reservations are, unless they are activists themselves and are present in a numerically significant group, stand-ins for their men folk who would have got elected but for the reservations. The rotational system of reserving constituencies used in Maharashtra has had an adverse effect not only on the working of the panchayats but also on the goodwill enjoyed by the women's movement itself.

Was Beijing Necessary?

Evidently, the women's movement has gone astray and has allowed itself to be used by those who have a vested interest in statism. This could not have happened if its spokesmen had contact with mainstream women. That creamy layer which managed to benefit from access to education, jobs and political power, love their new situation. Capitalising on the immense misery of womanhood, they can make a good career giving speeches, attending seminars and conferences all over the world. They have no interest in resolving the women's question. They have willingly allowed the women's movement to be hijacked.

Women are not organised even at the grassroots level. There exist hundreds of organisations even in relatively small townships. They hold some meetings with a handful of faithful followers and appear to take some interest in individual cases of harassment of women. Those with some capacity for articulation get picked up on

the seminar circuit and spend their life jet setting till a fresh batch comes along to replace them. At various levels, Women's commissions are constituted to accommodate superannuated politicians of the ruling party. It would be difficult to organise a truly representative conference of women even at the state level, leave aside the national. Then how come four world conferences of women took place within twenty years? Who attended the conferences on behalf of the members states? How were the NGOs screened for inclusion in the national teams? How truly were they representative of the cross-section of women in their respective countries? The NGO Declaration does not speak for the women at large. That is obvious from the contents. The composition of the teams would probably bring out that there was no chance of the voice of the women of the world being heard at Beijing, much less raised.

An international conference of women appears to be a particularly inappropriate platform for world women. This was brought out by the fact that the Muslim and Catholic position was largely supported by women

of the respective faiths. Evidently, in an international forum, to raise a dissenting voice against one's own faith would tantamount to *jihad* which the poor women dare not even contemplate. Premature exposure to a global audience forced women to defend their tyrants. Women fought amongst themselves arguing that their traditional systems were superior and more generous to women and needed no modification whatsoever from the outside.

It would probably have been more useful if conferences were held at regional or denominational level and each conference encouraged to make statements about the situation in diverse respects of women in their community. That would have put pressure on governmental and religious leaders to become, or at least appear to be, more generous to women. Ensuing competition might have produced some benefits particularly for women covering a cross section of gender, race, poverty and creed prejudices. At present, states have no incentive to take their commitments on advancement of women seriously before periodically endorsing fresh ones at each conference. The 'Forward-looking Strat-

egies' adopted at the Nairobi Conference in 1985 have not been acted upon as yet, and, as mentioned earlier, as many as 90 countries have not, as yet, cared to ratify CEDAW. In world conferences they can use women to feather their bureaucratic nests. In less amorphous conferences, they would be forced to be serious.

In sum, the NGO women at Beijing represented none but themselves. Most of them had leftist pedigrees and a vested interest in the proliferation of the state and the bureaucracy. They have produced a document that is devoid of any understanding of women's problems and which further betrays little interest in the redressal of the woes of their sisterhood. The Beijing Conference marks a serious crisis for the world's women's movement. The movement can be brought back on track only if the silent majority of working, self-employed and entrepreneur women raise their voice in protest and proclaim that women are human, and hence stand for freedom.

MR. SHARAD JOSHI is an economist, a leader of the liberal movement in India, and founder of the Shetkari Sanghatana.

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On Writing Plain English

A 'Hinglish' Experience

A. K. R. Hemmady

Through a painful process, I too have realised SVR's agony that writing plain and simple English is not easy (*Freedom First*, No.426). More so, for me due to my having had to complete my formal but non-Convent education in Lucknow and my "Hinglish" being roundly criticised by my Bombayite, convent educated, elder brothers and sisters.

After joining the Geological Survey of India, I became more self-conscious of my linguistic disability and decided to do something about it. Helpful senior colleagues suggested a monthly dose of *Reader's Digest* feature "Increase Your Word Power"; cross-word puzzles, cryptic clues; Fowler's *Modern English Usage*; Sir Ernest Gower's *Complete Plain Words* and much else - so much so that I was left wondering whether I would have any time left to keep abreast with the latest in geology.

I gave priority to increasing my word power. As my power increased, so did the frequency of bombastic words in my geological reports as also in my leave applications. I had a difficult boss, more interested in plain geology than in the display of one's power over words. I don't remember any of our geological draft reports getting past him at the first go and I doubt if he was ever entirely satisfied with the many times revised final one which he grudgingly approved. Benign otherwise, he was brutal with our reports. Once when I dared to point out that he was editing his own corrections, he bluntly asked 'when did I say I was ideal?' One of his pet aversions was the 'overuse' and 'questionable' use of the words 'Standpoint' and 'Point of view'. According to him, "from the standpoint of coal mining" or "from the viewpoint of road building" or "from the geological point of view" are

incorrect. It is the coal miner, road builder or geologist who may occupy a point but not their profession.

He used to tell us that a writer's perspiration should be his readers' inspiration, not *vice versa*. To that effect, he passed on to us a piece of advice which one of the former Directors of the US Geological Survey (Dr. G. D. Smith) gave to his officers: "The geology I plead for is that which states facts in plain words. We may as well admit a certain liking for the sounds of words, the longer the word, the more sound it has. Especially enjoyable is this mild form of hypnotism if both ideas and words are such as to make us feel that we are moving in the highest circles. At a meeting of the British Association, one physicist frankly explained that the idea of relativity is popular because to most people, it is 'pleasantly incomprehensible'. The chief purpose of words is to convey thoughts, and unless the wavelengths of the words are right, the receiving apparatus will utterly fail to pick up thoughts".

On the use of jargon, Dr. Smith said: "We often try to overdress our thoughts. Just as there is a somewhat prevalent notion that clothes make the man, so we subconsciously believe that words make the ideas. We follow the percept, "to be scientific, use scientific terms" and in so doing, we deceive ourselves.... The world has a right to discount our usefulness and even to distrust our honesty if we persist in concealing our thoughts or lack of thoughts behind a mask of professional jargon".

However, jargon, the technique of not calling "a spade a spade" when one can call it "a manual earth-restructuring implement" continues to be the presiding deity of dialectical materialists who have not only managed to survive but thrive in India, even when

their god has failed elsewhere. They now throng the hallowed precincts of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) which boasts of having in its faculty, some renowned historians who had prepared Indira Gandhi's famous Time Capsule. The present did not have the patience to wait for the future to know about what scholarship was secreted in the capsule, which as a result had to be exhumed. Anyway, those who believe that clarity is infantile and complex opacity profound, will be happy to know that at a Sociologist's Conference in the USA (1977), love was defined as: "the cognitive-affective state characterised by intrusive and obsessive fantasizing concerning reciprocity of amorous feelings by the object of the amorance". I try to imagine what the reaction of a girl would be if courted with such profusion of words. If favourably inclined, she is likely to say "shut your gob or you don't get me, Steve".

There are times when slang or a down to earth expression succeeds where euphemism fails. I am told of the following anecdote that was doing the rounds among IFS officers some time ago. An elderly member of an Indian delegation to the UK wanted to have a Saville Row suit stitched. Because of this delegate's political importance, the Chief Designer himself was in attendance. While taking measurements for the pant, (trousers if that sounds better, i.e. two legged outer

Marriage - & Casual Leave

During the British days at the Geological Survey, a young officer applied for casual leave because he was getting married. The Director had told the youngster that since marriage was not a casual affair, he would not sanction casual leave; instead he sanctioned him a month's privilege leave.

garment reaching from waist to ankle), the designer politely asked: "Sir, how do you dress, left of the centre or right of the centre?" The politician was angry and told the designer that one's political leanings should not have any bearing on how a pant is to be stitched. The designer employed alternative euphemisms to explain what he wanted to know but to no avail. The IFS officer in attendance tried to explain that the designer wanted to know the side of the seam towards which an allowance could be made for the comfort of a vital part of the man's anatomy. This too failed to nudge the VIP to reveal his political affiliation. The designer finally lost his patience and asked "which side do you hang your"

"English is full of booby traps for the unwary foreigner", says the linguist Bill Bryson in his delightful book 'Mother Tongue': "Any language where the unassuming word fly signifies an annoying insect, a means of travel, and a critical part of a gentleman's apparel is clearly asking to be mangled. Imag-

ine being a foreigner and having to learn that in English one tells a lie but the truth, that a person who says "I could care less" means the same thing as someone who says "I couldn't care less"; that a sign in a store saying *ALL ITEMS NOT FOR SALE* doesn't mean literally what it says (that every item is not on sale) but rather that only some of the items are on sale, that when a person says to you, "How do you do?", he will be taken aback if you reply, with impeccable logic, "How do I do what?"

Reverting for a moment to Dr. G. O. Smith's advice that while writing, the wavelength of the readers should be kept in mind, I recall Sir Ernest Gowers in his *Complete Plain Words*: "An Indian official, who, on finding his British superior labouriously correcting a letter he had drafted to a brother Indian official, remarked, "your honour puts yourself to much trouble correcting my English and doubtless the final letter will be much better literature; but it will go from me

Mukherji to he Bannerji, and he Bannerji will understand it a great deal better as I Mukherji writes than as your honour corrects it".

Professor Randolfe Quirk of Oxford University says: "English is just as much big business as the export of manufactured goods. There are problems with what you might call 'after sales service'; and 'delivery' can be awkward, but at any rate the production lines are trouble free". (*The Observer*, 26.10.80). No wonder that in the flourishing market economy of USA, the 'word-market' is also booming. (See box for the Buzz Phrase Projector or BPP).

In fact, this versatile all-purpose tool was handed over to me by one of my subsequent practical minded bosses, not that he was unaware of the virtues of plain English. For years after I joined the Survey, I was not able to make it to any of the symposia or seminars, usually held at exciting and scenic locations. That was reserved for the creamy layer of seniors. Once I learnt that a symposium was to be held in Ooty which I had never seen. I requested my boss to sponsor me as a delegate. He asked me whether I had a paper ready for presentation, a good one at that, on the strength of which he may recommend my name to the higher ups. "No", I said, because all the themes besides being too abstruse, were not even distantly related to the work I was then doing. I could be sent as an observer, I pleaded. "You are too junior to be sent to observe Ooty at government expense, he said, and as to the themes being vague, he explained that it was deliberately so kept to encourage inter-disciplinary interaction. One should not expect the topics of seminars to suit one's work: one has to twist his work to suit the topic of the seminars by overdressing one's thought or the lack of it by esoteric words and so saying, he passed on to me the BPP. Needless to say, in later years, I won my passage rather than beg to be sponsored as an observer.

I must confess that SVR's concern 'to split or not to split' the infinitive made me dust my old collection of

THE BUZZ PHRASE PROJECTOR (BPP)

After years of hacking through etymological thickets at the U. S. Public Health Service, a 63 year old official named Philip Broughton hit upon an infallible method for converting frustration into fulfillment (jargonwise). Euphemistically called the Systematic Buzz Phrase Projector (BPP), Broughton's system employs a lexicon of 30 carefully chosen "Buzzwords":

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
0. Integrated	0. Management	0. Options
1. Total	1. Organisational	1. Flexibility
2. Systematized	2. Monitored	2. Capability
3. Parallel	3. Reciprocal	3. Mobility
4. Functional	4. Digital	4. Programming
5. Responsive	5. Logistical	5. Concept
6. Optional	6. Transitional	6. Time-phase
7. Synchronised	7. Incremental	7. Projection
8. Compatible	8. Third-generation	8. Hardware
9. Balanced	9. Policy	9. Contingency

The procedure is simple. Think of any three digit number, then select the corresponding buzzword from each column. For instance, 257 produces "Systematized logistical projection", a phrase that can be dropped into virtually any report with that ring of decisive, knowledgeable, authority. "No one will have the remotest idea of what you are talking about", say Broughton, "the important thing is that they are not prepared to admit it"

Courtesy: *Reader's Digest*.

half-read books on how to improve one's English. These books are like classics which according to a cynic are something which the literati likes to be known to have read but rarely does. I am confused, the judgement is not unanimous about splitting the infinitive. It seems that the rule not to split was set in the 17th century and owes its origin to Latin grammar which served as a model. Some feel that English is not Latin and so the controversy amounts to hair-splitting. By the way, I normally avoid using this 'hair-splitting' phrase ever since one of my ex-colleagues who thought in Hindustani, took offense when I told him that he was splitting the hair. The golden mean apparently is if an unsplit infinitive tends to jar and breaks the flow of a sentence, split it.

