

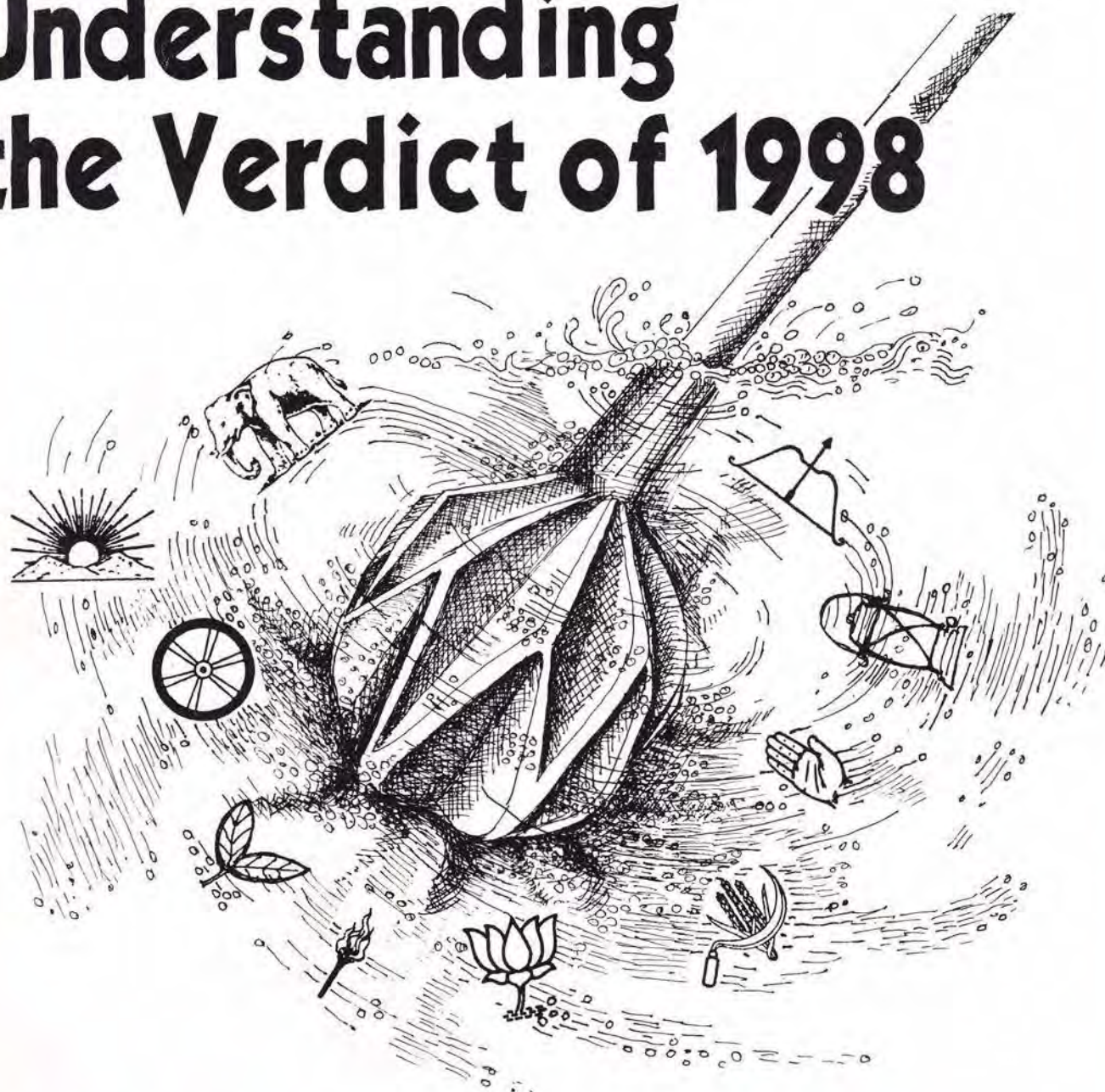
A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

April –
June 1998
No.437
Rupees Fifteen

46TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Understanding the Verdict of 1998



**The East Asian
Economic Crisis**

**Child Labour :
Taking a Contrary View**

Hiroshima & Nagasaki "Never Again"



To mark the 50th death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, the Nehru Centre, the Mani Bhawan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, the Hiroshima City, Nagasaki City and Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation organised an exhibition of rare and archival artifacts and photographs relating to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. These photographs vividly portray the devastation, destruction and the misery caused by radiation.