The book 'Right Word at the Right Time' belonging to the *Reader's Digest* Family has it: Phrases such as "to boldly go where no man has gone before" and "began to silently hope" are guaranteed to set pedants' teeth on edge - despite the greater metrical regularity of "to boldly go and silently hope" than "to go boldly and to hope silently". ... The famous lexicographer, Eric Partridge also seemed to enjoy outraging the

purists by "glaringly splitting his infinitive".

The well-known writer, Raymond Chandler once wrote to a magazine editor: "Would you convey my compliments to the purist who reads your proof and tell him or her ... that when I split an infinitive, God damn it, I split it, so it will stay split".

About spellings, I have nothing to add to what Harry Miller has said (see box). Foreigners may yet master King's or Queen's English, but rarely the correct pronunciation. Bernard Shaw himself admits that in English GHOTI can be pronounced as fish. Finally, it seems that when Krishna Menon's speech in the UN was criticised by Sir Owen Dixon for its English, Menon retorted that unlike Dixon, who had picked up his English in London streets, Menon himself had learnt it in college. When Rajiv Gandhi ridiculed Prof. Dandavate's English, Dandavate admitted unassumingly that he was not fortunate enough to learn English from air hostesses.

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

Of Euphemisms and Double Entendres

Once a venerable old Professor of one of the branches of Natural Sciences from America came to India on a lecture tour and in between these assignments, he was taken round on field trips. In one such trip, undertaken in the company of Indian counterparts, there was one Mr. A, an ardent recipient of knowledge who would not let the old Professor out of sight even for a moment on these field trips. During one particular journey by road, the Professor suddenly requested the driver to stop the car and while getting out he begged to be excused for he "wanted to go to the bushes". Mr. A also hurriedly scrambled after the startled Professor. It was only after some embarrassing arguments that the Professor was able to convey why he was heading towards the bushes - an exertion which had nothing to do with natural science. When this amusing episode was recounted to a young American scientist, he laughed at the euphemistic ways of his old timer compatriot and said that the Professor should have straight away told, "Leave me alone, I am going to shake hands with the best friend of my wife". I beg pardon for recounting this down to earth colloquial usage in vogue in the man's world of America. But I hope that the readers of *Nagpur Times* by now used to double entendres appearing occasionally in the form of a scooter advertisement exhorting people to "have something exciting between your legs" will not be prudish enough to be shocked.

Mr. Hemmady adds: Within a day or two of the appearance of the above in the *Nagpur Times*, the scooter advertisement was taken off.

ABRACADABRA

Having chosen English as the preferred language in the European Union, the European Parliament has commissioned a feasibility study on ways of improving efficiency in communication between government departments. European officials have often pointed out that English spelling is unnecessarily difficult; for example, cough, plough, chough, through, thorough.

In the first years, for example, the committee would suggest using 's' instead of the soft 'c'. Certainly, civil servants in all sites would relish this news with joy. Then the hard 'c' could be replaced by 'k' since both letters are pronounced alike. Not only would this clear up confusion in the minds of clerical workers but typewriters could be made with one less letter.

There would be growing enthusiasm when in the second year it was announced that the troublesome 'ph' would henceforth be written 'f'. This would make words like 'fotograf' - twenty per cent shorter in print.

In the third year, public acceptance of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more complicated changes are possible. Governments would encourage the removal of double letters which have always been a detriment to accurate spelling.

Would all agree that the horrible mess of silent 'e's in the language is disgraceful. Therefore we could drop them and continue to read and write as though nothing had happened. By this time it would be four years since the scheme began and people would be receptive to steps such as replacing 'th' with 'z'. Perhaps the function of 'w' could be taken on by 'v' - vitsh is, after all, half a 'w'. Shortly after this, the unnecessary 'o' could be dropped from words containing 'ou'. Similar arguments would of course be applied to other combinations of letters.

Continuing this process year after year, we would eventually have a really sensible written style. After twenty years there would be no more troubles, difficulties and evasions - you would find it easy to understand each other. The dreams of the Government would have come true.

HARRY MILLER,
Indian Express, Madras.

Much has gone wrong in the psychology of people as well as officials and the young men who pass out of the academy of administration should deem it their duty and religious obligation to do all they can to switch the country back to right thinking and right action.

- *Rajaji*



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The Emergency in a Southern State

- A Personal Note

P. R. Dubhashi

June 25, 1996 marks the 21st anniversary of the Declaration of the so-called "Emergency" by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. We publish this short article to remind ourselves of our close brush with tyranny. - Ed.

Apropos a number of articles published on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the emergency, a point needs to be made that in a large country like India, the impact of emergency was not the same all over the country. The impact of the emergency got considerably diluted as it moved from the Centre to the southern states, and in the process lost much of its severity and oppressive rigour. There was a further dilution from the state headquarters to the field level.

I was serving as Divisional Commissioner, Belgaum division during 1974-76. The announcement in the morning news on All India Radio about the imposition of the emergency came as a shock. Everybody was taken by surprise. There was no advance official information or communication. I hurriedly got hold of the local morning Marathi newspaper, *Tarun Bharat* which carried the news, a brief account of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's statement justifying the imposition of emergency, and the news that Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai had been taken into custody by the police at midnight hour and moved to unknown destinations. It was obvious that the beleaguered Prime Minister had, in her desperation, staged a coup, bending the Constitution at will.

It was not known as to what would follow the imposition of emergency. But on one point, I was clear in mind - there would be no emergency in Belgaum division so far as I was concerned. I would not be a part of the repressive machinery of the state. My style of people-friendly, people-oriented administration would continue. There would be no tension, no repression. And I was able to keep my word to myself till one day in March 1977, while I was in the Belgaum Club, I got the news that not only had the Congress party been defeated, but the Prime Minister who had

ruthlessly imposed the emergency had herself lost her seat and despite the last minute pressurisation by her election agent, Shri Makhanlal Fotedar, the returning officer had declared the results.

One reason why I could steer clear of the emergency was that the Divisional Commissioner was left high and dry regarding the detention of "opponents" of the emergency. I had only a vague inkling of these arrests. So I visited the District offices for inspection purposes and had a look at the detention orders issued by the District Magistrates on the recommendation of the police officers concerned. The police officers, in turn, had acted on the lists received from state headquarters. The stereotype orders were cyclostyled, and there were no speaking orders of the District Magistrate in each case. I asked the District Magistrates who had signed the orders whether it was a right thing to do. They said nothing - obviously, they knew that what they had done was not right but were helpless since they had acted under the orders of the Home Secretary.

On 15th August, the Independence Day flag hoisting was arranged at the office of the Divisional Commissioner with the participants consisting mostly of government functionaries. In my brief address in Kannada, I said that on independence day, we should recall the words of Rabindranath Tagore: "where the mind is *without fear* and the head is held *high*". This was not reported in the weekly report of the intelligence agency.

One day, I thought, I should meet the emergency detenus in the Hindalga jail of Belgaum. I expected to spend less than an hour in the jail. But actually stayed on from 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m., spending time talking to the detenus, many of whom I had known personally

in the course of my work as Divisional Commissioner. I talked to them with cordiality and in a relaxed atmosphere, as I used to do normally. They asked for some facilities such as books for reading, home food and occasional cinema. I had no hesitation in writing to the Jail Superintendent to provide these facilities. Amongst the detenus, I was sad to find a girl of eighteen, the sole female detenu. I was disappointed not to be able to meet a distinguished detenu, whom I was looking forward to meet, Shri Ramakrishna Hegde. He was shifted a few days earlier to Bangalore jail.

The twenty point programme was the Prime Minister's way of presenting to the nation, the constructive face of the emergency. Much was made of this programme and one Chief Minister, went to the extent of describing it as the *Bhagavad Gita* of our age! On going through the programme, I found it was no more than a hotch-potch collection of a number of programmes already in operation over several years. They were strung together without any particular logic or philosophy. When the Information department arranged a function to inform the people about the wonderful invention called the emergency, I had no hesitation in saying in my inaugural address that the 20 Point programme consisted of several programmes already in vogue.

One of the most maligned of the twenty programmes was that of family planning. It was the worst face of the emergency in the north, particularly, in the nation's capital. But here in Belgaum division, it was purely voluntary in character, based on persuasion and education by the development and health workers and therefore quite successful. It did not create any fright and some villages were able to claim with enthusiasm cent percent coverage of eligible couples.

Keeping Freedom Alive

S. A. Srinivasa Sarma

The April-June 1995 issue of *Freedom First* transported me to the dark days of the emergency. I was a student at that time and regularly writing to "Himmat". I was shocked to receive a letter from Ms. Kalpana Sharma then stating that the censors had taken exception to my letter and apologising for not being able to publish my letter.

Mrs. Gandhi never allowed anyone to write about any of her acts nor she listened to any advice. Unfortunately, many Congressmen shamelessly never opened their mouths because of their lust for power and position. The Tiwaris and Arjuns at that time kept quiet. The imposition of the emergency, the throttling of the press, the arrest of countless national leaders clearly indicate the dangers of dynastic rule in a democratic setup. In this context, it is better to limit to two terms the post of Prime Minister. This would put an end to efforts to pulling down the government or the frequent demands for change of leadership. We can abolish family rule. If anyone reaches the highest office and completes his term for two years, he or she should not be allowed to enter politics again and retain the membership of a political party.

The lost freedom was regained in 1977.

Unfortunately, the politicians refused to change their behaviour. Instead of punishing the politicians for the crime committed on citizens during the emergency, the people showered sympathy on Indira and her coteries, when the Shah Commission was carrying out its enquiry. The infighting in the Janata Party was the worst thing that could happen to our democracy. Their ego clashes led us to believe that non-Congress leaders cannot provide an alternative to the Congress and Indira alone can save our country. Even today, there is no one who can provide an able workable alternative government with vision and foresight.

Even though one can debate Rao's tenure as Prime Minister for hours, one thing is definite - he has proved that there is no need for charisma to lead a country with economic policies, a political agenda and social reforms. He has definitely controlled the influence of the Indira family and completely dislodged the Nehru influence by dismantling socialism without hurting the sentiments of Nehru's family and its supporters. Most Congressmen openly say now that socialism has not done anything good for us. Those who never listened to Rajaji in the fifties, are realising

the vision of Rajaji.

Even die-hard communists no longer believe in socialism and communism. The scientific developments, technological growth, communication marvels and computers have completely changed the vision of political leaders and reduced the gap between countries. Credit should go to Rao for completely burying the heritage of Indira (Nationalisation) without hurting her followers by opening the gates of the economy.

The people too have responded positively. Only those who fear losing power and position if the licence raj is abolished are raising a hue and cry. Democracy can take roots only if each and every one of us take active part in our political events, analyses the acts of politicians, point out the mistakes of rulers and fearlessly inform our representatives to act positively without hurting our economy.

We cannot expect Minoo Masanis and Palkhivalas to come out every time and raise their voice against authoritarianism and licence raj. They have done their duty exceptionally well and they would do so till their last breath. It is for us now to carry the torch of freedom.

Somewhere,
sometime,
you'll meet
the
complete man.



Raymond

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Debate

Swadeshi's Neo Champions

As is to be expected, the ignorance on the concept of *Swadeshi* amongst the people is rampant. It is no wonder that you make the statement, "And just when we seem to be catching up on lost time come the champions of *Swadeshi* who would have no qualms in turning the clock back...", in your July-September 1995 issue. In this context, I am enclosing some material that would put our views in the right perspective. It is a tragedy in our country that those who are supposed to lead the debates do so with so little knowledge of the position of the various parties involved.