Not only is the exhibition unique but a moving experience. A reminder to all of us and particularly the younger generation of the horrors of nuclear war. We are informed that this is the first time that the exhibition is held in Asia and only the third time held in the entire world! This exhibition ought to be held in every part of the world and seen by as many people as possible.

The theory of 'nuclear deterrence' or 'balance of terror' may have had some validity during the cold war years. The older generation may recall the furious debates in the 'fifties and 'sixties between men like Bertrand Russell and Sidney Hook on 'whether it was better to be 'red than dead' (Russell) or to be 'dead than red' (Sidney Hook). With the collapse of the Soviet Union this debate became irrelevant and with it concepts like nuclear deterrence and balance of terror should have

been buried. But this has not happened. With many of the 'autonomous republics' of the Soviet Union becoming full fledged republics a whole host of countries emerged with nuclear arsenals. Nuclear proliferation on a frightening scale bedevils the world. India's politicians talk about the 'nuclear option' without a clue of what this option implies. It is not an option but a prescription for the annihilation of humanity itself. Viewing this exhibition must be made compulsory for every politician in every part of the world.

Here are some facts we garnered from the exhibition:

- ♦ The Hiroshima bomb generated heat that reached more than a million degrees centigrade.
- ♦ It generated a state of super-pressure reaching several hundred thousand atmospheres and an enormously powerful shock wave.
- ♦ The damage was caused by a combination of heat rays, blasts, and fires, and was more extensive than the sum total of these effects.
- ♦ The entire city was destroyed in a brief instant. Today fifty years after the atomic bombing the human damage wrought by the bomb remains unclear. The city's population and household records were lost.
- ♦ 140,000 out of a population of 350,000 died in Hiroshima and 74,000 out of a population of 210,000 died in Nagasaki.
- ♦ The bodily damage inflicted by the atomic bomb was aggravated by the complex

interaction of thermal burns, bruises and lacerations and radiation.

- ♦ At the instant of detonation, the atom bomb emitted huge quantities of radiation unheard of in a natural environment. It was this massive radiation that made the atomic bomb qualitatively different from conventional weapon. Radiation is the chief reason that many of these people continue to suffer after more than fifty years.

The Earth now holds rough 20,000 nuclear weapons. Their collective explosive yield is unknown, but if we place it at 22,000 megatons, the maximum known value to date, it is equivalent to 1.47 million bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima. Simply calculated, this destructive power could cause 200 billion deaths or 35 deaths for each of the world's present 5.8 billion people.

As of January 1996, the estimate number of strategic nuclear weapons possessed by the nuclear powers are as follows:

Russia: more than 11,235; US: 9,097; France: 512; China: more than 42; UK: about 300. Total: More than 21,567.

"We shall Bring Forth New Life"

*It was night in the basement of a broken building.
Victims of the atomic bomb
Crowded into the candleless darkness,
Filling the room to overflowing –
The smell of fresh blood, the stench of death,
The stuffiness of human sweat, the writhing moans –
When out of the darkness, came a wondrous voice.
"Oh! The baby's coming" it said.
In the basement turned to living hell
A young woman had gone into labour!
The others forgot their own pain in their concern:
What could they do for her, having not even a match
To bring light to the darkness?
Then came another voice: "I am a midwife.
I can help her with the baby."
It was a woman who had been moaning in pain only
moments before.
And so, a new life was born
In the darkness of that living hell.
And so, the midwife died before the dawn,
Still soaked in the blood of her own wounds.
We shall give forth new life!
We shall bring forth new life!
Even to our death.*

Verse written by Sadako Kurihara from Hiroshima, writer and A-bomb survivor

Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

The 12th general elections to the Lok Sabha have come and gone. We have a government of sorts led by a party that had poured scorn on the previous government that was unseated by the Congress and which occasioned the elections. They are in no different position. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi has been replaced by Ms. Jayalalitha.