Kirit Somaiya, MLA (BJP)

We would have been happy if Mr. Somaiya had sent us a comprehensive document on the issue relating to *Swadeshi* advocated by the BJP. In the absence of such a document, it is difficult

to come to any conclusion about your party's stand on economic reforms in general or *Swadeshi* in particular.

As a result of the introduction of the reforms in 1991, a number of macro-economic indicators have moved very spectacularly whether it is the rate of growth of real GDP, or the rate of growth of industries or savings and investment, not to speak of exports. Apart from these quantitative improvements, Indian industry has been undergoing many qualitative changes in terms of improving productivity, efficiency and competitiveness (both internal and external). I would like to reiterate that the kind of *swadeshi* your party advocates gives the impression that it would, in effect, turn the clock back. Even after reading your enclosures, I find no reason to revise my statement.

You might like to recall that the inflow of foreign direct investment remained very meagre at about \$4 billion during the four years of the reforms. This is too small a figure and I am convinced we need to go ahead with more foreign direct investment in the coming years. Even communist China absorbed \$30 billion worth of foreign direct investment in a year. We are not yet talking about such large amounts of foreign investment in the Indian economy in the immediate future. The idea is to increase competitiveness both internally and externally, so that we can have a strong and thriving Indian economy in the global context like some of the Asian Tigers or China and not remain closed or isolated as before.

SVR

India Cannot Afford *Swadeshi*

Swadeshi, as we, the laymen, understand the word, implies a positive discrimination in favour of everything Indian, be they Indian products, Indian entrepreneurs or Indian institutions, as against everything non-Indian.

It is in perfect agreement, upto a point, with what Indian entrepreneurs have been asking for ever since the Rao-Manmohan combination started liberalising the entry of foreign companies in diverse fields.

Beneath the veneer of the noble concept of *swadeshi* lies the sheer hypocrisy of the Indian political, entrepreneurial and elite class whose only motive was self preservation.

Even before Rao and Manmohan Singh started liberalising the economy, big Indian companies used to buy

foreign technology indiscriminately, without any regard for encouragement or development of *swadeshi* technology. It suited them best as Indian entrepreneurs were mostly interested in controlling companies and nothing else. Licensing and restrictions on the use of foreign brand names, and curbs on foreign equity investments enabled Indian companies prosper as they didn't have to face any significant competition nor have any particular concern for the Indian consumer. What was required was very good political management. With two thirds of the project cost coming from financial institutions and the public, they ran their companies as if they were their personal fiefdoms with virtually no accountability to the other stake holders.

The result was indifferent or in-

ferior goods and no value delivery to the customers. With the domestic market offering a good bargain, entrepreneurs had no interest in developing exports either.

The politicians contributed by promoting, in the name of self reliance, a mammoth public sector, a state monopoly with no accountability to the public at large. The public sector controlled almost all the core and infrastructure industries which were so critical to the general wellbeing of the economy. With constant political interference and inefficient management and losses underwritten by the public exchequer, year after year in the case of a large number of public enterprises, the cost of manufacture went up, making Indian manufactured products uncompetitive abroad.

As the Rao-Manmohan economic reforms started showing some positive results, the leftists and the rightists, despite daggers drawn in the political field, found self reliance and *swadeshi* a convenient double-edged weapon to attack the Rao government, despite overwhelming evidence that both self reliance and *swadeshi* had not benefited a large section of the Indian population, whose interests these con-

cepts were supposed to help. If these have failed in the last four decades, it is partly because of the fact that they were inward looking and harbingers of an inefficient economy but mostly due to the sheer hypocrisy of our ruling establishment and entrepreneurial class, who never hesitated to gang up whenever it was to their mutual advantage. This time too they have got together to commit a great fraud on this country

in the name of self reliance and *swadeshi*.

If the public are not vigilant and do not expose this hypocrisy of our masters, a large section of the Indian populace will continue to mire in poverty for several decades to come. The cost of being *swadeshi* is high and India can ill afford to do that any longer.

Ranga Kota

Kashmir : A Question of People or Real Estate?

What About the Kashmiri Pandits?

I really must protest that in your issue on Kashmir (Kashmir: A Question of People or Real Estate; *Freedom First* No.426), you have neglected to take into account the views of the Kashmiri Pandits, who are quite active in Mumbai. If at all one intends to have an enduring solution to the problems in the valley of Kashmir, the misery of the 300,000 Pandits, who are refugees in their own country, has to be uppermost in the mind, rather than have a mere passing reference as has been done on page 14. (Incidentally, the same Smt. Teesta Setalvad, who made this reference, was asked nearly six months

ago, after a trip she made to the state, about her views on the Kashmir Pandits. At that time, she said that the Pandits were not a part of the agenda of the group that made the visit!).

I am enclosing a copy of a 'review' about a book on Kashmir, which puts a perspective different from all that has been published in your issue. With respect to the charges of human rights violation in Kashmir, in his book, "Crescent over Kashmir", (Rupa & Co., 1993), Shri Anil Maheshwari says: "The report - generally known as the Verghese Committee Report - stated

in its findings that reports of human rights excesses against the Indian Army in Kashmir have been either grossly exaggerated or invented. It added that some excesses did occur, but these have been inquired into and action taken against those found guilty" (p.144). The book also deals with how the media has deliberately glamourised the terrorists in Kashmir.

One would like to see a more balanced view, coming from a magazine which calls itself *Freedom First*.

Ashok Chowgule, Mumbai.

Two Wrongs Do Not Make a Right

The humanitarian initiative (of which I, Teesta Setalvad was a part), that visited Kashmir in June 1995 had a specific brief: to study, and then assess, the state of educational, health, legal and other services within the Valley in the context of a complete paralysis within civil society.

Unfortunately, there is a poor tradition of non-governmental initiatives tackling developmental issues in the State. Unlike Punjab, the peculiarly "sensitive" nature of the Kashmir problem has successfully warded off any interventions from the rest of India. At the height of the terrorist and State-sponsored violence in the Punjab, strong

links with the rest of the country remained, but quite apart from human rights' groups that have highlighted violations with J&K, no political groups, NGOs, street theatre activists etc. (unlike Punjab) ever visited the state.

It was within this framework and background that this team visited Kashmir and submitted its report. It assessed the extent of the breakdown and suggested, in its report, linkages that could be made with the rest of India. It was also in this context that I made my public presentation later.

Members of this team, including myself, were *not* in the context of this visit, asked to look at either the human

rights violations by the Indian establishment or the plight of the Kashmiri *pandits*, however, sad a reflection on Indian democracy *both* situations are. It is the *sangh parivar* and its valiant spokesmen who have reduced any issue of gross human rights violations, or infringement of a minority's right to life and property in any part of the country - the milestone for a healthy democracy - to a cheap tit-for-tat argument. Two wrongs do not make a right. And when it comes to attacks on life and property, one wrong can *never* be worse than another.

Unfortunately it is Mr. Chowgule and those like him who have resisted

any wholistic solution to the Kashmir problem denied the secular reality of the state's history and indulged in the wholesale promotion of communal segregation within the state as a solution.

So my answer to Mr. Chowgule is: yes, the whole issue of the plight of Kashmiri pandits is very important but it can never be pivotal and will defy any solution if a humane solution to

the entire situation in J&K (and this, in my opinion, includes POK) is not sincerely attempted.

Teesta Setalvad, Mumbai.

Nationalism, Secularism, Communalism

While reviewing Mr. Sarto Esteves' book entitled "Nationalism, Secularism and Communalism", it would appear that Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza was obsessed with the BJP rather than with the contents of the book.

All the publications mentioned in the review to establish the credentials, rather secular credentials of Mr. Esteves are propagating only Christianity and as such, how does the *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* fits into Mr. Esteves' scheme of secularism?

Granted that the BJP is an upper caste composition, what are we to infer about the so called casteless composition of the Christians if *The Examiner* in its editorial under the heading "Matters of Concern" (18.6.94) says: "The majority of Catholics in India have been poor, and have been kept at a distance by their better-off co-religionists since a few years ago, they have been designated as Dalits, thus emphasising and perpetuating a shameful caste

distinction ... They are considered as members of an inferior Church ..."

I am certainly not gloating over the fact that Christianity has failed to combat the caste-system but the point is that the BJP too, like the enlightened readers of *The Examiner*, are aware of the problem and trying to do away with the system. The RSS is also doing this in their quiet manner, but unfortunately, what they are doing cannot make it to the high intellectual caste journal like *Freedom First*.

Freedom First advocates freedom of expression, but *The Examiner* is not in favour of unfettered freedom. In its March 30, 1996 issue, certain guidelines for handling the media are given, which in essence emphasises that in controversial issues, permission of the high command 'Catholic Communication Centre' should be sought. In contrast, Hindus have no such high commands and even if one is set by any organisation, many will not listen.

It will be interesting to know the views of Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza and Mr. Esteves on an official publication of the Catholic Church published in 1956 called "Catholic Dharma Ka Pracharak", which advises that "to gain access to non-Christian households, the preacher should know something of medicine. He will then be sought after whenever there is some illness in the house. Once there, he should try to prevail upon the parents that he should be allowed to baptize the child as the baptism will aid the child's recovery." And here we have a committed and proud Christian blaming BJP for misleading illiterate masses.

If the majority of Hindus believe in equality of all religions, why are so many missionaries wasting their time in India. They should go to Pakistan and Bangladesh and preach the gospel truth which should be easier because Islam recognises the early prophets of Christianity.

Anita Chavan, Virar.

Siberia in my soul

A year has passed and I am one year older, but the new year has brought no promise nor hope of freedom. Exile has no limits: how long shall I spend the life of a stranger in a foreign land? I see no reason to live in hope of tomorrow.

If someone gave me a single wish, I would answer without a thought: I want to go back to my homeland, Bangladesh. So many years have passed since I left my home. So many years since I last looked on her beautiful face. Sometimes I think I'll go crazy. To those who judge me from outside, I should be happy, content. I don't have to worry about food, clothes and shelter like most of the people back home. I don't have to run for my life any more. There is no *fatwa* nor demonstrations against me. And no spontaneous flow of writing in my life any more.

There are so many caring, friendly people around me here. But still I cannot say I am happy. I've been uprooted from the very soil where I was born and grew up to be myself. Europe: 'the land of dreams' for so many. But what am I here? A rootless person in this alien soil, no sense of belonging. Just another plastic plant in a painted pot. No flowers bloom, even the buds wither away long before their time.

Deep in my soul I still have the urge to create, once more to bring forth the flowers. I want to write again. But for the last year, I could write nothing but poems. Poems born from the tears and sighs of my depressed soul. I could describe only my cravings to be a bird and fly back to my beloved Bangladesh. I remember how, in winter, birds from cold, distant lands like Siberia would make their long flight to Bangladesh in search of warmth and sunlight. I too was caught in the wintry coldness of imprisonment in my country when the *fatwa* was announced against me, when they put a price on my head. It was Europe that gave me shelter and saved my life. I can never forget its warm generosity.

But still my heart craves to return. To start my life as a writer again in my old familiar surroundings, among my own people. To sit behind my old writing desk, pen in hand once more. Will Bangladesh remain my eternal Siberia?

TASLIMA NASRIN is a doctor and writer from Bangladesh. Following death threats against her by Muslim extremists accusing her of blasphemy and 'conspiracy against Islam' and the banning in July 1993 by the Bangladesh authorities of her novel *Lajja* (Shame), she was forced to leave her country.

Courtesy: *Index on Censorship*, 2/1996.

A TRIBUTE TO
THE FOUNDER OF *FREEDOM FIRST*



On November 20, 1995, Mr. Minoo Masani, member of the Constituent Assembly, a Parliamentarian par excellence and a doyen of the Liberal Movement in India, completed 90 years of age.

To mark the occasion, *Freedom First*, founded by him, has published a special number entitled *Minoo Masani - 90* as its tribute to his contribution to India's public life.

The special number contains major writings by him in the last 50 years, beginning with extracts from *Our India*, the book that was a runaway success; his rejection of socialism as back as the late 1940s; highlights from some of his speeches in the Lok Sabha in the 1960s; articles of a seminal nature written by him tackling basic issues facing the country and ending with extracts from his last book *We Indians* which, in a way, is a sequel to *Our India*.