Thanks to competing television channels, viewers have been provided with mountains of statistics, exit and other kinds of polls, learned explanations about swings and so on. All very good but, and I believe there are many who would agree with me, all these left me, for instance, rather bewildered. I for one was looking for simple explanations. We bring you this quarter's cover feature: "Understanding the verdict of 1998. The discussion and the two articles do not get mired in statistical data. They suggest various reasons why the voter voted the way he did. Our search for simple explanations.

Computer's Devil: We all know of the 'printer's devil' a printing mistake, probably a mis-spelt word that escapes even the most diligent proof-reader. With the advent of the computer and the DTP, printer's devils have given way to computer's devils in which whole lines disappear because of the computer's fetish for mechanical accuracy so that if a line dares to exceed the format it gets transferred to the next page and if there is no next page, it gets thrown out altogether. Such is the fate suffered by the last line of the resolution entitled 'The Liberal Agenda' on page 34 of the last issue of *Freedom First* (January-March 1998). The full sentence should read as follows (the italicised words are the missing parts of the sentence):

"We reaffirm the liberal commitment to place the freedom and dignity of every human being *at the centre of our political life.*"

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*

Like it or not, Indian parties cannot be run today without corruption; and manipulating foreign contracts is the most efficient form of corruption available to those in power.

Ashok V. Desai, *BUSINESSWORLD*, March 22.

If you want to murder someone, Los Angeles is the place to do the deed.

Charles Peters, *The Washington Monthly*, January/February 1997

Another poll, another coalition, another set of rogues and incompetents to misgovern India.

Editorial in *The Economist*, March 7

The UCPI (United Communist Party of India) is supporting the Congress because in 1920 Lenin asked the communists to support Gandhi as he was an anti-imperialist.

Mohit Sen, UCPI General Secretary, *India Today*, February 23

Why has politics become so criminalised? Because if no law breaker is convicted then law breaking becomes the most successful political strategy.

Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyer, *The Times of India*, March 8

The Pedestrian (in Mumbai) is not part of municipal planning.

Kisan Mehta, President, Save Bombay Committee, *The Times of India*, March 28

This (booth capturing) is the reality of India. You are fooling yourself if you believe that India is marching into the the next century. For fifty years there has been no social engineering in several areas.

Chief Election Commissioner M. S. Gill, *The Times of India*, January 29

Ms. Jayalalitha is not the power behind the throne. She is the throne behind the power.

M. J. Akbar, *Asian Age*, March 22

I am sick of today's politics. Politicians have no morals or ethics. We have better things to do. Greener pastures await us, while politics gets murkier.

Srinivas Bhandaru, 20-year old BA student, Nizam College, Hyderabad.

Just let a leader come in front of me. I'll beat him to pulp. They use us every election for rallies, campaigning, for booth capturing and throw us out...no kick us out.

Sunil Solanki of NREC Degree College the town of Khurja in Uttar Pradesh

... for god's sake, stop the doddering senile from chalking out India's agenda for the next century.

Manoj Mishra, a 28-year old paan shop owner in New Delhi

The general feeling among our generation is that politicians are corrupt, dirty people. We should keep away from them irrespective of which party they belong to.

Shayar Nag, first year student of English at Calcutta's Ashutosh College

There is no space in these corrupt parties for idealism or revolutionary thoughts. There is no role for eager youth in a Babudom.

Vikram Diesh, member Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Human Resources Development

Their (the politicians) job is *ghotalas* (manipulation/messing around) mine *kheti* (farming). They won't help me. I can't stop them.

Gulab Singh Gujar, a young farmer in the village of Mand Kasia in Madhya Pradesh

All from *Outlook*, February 9

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

A Worthwhile Institution Goes

The Harold Laski Institute of Political Science, Ahmedabad which was founded on 15th August 1954 "stopped working" on 27th November 1997.

I was privileged to be a life-member of the Institute and proud to have Purshottambhai Mavalankar the Founder-Director of the Institute as a dear friend – a friendship that goes back to the days when I was Executive Secretary of the National Headquarters of the Swatantra Party.