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A Requiem for the Ideal Banker

Eknaath Nagarkar

There is no disputing the fact that the nationalisation of Banks was a big mistake.

I am one of those bank employees who vociferously demanded the nationalisation of banks during late 'sixties. Inspired by Marx and thoroughly brainwashed by our trade union leaders, we were thrilled when major banks were nationalised. The fact that veteran politicians like Morarji Desai were opposed to the idea seemed to add further charm to this development. Today, however, there is no disputing the fact that the nationalisation of banks was a big mistake. The very fact, that the same party has mooted the idea of 'privatisation of banks' is an admission of this mistake, although one cannot expect them to say so in as many words.

When this much awaited development took place, senior bank executives were taken by surprise. At this stage, new entrants were clearly at an advantage. They had only to learn, whereas, the experienced ones had not only to learn a great deal, but simultaneously to un-learn quite a bit as well. Old values had to be quickly replaced by new ones and in many matters, a virtual U-turn had to be executed. Whereas these executives were conservative by nature (otherwise their talent would never have been identified and recognised by earlier managements, the changed situation not only demanded that they shed their 'conservatism', but also persuade and motivate their subordinates to do so likewise. The latter was easier to accomplish, after all a few well rehearsed speeches and lucidly drafted circulars were all that was necessary for this. But then, the former, viz. changing their own attitude was indeed more easily professed than practiced. This aspect reflected in their actions and in their decision-making, which effectively confused their subordinates.

While the (ideal) banker we dreamt of loomed large on the horizon, forever keeping the same distance (as in a April-June 1996

magnificent mirage), a series of measures taken by the Government resulted in the creation of a system of political appointees as Chairmen of the various nationalised banks, to do their bidding. These Chairmen, who had not grown with the institution they were heading, and owing loyalty to their political bosses started setting stiffer and stiffer targets for their juniors and embarked on a plan of indiscriminately opening branches with utter disregard to business potential or availability of suitable manpower. These newly opened branches, often without basic amenities, were called upon to disburse loans under various 'Poverty Alleviation Schemes' conceived by the party in power.

A new cult developed in which progress began to be measured in terms of Branches opened and loans disbursed. Soon, senior executives accountable to the Chairman, devised various methods to hoodwink 'politicians' by resorting to misreporting. This they accomplished by verbally telling those working under them to exaggerate figures by reporting the same loan under different heads! In this charade, both the parties concerned knew and appreciated each other's position. Meanwhile, the 'party in power', with an eye on the vote bank, started looting the Banks in the name of 'Loan Melas'. More than the amounts actually lost by Banks in this manner, the campaigning and publicity that preceded these 'Melas' had a demoralising effect on the minds of small borrowers and this turned out to be disastrous.

It is interesting to see how attitudes have changed over the last 25 years. Whereas the success of a Bank manager necessarily depended on the soundness of advances recommended and/or sanctioned by him, today the emphasis has shifted from soundness of the advance/s to paper work that has gone into them.

Whereas a bad advance with good paper work is tolerated, a good advance with inadequacies observed in paper work is considered intolerable. Needless to mention, a corrupt Manager, almost always is good at paper work. Just as a murderer would not like to leave behind any trace of evidence of his foul deed that could lead to his arrest, so too a guilty person, would not like to leave any procedural formality incomplete, lest he be caught. The history of various banks is replete with instances of honest managers being penalised and corrupt managers getting out of turn promotions. Such instances occurring at regular intervals prompted the shrewd and ambitious ones to quickly adapt themselves to the changed environment. This yielded results as such persons' ascent of the hierarchal ladder was rapid. Today a bank manager is concerned about his own job security. Earlier, this was not the case. The banker would give individual attention to his borrowers and employ his 'judgement'. Today 'judgement' has no value at all. This has more or less been replaced by 'norms'. Is this what we had hoped for in a banker, when we were demanding the nationalisation of banks? I wonder.

With nationalisation, one expected more success stories like 'Lijjat Papad' and 'Lakhani Shoes', where an entrepreneur has all the attributes required of him for success, except money, which the banks could, always provide. One expected the banker to change his attitude from that of a 'lender' to that of a 'financial partner'. Where the borrower is in need of funds, one expected the manager to stretch himself even beyond his delegated powers, to assist a genuine entrepreneur.

When 'rules' are implemented in a government agency or a nationalised bank, we do so, going strictly by the word, almost always ignoring the spirit

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behind 'directives'. For instance, banks generally consider working capital limits in the light of the Tandon Committee Norms. But we completely ignore what Tandon himself says in the preamble. He states that in his detailed study conducted over two years, he noticed that most of the government undertakings like BHEL, BEML and BEL were not meeting their commitments on time. He suggested that government should initiate immediate remedial steps to ensure that such public sector enterprises meet their commitments on time. He warned that unless this was done, any attempt to rigidly go by the 'norms' could strangle the small scale units.

Obviously, the government has paid little attention to this warning, because even today, the small borrower often comes to grief. In such circumstances, the bank manager has to take spot decisions or else the borrower could perish. If the borrower is unable to pay staff salaries on time, because of huge outstandings, his banker must allow him to overdraw. A reference to higher-ups necessarily entails delay and in these matters, justice delayed is justice denied. Even in circumstances such as these, senior executives have come down heavily on the managers simply on the grounds that he has 'exceeded his authority'.

Though it is over 18 years since the Tandon Committee Norms came into effect, to this day, government is yet to take remedial steps as suggested by the Committee. Why?

When I was designated as manager of a branch of a nationalised bank in Karnataka in 1982, I had the opportunity to put into practice my ideas of what a banker ought to do. In the two years I was in that branch, the progress achieved was unprecedented. There was an impressive growth in 'profitability' as also 'business-mix'. Even so, I was unceremoniously removed and transferred to another branch in an undesignated capacity. Why? I had financed a newly opened DC-Motor manufacturing unit. Although the amount of facility granted was well within my powers, the purpose for which the finance was given was outside the scope of any scheme of nationalised bank (at that time), viz., 'Manufacture of prototypes'.

At the Regional Office level, everyone was convinced with regard to the technical feasibility and the economic viability and all other aspects of the project. The proponent's technical competence was exceptionally good. The amount required by him was well within my delegated powers. The problem, however, was the purpose, as stated earlier. As Banker, I was convinced beyond doubt that due to the peculiar nature of his line of activity, there was certainly need to finance this requirement. I put the promoters through a detailed interview, and realising that his only area of weakness was finance management, I arranged for a capable Chartered Accountant friend to advise him. In short, the decision was a well-

considered one.

Even so, I was axed, and when I demanded to know from my Regional Manager what was my sin, his reply was, "Mr. Nagarkar, you are a bloody fool! You are yet to adjust and adapt yourself to the changed set-up. Today, nobody is interested to know whether the bank's funds are safe or not. What is important, is whether the paper work is okay, 'norms' have been followed and whether you have exercised powers within your limit. In this case, you have exceeded your authority, as manufacture of prototypes is not an approved purpose and is outside the scope of our schemes.

Inspired words these! Little did we know at that time, that a 'scheme' was indeed on the anvil to make finance available for prototypes, and that too, on concessional terms! Of the six areas where an expert committee (appointed at the behest of RBI) identified the need for extending such finance, DC-Motor manufacturing was one! Of course, it took another three or four years for the scheme to come into force. The fact that the unit I enabled set itself up in business happens to be a 'success story' of that Branch and its annual turnover is over Rs.10 crores is another matter. But the manager who enabled it to happen, had to pay the price.

What prompted me share this experience with *Freedom First* readers is a recent Supreme Court ruling reversing a lower court verdict in the matter of a dismissed employee of a Bank. I do not have full details of the actual case, but what saddened me was the latter part of the Supreme Court verdict which says that even where the bank's funds are safe, the banker who exceeded his 'authority' should be punished. This coming from the highest authority of the nation, beyond which there is no appeal, has clearly driven the last nail in the coffin of managerial initiative. The judgement buried the banker we dreamt of. I write this as my epitaph for the ideal banker who has had to die even before he could assume form and substance.

MR. EKNAATH NAGARKAR is a bank manager, who took premature retirement.

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Replace the GDP

Jonathan Rowe

Readers will recall Mr. J. B. D'Souza's article, "Delusions of Progress" (Freedom First No. 428) where he discussed the basic deficiencies of India's GDP. By a coincidence, around the same time, The Washington Monthly carried the following article expressing an almost similar view on the deficiencies of the GDP in the USA! - Ed.

Adam Smith said that the final measure of an economy is the well-being of the people. Yet this is the one question that the policy establishment never asks. The government studies the supposed means to that end in exacting detail. It can tell us how many televisions we buy, how much money the drug or record industry invests, practically down to the last penny.

But nobody bothers to ask whether such means actually bring about the desired end. Economists simply assume it, and this assumption is the implicit baseline of just about every policy debate in Washington. More consumption or investment will bring about more well-being, regardless of what that consumption and investment consist of and the actual impact on people's lives.

The result has been a growing chasm between the way the policy establishment measures the economy and the way Americans actually experience it. The experts keep saying the economy is up; Americans experience it as down. Economist Robert Lucas, the Nobel laureate, says the economy is in "excellent shape." Ask your neighbours about that.

Like the former Soviet rulers, America's policy establishment dismisses such skepticism of official economics as a sign of psychological disorder. You are spending more money, folks, they say; what possibly could be troubling you? Alan Greenspan, the Federal Reserve Board chairman, has scratched his head publicly over the "extraordinarily deep-rooted foreboding about the (economic) outlook." Yet just maybe the people are on to something. Until our politi-

cians cast off their archaic assumptions about well-being and what it helps bring about, their efforts to make things better will continue to make them worse.

A good place to start would be the official gauge of economic progress, the Gross Domestic Product. The GDP is accepted as the main measure of economic policy and performance. Yet it is built upon several stunning fallacies.

The first is the assumption that everything produced and sold is a "good" by definition; more production and buying automatically equal more economic well-being. The result is a Mad Hatter's accounting system that adds but can't subtract. Car wrecks, divorces, disease, crime - social and environmental breakdowns of all kinds - get tallied in Washington as economic growth, simply because they cost money.

What Americans experience as bad, in other words, the experts count as good. Environmental breakdown gets counted as a double or triple gain. The factory pollutes the water. People buy bottled water to replace the questionable stuff from the tap. The GDP goes up some more. People contract cancers or other

diseases from the toxic chemicals that are emitted: Medical bills makes the GDP go up again. And on and on. It is on this crazy basis that economists say environmental protection must come at the expense of the economy."

A second assumption is more subtle and insidious. The GDP includes only the part of the economy that is transacted through money. The conventional economic mind can grasp only that which has a price. This leaves out entirely the vital economic functions of households, communities, and the natural habitat. So the more these fall apart, and monetized products and services take their places, the better the experts say the economy is doing.

Child care takes the place of parents. McDonald's displaces the kitchen table. Air purifying devices take the place of the natural purifying functions of trees. More money changes



hands, so the economists cheer - even though the economy Americans actually experience is going to hell.

This kind of thinking governs the policy establishment in Washington. It is built into the cost benefit analyses that increasingly determine the fate of proposals of all kinds, (except certain ones that Republicans favor, such as curbs on abortion and the B-2 bomber.) Yet it is a relic of another era, when pedal-to-the-floor production was the overriding national goal. Today the economic problem is much more complex, and it goes much deeper than the two-tier economy and declining wages in the middle. Increasingly, Americans must contend with the new burdens that the economy (not just government) places on people in the name of economic growth.

The nation desperately needs new ways to measure economic progress, ones that reflect the actual experience of Americans rather than the brain-dead assumptions of conventional economics. It needs to distinguish costs from benefits, progress from regress; and it must start to value the functions of households, communities, and the natural habitat that are inherently beyond price. America has to gauge the actual impact of the economy on human well-being, instead of just the amount of stuff produced and consumed.

Such measures would be a truth serum to the economic debate. No longer could Bob Dole blast gangsta rap one day and call for increased GDP the next, when sales of gangsta rap are part of the GDP.

Put another way, politicians and pundits would have to stop hiding behind abstractions like "investment" and "growth." They would have to name what they are actually talking about. Investment in what? Growth of what? Casinos or apple orchards? This in turn would diminish the role of the purveyors of these abstractions - namely, economists - in the national debate. To ask questions of quality instead of just quantity, values instead of just price, would open the door to

a much larger range of disciplines and concerns.

One particular issue that would change radically is work. Work occupies an exceedingly odd place in the nation's policy debates. Politicians extol it continually. Yet they listen to an economic establishment which regards work as "disutility," a loathsome thing which people do only to gain the wherewithal to consume. They view the destruction of work - called "productivity" - as an unquestionable good. They rig the tax system to reward "investment," which can eliminate work, instead of rewarding work itself and the creation of it. (Today the Republicans want to shift the entire tax burden onto work, through a misnamed "flat tax" that includes a gaping exemption for unearned income.)

This view is obsolete. Work is much more than just a way to acquire money for consumption. It has value in itself. It provides a daily setting for social interaction, a sense of competence and achievement, and the opportunity to feel useful and needed. Some 70 percent of big lottery winners choose to keep working, as do most executives long after they have made enough to retire comfortably.

In other words, work today is more a good than many of the things economists call "goods." Increasingly, people need it more than they need the stuff that work enables them to buy. Yet the policy establishment continues to applaud its destruction (in the name of efficiency); and the GDP counts the production of stuff rather than the production of work, which people need more. A new measure of progress would include work as a good and its destruction as a bad. This would alter the nation's policy debate, from taxes on down, in a radical and healthful way.

MR. JONATHAN ROWE is a policy director of Redefining Progress, an organization based in San Francisco.

COURTESY: *The Washington Monthly*, January/February 1996.

India's Misadventure In Sri Lanka

Ever since the eruption of the ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, our policy towards Sri Lanka has been wrong and disastrous.

First, we trained and armed the Sri Lanka Tamil terrorists who had sought refuge in India. This was in total violation of our well-known stand on terrorism and our philosophy of *Panchashila*.

We then sent the Indian Peace-Keeping Force to Sri Lanka, which was a Himalayan blunder. Our intervention in the domestic affairs of Sri Lanka was uncalled for.

Our country would like to know who advised the late Rajiv Gandhi to send our army to Sri Lanka. He would not have taken a unilateral decision all by himself.

According to an inquiry going on in Colombo, Sri Lanka supplied arms to the Tamil terrorists to fight the Indian Peace Keeping Force! At one stage, both the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil terrorists joined to fight our army in Sri Lanka!

If neither the Sri Lankan government nor the Tamil terrorists nor the people of Sri Lanka wanted our army to interfere in their domestic quarrel, who invited us there?

Thousands of our soldiers were killed and injured in somebody else's war. These poor soldiers died unsung and unwept. We earned the enmity of both the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and in the process, lost the goodwill of all concerned in Sri Lanka. Poor Rajiv Gandhi lost his life because of our disastrous misadventure in Sri Lanka.

We lost heavily in terms of money and materials, and above all, thousands of precious lives. We have paid a heavy price for our uncalled for intervention in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Our next government should institute a judicial probe into our misadventure in Sri Lanka.

S. S. Bankeshwar

In Praise of Intolerance

Madhava Ashish

The point of all this in the present context is whether we, the mass of non-government citizens whose over-tolerant votes have kept a majority of criminals in power for far too long, should continue to tolerate the abuses of power

There are at least three forms of intolerance we should be concerned about. Firstly, there is the intolerance we find in the average citizen, an intolerance that seems to stem from the egotism of the immature man who has yet to learn that the world seldom conforms to his expectations. This is the intolerance which manifests in the petty tyrant, as we find in the home, in the office, in the administration, and in Parliament. These are the secret autocrats who would like to pass laws and make rules which would turn us into obedient automata. They are the last to understand that we, the people, are individuals and intelligent ones at that. We insist on our being tolerated.

Then there is the sort of intolerance which is bothering everyone nowadays, namely, the growing intolerance of one community for another. The population increase with its associated exacerbation of competition for ever scarcer jobs and other scarce resources can obviously be blamed, but we have to look further to the politicians who, by sins of commission and omission, allowed the increase to happen because they saw personal advantages in it. And now it seems that the situation is sought to be exploited by the tiny percentage of the highly influential upper castes who, fear of being swamped by the aggressive uprush of 'liberated' lower castes and tribals who would like to have their turn at wielding power and gaining their own place in the sun. They are trading on an intolerance for other communities which they have assiduously cultivated over the centuries. The present gambit appears to be to unite the largely uncommitted masses under their leadership by raising the bogey of the alien within our country.

More attention to better education, especially for the huge rural population, together with unrestricted dissemination of information so that misinformation about such things as the non-Hindu birth rate could be countered, would reduce this threat to a few sleazy figures gesticulating on the sidelines.

This brings one directly to the third type of intolerance which I believe to be the most important of the lot at the present juncture. It is still so rare in India that our politicians need have no fear of it - yet. It is an intolerance of evil which is also called righteous indignation. It is rare in India because the old feudal society, with its lack of social mobility and its fixed social roles, did not encourage the free criticism of the powerful by the weak. And when foreign rulers occupied the positions of power, criticism was even less agreeable. It was wiser to practise tolerance.

The point of all this in the present context is whether we, the mass of non-government citizens whose over-tolerant votes have kept a majority of criminals in power for far too long, should continue to tolerate the abuses of power, the corruption, the misuse of public funds (squeezed out of us by multiple taxation paid by the poorest of us, namely, excise charged upon excise and sales tax charged upon the lot). Is it too un-Indian for us to be angry at the way we have been fooled and exploited by a mafia-like gang of mutual back-scratchers? Are we still so deeply conditioned by our past that we are incapable of taking action against anyone in the hallowed position of ruler?

And in these days of burgeoning

greed we must be clear that our intolerance of abuse is not coloured by jealousy of the spending power and the family fortunes enjoyed by the mafia network. Is our intolerance based on anything more sound than our exclusion from a share in the thieves' booty and a wish to enjoy all the goodies they enjoy? Does our resentment spring only from that, or do we genuinely feel that something far more important than greed for personal gain is involved? Do we, in fact, feel that there are eternally valid standards of human behaviour which should be controlling both us and the people who are occupying the seats of power?

Putting aside the ego's fear of annihilation, does it matter whether India survives its degenerative disease or succumbs to it? What is there to lose? An ancient culture rotten with age. A social tradition that no-one believes in: a system that was so hide-bound, so lacking in the social mobility that encourages innovation, invention and aspiration, that all the excitement of living was repressed and people cultivated tolerance because there was nothing to be gained from complaints. Indeed, one is entitled to wonder whether the horrors of the partition riots and of the 1984 massacres were in fact eruptions of all the desires and frustrations repressed by the cultivation of tolerance. In a social order that permits no growth, buried desires grow bitter and burst out violently.

Is that all? What of the new India now being formed by the younger generations who rebelled against convention and broke out into the larger world? What an amazing brightening of the Indian mind has taken place. Is that not worth preserving?

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In terms of human evolution, the old order had to pass in order to allow the growth of the new. Much could be preserved, but how little could grow in the shadow of such teachings as: 'Better one's own *dharma* even though lacking merit than the *dharma* of another well performed'. What has been preserved - such concepts as that of the unity of all being - is of enormous importance both to India and to the world at large. There is a perception of a transcendental non-physical reality which seems to be lacking from the understanding of most western spiritual schools yet is a common place to even the illiterate Indian peasant.

On the other hand, no Indian ever wrote 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time'. No Indian school ever taught that the *jivatma* evolves in the same way that any other human faculty evolves from potentiality to actuality, for there has been overmuch emphasis on the illusory nature of phenomena. Yet these affirmations of the beauty and meaningfulness of existence are crucial concepts for a people who are moving out of the static sterility of fixed and unalterable social roles, and into the social mobility which goes with the opportunities of education and a world of changing laws and changing customs.

When trying to steer our way through the uncertainties of our times, how can we tolerate the people who say and practise 'It is not in the interests of the politician either to educate the people or to raise their economic status.' Compare this with 'The right to know can become a legally enforceable right only when individuals are educated enough to know what to know and from whom.' (The Right to Know, S. P. Sathe, Fifth Campus Law Centre Endowment Lectures, 1991).

Therefore I write in praise of an intolerance which is directed against the corrupt usurpation of power, against the use of lies to keep the peoples of India ignorant of the abuses of power, and against the misuse of power to protect offenders from the legal consequences of their offences.

COURTESY: *Seminar*, November, 1995.

April-June 1996

A Plea to the President of India

In his Republic Day broadcast, President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma has echoed the anguished cry of the common people for the rule of law and public morality. He will become the darling of the masses by using the authority and prestige of the presidential office towards this end, and inspire the ordinary citizens and honest officers to put in their own efforts.

(1) Politics has become an insurance for criminal elements against income tax investigation. A reported oral edict to I.T. officers not to probe into affairs of politicians is the cause of this mischief. The President should exert his moral authority to get the Government declare that no such edict will stand in the way of I.T. investigation.

(2) State governments on a spending spree indulge in unauthorised overdrafts with the RBI. Unfortunately, these are regularised every June end by the Union Government by converting them into loans. The President should advise the Union government to desist from this practice, so that the State governments' cheques will bounce. This opens the constitutional way for removal of such governments from power.

(3) State governments which support or call for *bandhs*, paralysing economic life, are subverting the Constitution which is meant to ensure an orderly and civilised way for citizens to carry on their life. A State-sponsored *bandh* is a criminal activity and a direct attack on law abiding citizens, particularly the poorer sections who suffer the greatest hardship. The President should call all Chief Ministers and warn

them that removal of their state governments would be advised if they indulge in such activities which undermine the Republic. If State governments are removed under these circumstances, there need be no fear of political fallout because the rank and file of all political parties are reluctant to lose power and thus the opportunity of shaking the pagoda tree.

(4) The governors of states send confidential reports. These reports contain information on Chief Ministers and other politicians. The President can use his moral authority to call the CMs and politicians concerned for a "cup of tea" and give a plateful of advice on proper behaviour along with the tea. Such informal counselling and admonition are very effective.

(5) The President should exercise his prerogative of using AIR and Doordarshan and address the nation every month on his personal thoughts on the state of the nation, and thus infuse the citizens with courage by showing that the highest authority is deeply concerned with their welfare.

M. R. Pai

The measure which the whole world treasures

"At the time of marriage, Shani should be in the fifth house and, PSPO in the groom's house."



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Over
More Area



Less Electricity
Consumption



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What Socialism Ought Not To Be

"A society in which someone who has committed no crime sits at home waiting for the police. A society in which it is a crime to be the brother, sister, son or wife of a criminal. A society in which a man is unfortunate if he says what he thinks, and unhappy if he does not say it. A society in which a man lives better because he has no opinion whatever. A society in which a man is unfortunate because he is a Jew and another fortunate because he is not one. A state whose soldiers occupy the territory of another country to prevent the incursion of other soldiers. A state where everyone does better who praises the leader of that state. A state in which a man can be condemned without trial. A state which does not allow everyone to travel abroad. A

state in which there are more spies than nurses and more people in prison than in hospitals. A state in which officials multiply faster than workers. A state whose neighbours curse geography. A state which builds excellent jet aircrafts and bad shoes. A state in which a majority of the people seek God only as a comfort in their misery. A state in which prizes are distributed to the wrong authors, a state which knows more about painting than do the painters. A state in which philosophers and writers always say the same as the generals and ministers, but always after them. A state in which maps of the streets of its towns are a state secret. A state in which the results of elections are always foreseeable. A state in which a whole population is moved against its will from one place

to another. A state in which the workers have no influence on the government. A state which believes that it alone can save mankind. A state in which historians are the servants of politicians. A state whose citizens may not read the greatest works of contemporary literature or hear the greatest works of contemporary music. A state which determines who may criticise it and how it may be criticised. A state in which one must say every day the contrary of what one said the day before, and believe that it is the same. A state which does not like its citizens to read old newspapers."