Late last year he wrote to me, as he did to all life members of the Institute. In his letter dated 27th November 1997 (the 110th birth anniversary of his illustrious father, the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha Mr. G. V. Mavalankar who set very high standards as Speaker) he explained why he had decided to close the Institute. The letter reveals the character and integrity of Purshottambhai who belongs to a fast disappearing species – the honest public person.

I wrote *inter alia* "From its very inception, the Institute has, as a matter of policy not taken any government grants nor sought donations. All along, our various activities have been sustained mainly by life membership support...

"...I have done my best to act informally and democratically, always striving to promote and strengthen the aims and objectives of the Institute viz. political education of the citizenry in our Democratic Republic. The Laski Institute has been my life's dream and mission, and I have poured my heart and soul into it."

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



Aziz Madni



Mr. Aziz Madni, member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*, its editor for some years when the journal was a monthly and whose association with the journal in general and Mr. Minoo Masani in particular, goes back to the 'fifties, is no more. He passed away after a prolonged illness on February 7.

He belonged to a family imbued with a strong sense of social service. He was the grandson of Mohammad Haji Sabu Siddick, a prominent philanthropist. Azizbhai carried on the tradition by being not only on his grandfather's charitable trust but was a trustee of a number

of charitable organisations. He was a trustee of the Cummo Jaffar Girls High School for over 45 years.

Education meant a great deal to him. He was convinced that it was the only way, poor muslims could make a better life for themselves.

I had the privilege of getting to know Azizbhai and working with him since the 'sixties. He was a liberal to the core, a thorough gentleman whose soft exterior covered a person with a firm resolve. He was a clear thinker who understood the nuances of issues discussed. Often a knowing smile at meetings of the Board meant he had understood the issue involved and we could count on his support!

An active citizen he did not hesitate to put pen on paper and shoot off letters to the press whenever he felt strongly about something or the other. But he never allowed the strength of his feeling to influence him in using harsh or abrasive language.

We convey our deepest condolences to Mrs. Abida Madni and her family on their loss. A good friend, a fighter for the freedom and dignity of the individual has gone. We shall miss him very much.

S. V. Raju

"Unfortunately, my health no longer permits me to conduct and lead the Institute's work efficiently and energetically as before. I have therefore, been compelled to put a stop to its work with effect from today, 27th November, 1997, the 110th Birth Anniversary of my revered father Dadasaheb Mavalankar."

And with the letter he enclosed a cheque for Rs.700 - a refund of my life membership fee .

I will not dwell on the work of the Institute spanning over two decades. There is only one word to describe it "FANTASTIC"! Apart from the fact that the Institute was run by a person of dedication another reason why The Harold Laski Institute became an Institution - a landmark in the academic world of Ahmedabad - was the fact that it was not located in Delhi and subject to the careerism that marks most such institutes (generally state-funded) that proliferate in India's capital city.

Sadly the Institute has closed its doors when it is needed most to carry on its own mission - political education of citizens.

India - A Celebration of Independence

Thanks to the Alfred Stieglitz Center of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the United States Information Service in India we had a veritable feast of photographs at an exhibition organised by them as "part of America's celebration of India's golden jubilee of independence."

The 21 photographers whose photographs were exhibited included Henri Cartier-Bresson, Mitch Epstein, Charles Lindsay, Robert Nickelsberg, Raghu Rai, Sebastiao Salgado, Ketaki Sheth and Pamela Singh.

Some photos were evocative, others nostalgic while yet others captured in all their detail, times of joy and of sorrow of ordinary common folk

While thanking and expressing our gratitude to the Alfred Stieglitz Centre and the USIS for putting together this exhibition there were, in my view, two defects. The first - too many photographs of BJP conferences and the saffron flag. The second defect - not a single photo by Raghu Rai of the movement led by Jayaprakash Narain. I have a volume (published by *The Statesman*) of photographs shot by Raghu Rai of JP's movement and some of the pictures are as good as any that were exhibited. There is one of JP being beaten by the police for instance. Surely the story of the bogus emergency and the freedom movement that followed should have found a place in this picture story of 50 years of freedom.