Leszek Kolakowski in his '*Polish Manifesto*', quoted by Peter Sager.

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Nigeria:

Collapse of the Banking System

George B. N. Ayittey

Nigeria is a truculent African tragedy. With immense oil wealth, it was poised to become Africa's answer to Asia's newly industrialising countries. But Africa's great hope transformed itself into Africa's great disappointment. Its real income per capita today - about \$250 - is nearly the same as it was when Nigeria became independent in 1960. Its banking system is in shambles, and capital flight throttles any hope of early economic recovery.

In 1994, Nigeria had 121 commercial and merchant banks. The number of new banks exploded after the government of General Ibrahim Babangida deregulated the banking system in 1986. A decade earlier, the country had only 38 banks (27 commercial and 11 merchant). Despite its rapid growth, however, the banking system remains weak and subject to inconsistent, irresponsible government dictates.

Three factors underpin Nigeria's banking crisis. The first has been a reckless government accountable to no one. The second has been the regime's erratic monetary-policy management that added more confusion and panic than calm during turbulent times. The third factor is a nearly complete breakdown of the rule of law, which has spawned a culture of corruption that tolerates even egregious scams.

Between 1970 and the early 1980s, the Nigerian government went on a spending spree as over \$100 billion in oil money flowed into its coffers. To maintain the consumption binge after oil prices collapsed in 1981, the country's leaders borrowed heavily abroad, injecting substantial liquidity into the economy. Nigeria's foreign debt quadrupled from \$9 billion in 1980 to \$36 billion in 1990.

With external sources of credit

drying up, Nigeria's military government also resorted to heavy domestic borrowing to finance their profligacy, expanding the money supply dramatically. In 1974, for example, the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) loans to the government constituted less than 1% of the bank's loan portfolio. By 1986, they had reached 63%. Lax monetary policy has remained a constant problem and according to Ralph Osayameh, president of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, "The cause of that is government expenditure".

Control of government expenditure has been non-existent. For example, soon after Gen. Babangida signed a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) agreement with the IMF in 1986 to rein in extra-budgetary spending and defense outlays, he began a steady increase in military spending. In July 1992, for example, his regime took delivery of 12 Czechoslovak training jets in a secret deal believed to be a part of a larger order worth more than \$90 million. Earlier in 1992, Nigeria purchased 80 British tanks, worth more than \$225 million.

Uncontrolled government spending coincided with a banking crisis. Finding it difficult to attract deposits or borrowers, newly-established banks sank their funds into the highly speculative foreign exchange market and other risky ventures that promised fantastic rates of return. Unfortunately, the gambles did not always pay off. In November 1992, the CBN declared 46 banks insolvent due to "huge debts that are doubtful or bad, fraud and forgeries, boardroom quarrels and inept management".

According to *African Business*, "by September 1, 1993, literally all the banks were unable to meet their obligations

to customers. Depositors were in most cases not allowed to withdraw amounts in excess of N1,000 (in some cases, even less), irrespective of their credit balances". The banking system had in effect collapsed.

The Culture of Corruption

A general breakdown of the rule of law permitted corruption to grow in Nigeria. Virtually every agency in the public sector was affected. For example, in late 1990, the secretary to the federal military government announced, after a debt verification exercise, that close to \$5 billion of Nigeria's foreign debt was "fraudulent and spurious".

Fraud and corruption began to threaten the integrity of the banking system in the mid 1980s. The first blow to the banking system came in May 1984 when the military government of Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari changed the currency and sealed the country's borders, ostensibly to "catch the big-time hoarders who had tucked money away overseas". Central bank officials argued that the change was necessary to demonetize the N2 billion corrupt politicians had illegally acquired and taken outside the country. However, corrupt politicians take the booty out in foreign currency, not in naira.

When Nigerians deposited their old currency to exchange for the new one, persons with deposits of up to N5,000 had to produce their tax clearance certificates of the last three years in order to get permission to withdraw any of their money. The Nigerian public reacted by shunning the banking system and spending their savings on any goods they could find.

Between 1988 and 1990, fraud cases rose 800%. In 1991, for example, a total

of N360.2 million was lost through fraud. Of this, the loss to privately-owned commercial banks was N25.5 million and N28.3 million for merchant banks. The bulk was incurred by state-owned banks. In May 1993, the CBN took over the management of five state-owned banks. Less than a year later, the CBN revoked the operational licenses of four more banks for "total erosion of their capital bases and dissipation of the depositors' funds". But few of the perpetrators were prosecuted as most had fled the country.

Lessons to be Learned

Nigeria's banking crisis offers three major lessons. The first is that government attempts to resolve a financial crisis through a spurious currency reform are bound to fail. The entire banking and monetary system operates on the basis of confidence - in both the currency and the banking system. People will hold a currency if they trust that it will retain its value over months and years. Declaring old currency worthless destroys this confidence. Lopping off zeroes after a bout of hyperinflation is sometimes necessary, but governments must permit all the old currency to be exchanged.

Furthermore, the public will keep its savings in banks only if the safety

and confidentiality of their transactions are preserved. If this guarantee is absent, the public will shun the banking system and capital flight will increase; banks ultimately pay the price of government irresponsibility. Governments should not snoop into people's bank accounts to "catch tax evaders", as was the case in Nigeria.

Second, in Nigeria and many other African countries, massive government deficits financed through money creation have wrecked economies. Central banks must be insulated from governments' fiscal profligacy by granting them real, not nominal, independence as has been the case in Francophone Africa.

Third, a breakdown of the rule of law can corrupt a country's entire monetary and financial system. Criminals must all be prosecuted, regardless of their political status. For this, a strong and independent judicial system is required. Unfortunately, these lessons are unlikely to be heeded in Nigeria.

MR. GEORGE B. N. AYITTEY, a native of Ghana, is associate professor of economics at American University and president of the Free Africa Foundation, both in Washington.

Extracted from his article in *Economic Reform Today*, Number One, 1995.

A Polish Primer on Reform: Privatize, Commercialize, Temporize

The financial restructuring of Poland's SOEs was part of a broader plan to pare back the state's role in the economy. While the country launched its economic reforms intending to privatize much of the state-owned sector, officials have responded to the changing political climate by reconsidering the relationship between ownership patterns and financial restructuring.

For example, over 500 firms have been commercialized (i.e. converted to state-owned joint stock companies). Commercialisation was ostensibly a preparatory step on the path to privatization, but in practice it has been applied as a tool of political patronage. The authorities have created boards of directors for hundreds of firms and then packed them with political allies. The effect has thus been to slow down rather than accelerate the privatisation process.

Additional obstacles have been created by Poland's state treasury, as its role in the application of the financial restructuring law attests. Just as the treasury fell under the law's equality

rule as one creditor among many, it was also required to subordinate its ownership-related liabilities to those of the banks and the other creditors. The legal principle that creditors' rights are superior to shareholders' rights is derived from the legal codes of developed countries, where the rights of these two groups are strictly separated.

Here, the treasury refused to abide by the law. As the SOE's owner, the treasury bears responsibility for the insolvency of many of its own enterprises through negligence and poor management. Although the SOE's creditors will bear the financial burden of the restructuring, the treasury refused to acknowledge the precedence of the creditors' claims.

If the law failed to protect debtors, this position would be easy to understand; but in fact the law protects debtors as well as it may. The treasury's refusal to respect an important aspect of the restructuring law endangers one of its chief goals: to improve the efficiency of the capital allocation in the economy.

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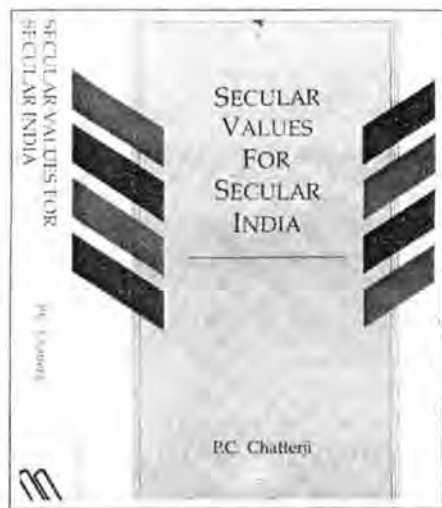
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BOOK REVIEWS

SECULAR VALUES FOR SECULAR INDIA by P. C. Chatterji, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi; 1995; pp.345; Rs.500.



**Reviewed by
Professor V. K. Sinha**

As India lurches towards the twenty first century, our country is in for hard times. In almost every area of human development, we are confronted with almost insuperable problems demanding not only a government which would be stable but one which would be strong enough to take bold and effective measures. And, unfortunately, we are faced precisely with a prospect of an unstable polity.

One of the most severe challenges to the Indian political system is presented by the rise of fundamentalism in our country. It is no consolation to know that fundamentalism has also spawned in various other parts of the world. In India, fundamentalism is not a mere defensive tactic of a minority which perceives itself to be under threat. It is, more ominously, infecting the 'majority' community. The rise of Hindutva forebodes ill for liberal democracy in India.

P. C. Chatterji's *Secular Values for Secular India* is one of the better publications which have appeared in recent years on secularism and communalism. Not being an academi-

cian, Chatterji's book is free from turgid writing which disfigures most publications emanating from our academic grooves. Chatterji, in this second edition of the book, presents a comprehensive analysis of secular values and their incompatibility with the traditions of our major religions - Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism.

In the first chapter, Chatterji gives a brief and succinct account of major communal riots in India after 1960 and identifies various factors which were responsible for them. He lists communal ideology (a prime factor, particularly, in the 1960s), economic rivalry, increasing loss of confidence in administration and its politicisation, particularly its law enforcing agencies, and the growing influence of "goondas" in politics. He also refers to the role of rumour-mongering in aggravating communal tensions. It is true that no single factor can wholly account for communal riots. But it is also true that after every communal riot, divisions between communities widen. Prejudices get reinforced and distrust of the "other" often changes to hatred and contempt. Chatterji has not paid adequate attention to the self-styled leaders of varied communities, in particular of the minorities, who have a vested interest in stoking communal fears and creating a sense of insecurity. Chatterji points to a grave lapse on the part of the Government of India. The practice of giving detailed reports on the number of communal riots, the number of persons killed and injured every year was discontinued after 1983. Apparently, like the figures of employment in India, the dismal facts were becoming too embarrassing for the government.

In the next chapter, Chatterji provides a critical analysis of secularism as expressed by several persons - Ambedkar to Radhakrishnan - in India. Communal parties and groups, for obvious reasons, deny that India is secular. For the Muslim League, secularism in India "is a cloak with which the Indian State hides its true nature

which is that of a Hindu State". On the other, the Hindu communalists argue that "secularism is a subterfuge by which the state seeks to appease the minorities". Chatterji shows that the basic principles underlying the concept of secularism - freedom of conscience, non-discrimination on grounds of religion, neutrality of the state in matters of religion - are denied wholly or partly by the various religious traditions. Dr. Radhakrishnan, probably further added to the confusion by arguing that the "religious impartiality of the Indian State is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious traditions of India..." The present day votaries of Hindutva would welcome this eclectic definition! Chatterji makes a spirited attack on T. N. Madan's well-known essay "Secularism in its Place", wherein he charged secularists of "moral arrogance" attempting to impose a minority "ideology" on the vast majority of the people to whom religion is a total way of life. One suspects that the views of Madan and Ashish Nandy reflect a form of statism which seeks to distinguish itself desperately from what they perceive, as the hegemonic threat of western intellectual traditions.

Chatterji in subsequent chapters underlines the need to demarcate the sphere of religion and limit it to certain specific areas of life. He distinguishes between the area of "autonomy" where an individual is free to believe, profess or practice any body of doctrines and the social area which seeks regulations from the secular state. While belief in dogmas and rituals may fall within the "autonomous" area, code of ethics or morality, which entail inter-personal relationship may need secular or social control. In his chapter on "Secular Values and Social Responsibility" - a fine and comprehensive analysis - Chatterji subjects to analysis, values like tolerance, social justice, economic welfare and equality and conclusively shows that these values to be realised freely and justly in the lives of the

people of a country, would need to be free from any linkage with traditional religions.