Incidentally in 1957 the USIS distributed a beautifully produced volume entitled "Gandhiji's Reflections on Democracy" to mark 10 years of independence.

Photographs were printed alongside quotations from Gandhiji. Some of these could have found place in the exhibition. We shall, in the next issue, share with readers a couple of these photographs with Gandhiji's quotation alongside, and a photograph or two by Raghu Rai of JP's movement.

This criticism does not however take away from the fact that the exhibition was truly remarkable.

SVR

The Clay Hooves of a Nobel Laureate

Novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a Nobel laureate in literature. He is well known for his

explorations in magical realism. He is also an uncritical admirer of totalitarian regimes and is fascinated with political power and to be in its close proximity. He is also an apologist for Castro.

On a visit to Stalin's mausoleum he wrote that "he stood transfixed by the 'delicacy' of the tyrant's embalmed hands. They (were) the hands of a woman" he wrote. He was an admirer of Janos Kadar who betrayed Hungary's freedom struggle by inviting Soviet Tanks to crush a people's movement.

Gabriel Marquez extenuates the Colombian drug trafficker Pablo Escobar on the dubious ground that he is a devoted family man and that he had expressed regret at the sufferings he had inflicted on numerous families, capping it with the consoling words of a catholic priest who while blessing the gold medal that Pablo Escobar wore round his neck said: "Deep down all men are good, although some circumstances can make them evil. Escobar is a good man."

During the Falklands war he filed a report in a Madrid newspaper *El Pais* that the "legendary and ferocious Nepalese decapitators" (the reference was to the British Army's Nepalese auxiliaries) had scimitars with which they "beheaded one Argentine prisoner every seven seconds. And because of some strange custom, they held up the severed head by the hair and cut off the ears."

In fact the entire report was a figment of the poet's imagination. The Gurkhas came to the Falklands to clear the mines. They carried Kukhris which cannot chop off the head of anyone in 'seven seconds flat'.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

RS

Understanding the Verdict of 1998

The 1998 elections produced all kinds of surprises except one and that one exception which surprised no one was a hung parliament. The Congress which many thought would be one step nearer to being marginalised has, in a manner of speaking, held on, though not gaining in numbers. Kanshi Ram's BSP has been given a drubbing. The Shiv Sena-BJP combine was in for a rude shock in Maharashtra; Jayalalitha all but swept the polls in Tamil Nadu and the Janata Dal is facing near extinction. It is clear that old notions, assumptions and considerations cannot adequately explain the current preferences of voters.

Politicians and political parties were very reluctant to face an election on the ground that there was voter fatigue and the argument that the nation couldn't afford frequent elections - the last one being held just two years ago. Yet voter turnout was 62% in 1998 as against 57.94% per cent two years ago. Obviously, there was no reluctance on the part of the voter to visit the polling booth as many times as required!

But why did he vote the way he did? Are national patterns of voting discernible? Or were they coloured by regional compulsions? Did the overall voting pattern indicate a preference for regional parties and regional issues as against national parties and national issues?

What, for instance, were the considerations of the voter in Himachal Pradesh whose support for Sukh Ram (the former Union Telecom Minister who uses currency notes instead of cotton or foam for his bed) helped him sweep the polls in his district of Mandi and of the Tamil Nadu voter returning Jayalalitha's candidates in such large numbers? Was the voter interested in stability to such an extent that he was prepared to accept candidates charged with corruption or known criminals? Is every election turning into a municipal election - is there lack of appreciation of the

functions of elective bodies at various levels?

Is the statement that the Indian voter has become or is becoming very discriminating an exaggeration? Are we needlessly glorifying ourselves? Has there been a reduction in the role of caste and religion? To what extent did these play a role in these elections.

The voters' choice has been described as a fractured verdict. Had there been a system of proportional representation and the seats won in proportion to the votes cast, would it not have reflected more accurately the electorate's choice? Is it not time to give serious thought to changing the system of voting to one based on PR? Meanwhile, would it be safe to assume that all future verdicts will be fractured and hung parliaments and legislative assemblies will be the rule rather than the exception?