Values which promote human development and give scope to the unfolding of human potentialities need to be enforced in the form of human rights. It is a little surprising that Chatterji does not refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which implicitly assumes the values which he cherishes. Religious freedom is a human right but like all rights, it is not absolute. No right can be enforced which infringes upon the rights of others. I have the right to believe that *Manusmriti* is the last word on law, but I certainly do not have the right to impose it upon others who do not share my belief.

Freedom of belief is a value but no particular religious belief is a value unless it can be demonstrated to be universally acceptable. It is for this reason that a ban on cow-slaughter is a gross infringement of human rights. Belief in the sacredness of the cow is a prejudice, not a value, however widely it may be cherished. All religions deny, in some measure or more, gender equality. Yet this belief of "He for God only and she for God in him" can hardly be the ground for social justice however piously and widely it was believed for centuries in the Christian world.

I believe any discourse on secularism should be grounded in the values as expressed in human rights which

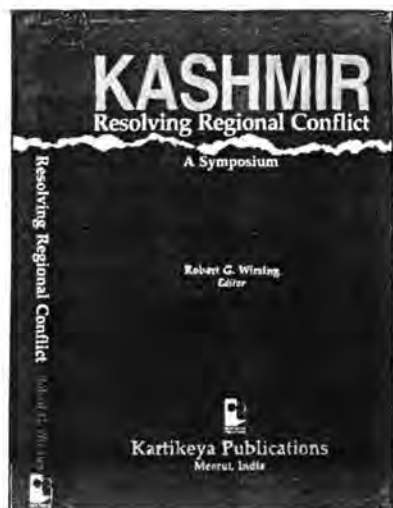
are universally recognised. Any forays into the theological labyrinth presented by Hinduism or Islam, Christianity or Buddhism, is to get oneself entrapped in the arguments which cease to be rational and become emotional emitting more heat than light.

Chatterji's book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of secularism which has acquired an urgency and relevance today. Not all his arguments may be acceptable to his readers. But they would certainly be stimulated to explore further this significant theme. No author can ask for more!

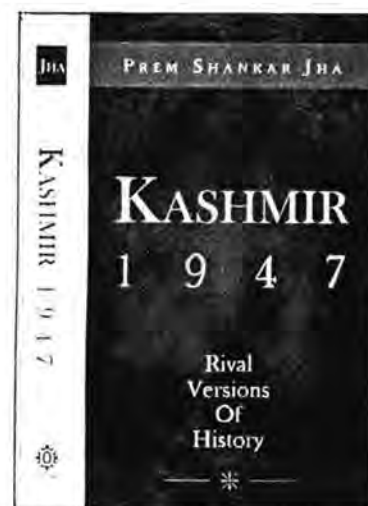
PROFESSOR V. K. SINHA is editor of *The Secularist*.

KASHMIR. RESOLVING REGIONAL CONFLICT: A SYMPOSIUM, edited by Robert G. Wirsing, Karthikeya Publications, Meerut, UP; pp.217; Rs.300.

KASHMIR, 1947; RIVAL VERSIONS OF HISTORY, by Prem Shankar Jha, Oxford University Press, Mumbai; 1996; pp.151/375.



Reviewed by
Maj.Gen. E. D'Souza, PVSM



KASHMIR. RESOLVING REGIONAL CONFLICT: A SYMPOSIUM:

Few realise that the on going conflict in Kashmir will be 50 years old in 1997. Most realists feel that the chances of a settlement are remote. But not so Professor Robert G. Wirsing, a Professor of International Studies at the University of South Carolina, USA. He has the credentials to do so, having authored, *inter alia*, 'Pakistan's Security under Zia, 1977-88'; and 'India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute'. He

is also the editor of *Ethnic Minorities*. Appreciating the need for greater public awareness in the hope that it would result in a lasting conflict resolution, he organised a no-holds barred dialogue involving partisans on both sides of the dispute, at the Centre for Asian Studies of the University of South Carolina. This symposium was attended by 75 invited participants, to hear and respond to a wide spectrum of views presented by eight speakers: two Americans, two Indians, one Pakistani, a

Kashmiri Pandit NRI, a Muslim Kashmiri NRI and a Human Rights activist. This handy little book in hard cover represents a record of not only the presentations, but the ensuing discussions as well following each speaker, for views on how this vexing and debilitating problem could be resolved. As the blurb says 'everything that was said was controversial, with exchanges becoming heated, sometimes angry, but instructive and sometimes constructive'. It is for the reader to

decide the veracity of this claim.

The eight authors of the papers were: James Clad, Asia Pacific Policy Centre, Washington DC, ex-bureau chief of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in New Delhi who has visited Kashmir and who presents the American Perspective-I; Professor of Medicine, Miraj-U-Din Munshi, ex-Srinagar Medical College presenting the Kashmiri Perspective-I, very biased, bigoted and who projects the Indian Army as an Occupation Force bent on genocide of Kashmiri Muslims, equating it with the genocide of the Jews and who claims that the Indian Army flew into Kashmir surreptitiously before the raiders entered the State; Vijay S. Sazawal, National President, Indo-American Kashmir Forum who presented the Kashmiri Perspective-II focussing on the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits and Panum Kashmir, from the very first day of the rape of the Valley by the raiders as a result of which, he says, 'my family was just one cyanide capsule away from self-inflicted death' so that his family could die in dignity; Neelam Deo, Minister (Political), Embassy of India, Washington, who presented the Indian Perspective-I. Focusing on the Instrument of Accession, the UN Resolution, two UNICIP Resolutions and the Shimla Agreement, this presentation drew 14 pages of discussion; An Indian Perspective-II by Prakash Singh, former Director General, Border Security Force which was involved in Kashmir, wherein he spoke on the historical background, the Pakistan case, Pakistan's subversion in Kashmir, human rights, conflict resolution and certain tension reducing measures which would include demilitarisation of the Siachen Glacier, a 'no first use of nuclear weapons' and greater interaction between the two countries in economic and cultural field, Zamir Akram, Counsellor (Political), Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, who gave a Pakistani Perspective in which he traced the analogy of the accession of Junagadh and Hyderabad, questioned the Instrument of Accession, misrule of four decades, the deployment of 600,000 Indian troops, the release of political prisoners as a

political expedient and the need to involve a third party to resolve the issue; Patricia Gossman, Research Associate, Human Rights Watch, Asia, Washington, elaborated on human rights violations, abuses by Indian Troops in Kashmir, lack of transparency by India, Militant abuses, Pakistan's role, and recommending greater transparency and international human rights organisations free access to visit Kashmir; and the last presenter, Professor Joseph E. Schwartzberg, Department of Geography, University of Minnesota, on an American Perspective-II, recommending a Kashmir Autonomous Region (KAR), based on population and area profiles in J&K, supported by maps, sketches and charts, forgetting that the sub-continent had already undergone a trauma of partition in 1947, involving translocation of peoples and redefining of borders, suggesting that if it succeeded in Austria after World War II, why not in Kashmir?

As an old Kashmir hand involved in two of the three wars, and subsequent visits after 1988, when militancy moved into high mode, there were many omissions in this symposium which surprisingly did not emerge in a debate organised by academics. Our Indian representative should have countered the argument about the peoples of Kashmir not being associated with the signing of the Instrument of Accession, by recounting that when Mahajan, the Prime Minister of J&K State, brought the document to Pandit Nehru for approval, the latter was reluctant to do so as he wished to know whether it had the backing of the people of the State. Sheikh Abdullah of the National Conference who was in the next room, heard this and sent a note to Panditji that it did have the support of the people of the State. Munshi says with tongue in cheek that the Indian Army was flown in before the raiders entered the state and did so surreptitiously. This is a patent canard; to commandeer so many Dakota Aircraft was a feat in itself which could not be hidden from the public. Akram keeps on stating that there are 6 lakhs troops in Kashmir, presumably Indian

troops. Those of us who have served there know fully well that after 1949, there were six infantry divisions in J&K; three in the Jammu Sector, one in the Valley, and one in Ladakh, to protect our frontiers and to prevent infiltration and exfiltration. After the three wars, there have been minor adjustments with the setting up of an additional Corps HQ on the south side of the Pir Panjal. This would add up to about 1,00,000 Indian troops for a very difficult border, including Ladakh. After 1988, three more divisions were inducted to handle militancy. Thus, the maximum number of Indian troops could not possibly exceed 1.5 lakhs.

Munshi gives one the impression that Kashmir has been under forcible subjugation since 1949. Personal experience tells us that this is yet another canard or else how could he have been a Professor in Srinagar Medical College? How does one explain that the first information about mass infiltration by the Pakistan Army into J&K was reported by a Kashmiri Muslim shepherd and full co-operation of the people of J&K was given to the army in rounding up these infiltrators. Or how does one explain that the so-called allegedly brutally repressed Kashmiris did not resort to sabotage during the 1971 war against Pakistan in Kashmir? The reviewer can vouch for this fact in the sector of his responsibility, extending from the Chor Panjal Pass through to Haji Pir, Uri, Tangdhar, Tithwal, the Northern Gallies and Sonmarg; in fact, the Kashmir Muslims came out in large numbers to help. Until 1988, human rights abuses was a rarity, never once experienced by this reviewer. Why then did Pakistan escalate the low intensity conflict through active militancy from 1988 onwards. This aspect was not brought out in the symposium. Because Pakistan felt safe in doing so, as it had developed nuclear capability.

The American stance has changed recently. Example? Robin Raphael's claim that the very Instrument of Accession is debatable, and this after 40 years. Professor Wirsing would have done well to have included an academic from the UK, *au fait* with this

problem, to spell out Lord Mountbatten's acceptance of the Instrument of Accession and its validity. The tone of the presentations following this symposium indicates that America is keen on a third party intervention but its credibility is questionable when the American speakers suggest the G-7 group, or Japan, Russia, UK, USA and China. By what stretch of imagination can China be one of the countries when it is in illegal occupation of Aksai Chin in Ladakh? The two Americans brush aside this problem on the plea that this remote area is very thinly populated, but then what about its strategic value to the security of India? Neither does the speaker from Pakistan care to refer to this very real problem.

There can be little doubt that -all the peoples of Kashmir, without exception, must be involved in any settlement, not only the Kashmiri Muslims; that the dialogue must be kept open; that India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri peoples must resolve this issue among themselves without outside mediators; that the conditions of the UN resolu-

tion must be followed, and that there cannot be a KAR!

This publication is well worth acquiring.

KASHMIR, 1947; RIVAL VERSIONS OF HISTORY.

Many do not realise that the vexing Kashmir problem is about to enter its 50th year without any perceptible signs of a rapprochement. It is now a "burning" topic which has been internationalised. Militancy, and the low intensity conflict, aided and abetted by our neighbour, continue. It has now assumed irreversible religious overtones with a vengeance. There are now hopes on the horizon that with a new dispensation in the Lok Sabha, the recently concluded elections to the Lok Sabha, the proposal to conduct assembly elections soon, and the offer by Benazir Bhutto to reopen negotiations through dialogue, this ongoing conflict between India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri peoples will be resolved.

Professor Robert Wirsing's book

views the problem from the perspectives of the USA, India, Pakistan, Kashmir (a Kashmiri Muslim and a NRI Kashmiri Pandit) and a Human Rights activist. Prem Shankar Jha's *Kashmir 1947* covers identical ground from an Indian perspective.

Prem Shankar Jha needs no introduction. He is a journalist of eminence, erstwhile editor of one of the *Times of India's* editions. His investigative journalism becomes clearly manifest in this excellently and exhaustively researched book, an unbiased presentation on this contentious issue, leaving it to the reader to decide the true facts of the accession of Kashmir to India in 1947. As Jha so very rightly cautions, this issue which has generated so much bitterness and frustration, has, over the years, eroded the distinction between scholarship and polemic to the detriment of the former. He is transparently honest in stating, "I can no more claim to be unmoved by the events that are described in this book... Rather than make claims to objectivity, I consider it fairer to readers to spell out the framework of values within which I have studied this sub-

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ject'. He has analysed with surgical precision some of the obviously slanted views of the British scholar, Alastair Lamb who is also extensively quoted in the symposium referred to earlier, and of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), and the Attlee Government.