These were some of the issues discussed at a seminar organised by Freedom First in association with the Project for Economic Education and the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung in Mumbai on March 14.

Readers will find divergent viewpoints expressed. The attempt was not to arrive at a consensus but to look at the results from a variety of angles. However, the thread that connects is the faith in a civil society and the fact that democracy (with all its defects) has come to stay. What was also evident was again the fact that we are going through a period of transition on several fronts - the economy is increasingly less dependent on the state, a whole new generation of voters has emerged with new perceptions and new priorities, and there are no serious ideological differences. The dominant issue is good governance - no more, no less.

We share with our readers a summary of the discussions. Editor.

Participants at the Seminar on "Understanding the Verdict of 1998", March 14, 1998, Mumbai.

Dr. Amitabh, President, Peoples Foundation • Mr. S. S. Bankeshwar, freelance journalist • Mr. Yeshwant Bhide, Lecturer in Commerce • Dr. B. N. Colabawala, President, Society for the Right to Die with Dignity • Maj. Gen. (Retd.) E. D'souza, freelance writer • Mr. J. B. D'souza, retired Civil Servant • Mr. Arvind A. Deshpande, Honorary Secretary, Leslie Savhny Programme • Mr. S. Divakara, Secretary, Forum of Free Enterprise • Dr. Lionel Fernandes, Lecturer in Political Science • Mr. D. F. Fitter, Accountant, Project for Economic Education • Mr. S. P. Godrej, Chairman, Godrej Group of Companies • Mr. A. V. Gopalakrishnan, Advocate • Mr. Cyrus Guzder, Managing Director, Airfreight Ltd. • Mr. A. K. R. Hemmady, author and freelance journalist • Mr. D. B. Karnik, writer and journalist • Mrs. Anjali Kirtane, film documentaries producer • Mr. Satish Kirtane, Managing Director, Apna Bazaar Cooperative Department Stores • Dr. Usha Mehta, Chairperson, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi • Mr. Ajit Narde, farmer and businessman • Mr. Jehangir Patel, Publisher and Printer • Mr. S. V. Raju, Editor, *Freedom First* • Mrs. Kashmira Rao, Programmes Executive, Project for Economic Education • Mr. Nitin G. Raut, Advocate • Mr. K. F. Rustomji, retired Police Officer • Ms. Ashraf Ruwala, Asst. Editor, *One India, One People* • Mr. L. R. Sampat, Secretary, Swatantra Party, Maharashtra • Prof. Nagindas Sanghavi, journalist • Mr. Viren Shah, Chairman, Mukand Ltd. • Mr. Kunwar Sinha, producer of documentaries • Prof. V. K. Sinha, Editor, *The Secularist* • Mr. Abraham Solomon, President, Indian Secular Society • Dr. R. Srinivasan, Professor of Politics (retired) • Mr. B. B. Thadani, company executive • Dr. Usha Thakkar, Hon. Director, Institute of Research on Gandhian Thought and Rural Development • Dr. Mary Thomas, Head of the Department of Politics, Bhavan's College • Prof. Sadanand Varde, Educationist • Dr. Parvathi Vasudevan, Reader, Centre for East African Studies • Mr. Pravin Vepari, Chartered Accountant • Mr. R. N. Vepari, Chartered Accountant • Mr. Mahesh Vijapurkar, Chief of Bureau, *The Hindu*.

Confused Voter?

Voters found it extremely difficult to find any difference between the candidate of one party as opposed to that of another because either both were non-entities or both were rascals and corrupt. The media added to the confusion by playing up certain candidates as against others for reasons best known to them. Even the intelligentsia found themselves quite confused on who to vote for. Part of the problem is due, perhaps, to the fact that in recent elections there has been decreasing contact between candidates and the general public.

Let us also accept the fact that Indian voters tend to vote emotionally. For instance in 1971 Mrs. Gandhi was returned with a big mandate; when she was assassinated they voted her son Rajiv Gandhi to power with a massive mandate that was denied even to his grandfather Pandit Nehru; in 1989, they threw Rajiv Gandhi out just when he had gathered the experience to be able to govern. More recently they, including

muslims, voted in Maharashtra for the Shiv Sena despite the carnage of the 1992 riots; and now the voter in Tamil Nadu has helped revive the political fortunes of Jayalalitha despite the fact that she has been charged with corruption on a massive scale.