Though the reviewer is an old Kashmir hand and has been following the trend of events from Day One as it were till today, many of Jha's exposes are a revelation because of the depth of his research and the wide spectrum of sources. His thrust in presenting his views takes the reader step by step to the final chapter, "Myths Exploded, an Enigma Revealed". Among the areas he has covered with such clinical precision are: Two Versions of History; Uprising or Invasion; Accession Under Duress; Signing the Instrument of Accession; the Gurdaspur Award; the Grand Design; and Britain and the Kashmir Question. Among the three appendices are: Statement by Field Marshal Manekshaw which is most revealing, no holds barred, in typical Sam Bahadur style; Letter from General Iskander Mirza to Sir Olaf Caroe; and The Truth of the Partition of the Punjab in August 1947 (the Radcliffe Award).

Jha's style of presentation is indicative of his erudition and professionalism as an eminent journalist. He is easy to read and to understand the trend of his arguments. The reviewer can only speak for himself in revealing that he was so gripped with this book and the exposition of some of the facts, that he went through it in one session, the French Open men's finals notwithstanding! Equally revealing were many of the *dramatis personae*: Maharaja Hari Singh, the Maharani, and Dr. Karan Singh; Jinnah, Chaudhari Ghulam Abbas, Khurshid Ahmed, Khurshid Anwar, Mian Iftikharuddin, Akbar Khan, Liaquat Ali Khan, Iskander Mirza, Nishtar Abdur Rab, Pir of Manki Sharif, and Zafrullah Khan; FM Auchinleck, Generals Roy Bucher, Gracey and Messervy, Air Chief Marshal Elmhurst; FM Sam Manekshaw; General I. P. Sen, Colonel K. C. Katoh; Nehru, Girija Shankar Bajpai, Baldev Singh, Sardar Patel,

Krishna Menon, V. P. Menon, K. P. S. Menon, Thakur Nachint Chand, R. C. Kak, V. D. Iyer, Janak Singh Katoh, Mehr Chand Mahajan, Rajinder Singh, Attlee, Campbell-Johnson, Cranston, Graffey-Smith Lawrence, P. J. Griffiths, H. V. Hodson, Evan Jenkins, Lord Ismay, the biased and pro-Pakistani Francis Mudie, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Alastair Lamb, Lord Listowell, Noel Baker, Pethick Lawrence, Cyril Radcliffe, R. H. G. Rumbold, A. C. B and A. P. J. Symon, Richard Symonds, Lord Wavell, W. F. Webb and Christopher Beaumont. Could there be a more impressive roll of actors in this high drama?

It would appear that the main culprit in this play of manipulating facts is Alastair Lamb. And Jha has done well to expose him with the array of evidence he has unearthed. Perhaps, the two-track policies espoused by Nehru on the one hand who insisted on the condition that Sheikh Abdullah should first be released and inducted into the government, and the far more pragmatic Sardar Patel's view, may have encouraged Lamb to his biased stance. Jha brings this important fact out lucidly. Nehru claims that he took the matter to the UN to avert another war at a critical juncture in history; was he justified in doing so?

On the validity of the accession, the Pakistan Government's stand, ably supported by the British Government, hinges, *inter alia*, on the population profile. The argument goes thus: 77% of the population of J&K is Muslim and only 23% Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist. Therefore, going by the numbers game, Kashmir should have joined Pakistan. What is not stated is that the majority of the Muslim population in Kashmir, especially in the Valley, is of the Sufi tradition and it was this large chunk that supported Shaikh Sahib's National Conference. The claim of Pakistan, again supported by the CRO, that there was genocide of Muslims in the Poonch District is proved to be a mathematical impossibility; in any case, 1/3rd of the Kashmir State Forces was Muslim! Jha cleverly brings out the unassailable fact, based on General Scott's (head of the Kashmir State Forces) reports and other

sources that the communal situation was never what is described by biased individuals in Pakistan and the CRO but is being flaunted as one more reason why the Instrument of Accession had no basis. Much was made of trying to link the Junagadh situation with the accession of J&K to the Indian Union. Jha has conclusively proved that there could never be any such comparison; Junagadh did not have a government as in J&K, and it was almost 100% Hindu. It is proved conclusively that ethnicity and religion have been confused in the case of J&K, the former having relevance.

In its strategic perspective, Britain historically worried about the Russians and their interest in a warm water port, and India. Jha proves convincingly that this concern, more than any other factor, encouraged the British Government to question the Instrument of Accession, its validity and relevance. Whitehall always felt that Kashmir should have acceded to Pakistan. In this game, the British had a good player in Francis Mudie, the Governor whose bias Jha exposes clearly. Such a *coup d'état* of Kashmir acceding to Pakistan was cleverly manoeuvred by Mudie, Liaquat Ali and the British Foreign Office.

Another point which Jha details is the Gurdaspur corridor which perhaps may have escaped the notice of many of us. The three tehsils of Gurdaspur District with a slight Muslim majority were not given to Pakistan for the simple reason that as Maharaja Hari Singh had made known his intention not to join Pakistan, a theocratic State, Mountbatten felt that there should be a land corridor from Pathankot to Jammu via Kathua, as the main road for supplies, etc. from Rawalpindi could be blocked. Attempts were made to link this issue to three tehsils of Ferozepore District which controlled the Hussainwala Headworks, important to the erstwhile State of Bikaner. How this was managed is brought out well by Jha to the extent that he has reproduced Christopher Beaumont's testimony of the "Truth of the Partition of the Punjab", Beaumont was Private Secretary to Radcliffe and V. D. Iyer,

Assistant Secretary.

Jha has painstakingly told why there are doubts arising about the signing of the Instrument of Accession. He quotes none other than Colonel Manekshaw whose integrity cannot be faulted that the Instrument was signed. He has also cleared the pitch that Maharaja Hari Singh had total control over his senses and was not a demented mess when he took the decision to join the Indian Dominion. Many such myths have been placed in the right perspective.

Jha makes yet another telling point of Pakistan's paranoid interest in Kashmir; by encouraging the raiders and then invading Kashmir with its regular Army, it succeeded in pushing back the border along the entire length of the Lahore-Pindi railway line and road granting it security in depth, physically separated Indian Kashmir from the NWFP and tribal areas, and ensured Pakistan's capacity to pacify the latter. Finally, it enabled the closure of India's capacity to open a second front in the far north to render Lahore indefensible.

Jha concludes this excellent piece of investigative writing by stating that attempts to inject the uncontrollable devil of communalism which began 50 years ago has been repeated over the years. If it continues on these lines, it may well lead to a third war which may be the mother of all such conflicts if it is nuclearised.

This important publication, moderately priced, needs to be read carefully by all those interested in truth, secularism and a lasting peace with our neighbour. The communal divide sought to be injected in this conflict from the start, must be laid to rest once and for all. Equally, it should be read by decision makers in the USA and UK if a just solution is to be sought instead of spawning Robin Raphaels who claim that the Instrument of Accession is questionable, and the BBC/CNN reference to 'Indian Administered/Occupied Kashmir' after 50 years. In the final analysis, what matters most is national interests or else how would Israel be permitted by these same powers to hold on to the Golan Heights in Syria?

That the British wanted J&K to accede to Pakistan is transparently evi-

dent. The foreseeable on-going conflict is the result which has only served to meet the ends of the arms lobby.

MAJ. GEN. E. D'SOUZA served in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) in 1948/49 in the Valley during the operations and after the ceasefire, in 1958/60 in the sensitive Poonch Sector, in 1969/71 in the Valley Sector as a divisional commander during the 1971 war, and in 1972/73 in Nagrota, helping to raise a Corps HQ. He has visited J&K frequently thereafter, his last visit being in 1995.

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The importance of freedom is realised,
Only when a man is bound in chains,
He is just a slave in life,
He cannot talk freely,
He cannot express freely,
He cannot roam freely,
He has to appease his master,
He cannot oppose him for fear of his life.

The importance of freedom is realised
Only when men are not ruled by fanatics,
Men are not wiped out by putting them in gas chambers,
Only when women are not raped at will,
Only when a couple can elope freely,
It can be said that there is some freedom left,
Only when views can be expressed boldly,
It can be said to be a sign of freedom,
Only when malpractices of powerful men
Are cursed vehemently in free atmosphere
Can it be said that there is an aura of freedom.

Only when every religion is respected,
There can be said to be freedom,
Only when every man and woman is granted equal status,
It may be hoped that freedom is lurking
Somewhere in the shadows,
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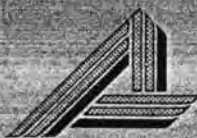
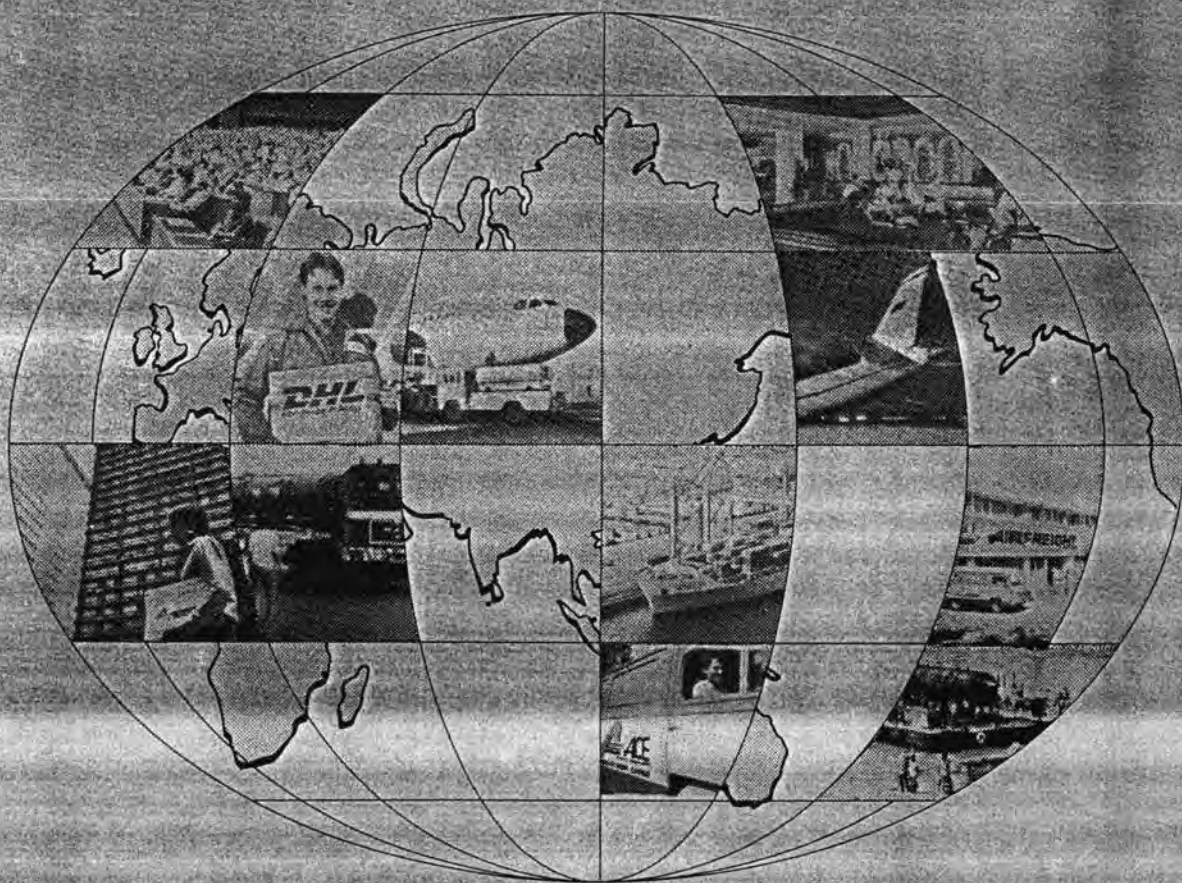
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