In the run up to the 1998 elections haven't we heard statements like 'we like Vajpayee, but not the BJP' or 'I would like a national party which can give stability and therefore I would prefer the Congress to the BJP but with Atal Behari Vajpayee as Prime Minister'? Such statements typify the confusion in the minds of the voters. May be voters in rural India are less confused because they are much more feudal in their attitudes. It is thus possible for a Sonia Gandhi to descend on rural constituencies and be regarded as a *Devuta*.

'The Indian voter confused? Of course not', said some others. He deserves the highest respect for the way he has voted in each election. Even where he voted for a Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu or a Sukh

Ram in Himachal Pradesh there must have been various local considerations which went in favour of wrong candidates.

Candidates Charged with Corruption

And talking of candidates charged with corruption, our judicial system is at fault. Why is it that Jayalalitha was able to contest elections when she is facing charges of corruption. Why did Sukh Ram whose mattresses were filled with currency notes emerge victorious as a candidate? Why did 72 people with criminal records contest the elections - one of them with a murder conviction. These show that our criminal justice system is not giving us the output we need. We waste a lot of time finding excuses and explanations but we will not try and improve that which is possible to improve - the criminal justice system. The judiciary should give priority to cases involving candidates facing criminal charges.

Illiteracy the Cause?

As for the talk about a large percentage of our voters being illiterate, it would be worthwhile undertaking an exercise - what proportion of the 62% who voted in the 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha was the literate vote and what proportion the illiterate vote. One must not forget the fact that in 1977 it was the illiterate vote that changed nearly 40 years of Congress rule.

As for the huge crowds at rallies addressed by Sonia Gandhi, hero worship or heroine worship is a universal phenomenon. Even so, our voters have shown wisdom. They thronged Sonia Gandhi's

A Difficult Problem Indeed !

When we were set the problem of why the voter voted in a certain way I must say I was astonished to see what a terrible problem it has turned out to be. It is difficult to find out what 30 people in this room are thinking. But consider the extent of our land. A thousand million people; six hundred million voters; how do they think. We have no way of ascertaining what they think and why they do what they do.

The basic fact that strikes me again and again is that we don't know enough of our country. And the fact is that we go by patterns that were established by countries like England or even America where communications are so good. But are communications good in India? Do we know what the voter in the rural areas is thinking? I am afraid, and I know India quite well, that we have no idea of what impels people to vote the way they do.

K. F. Rustomji

meetings but when one looks at the results, the Congress has not gained much. They went to have her *darshan* but not to vote for her.

Reflection of Our Society

The results are neither a reflection of voter confusion nor politicians' fatigue but a mirror of the philosophical and moral confusion in society.

Why should we expect politicians and political leaders to be paragons of perfection? Is there any field in our public life or in our private life where there is no corruption and where criminalisation is not thought of. When analysing the results of the elections we treat voters and the electorate as being on one side and the voters or the politicians and the elected representatives on the other, as though the two sides belong to different societies. It is the same society consisting of corrupt elements, decent elements, thinking elements and herd elements that is choosing its government. Naturally the result will reflect the type of society we have. It is not that in Bihar, for instance, the politicians are vile, corrupt and violent while the man-in-the-street Bihari is sweet and good-natured. The type of society that Bihar has is reflected in the type of leadership, the type of elected leaders they throw up. It cannot be any other way. The state of our society, of our culture, of our ethics and ethos is reflected in our leadership and in the type of people who sit in the legislatures. And the verdict represents the ethos, the cultural level of the people. If political parties nominated candidates with criminal records let us not forget the people voted for them nevertheless.

At the same time let us remember that even in a corrupt situation there are people who remain honest. What is it that makes some people remain honest and makes other people corrupt?

Every election should afford us an opportunity to do some soul searching. We have to focus on what type of people we are. If we are not satisfied with our leadership, it means we are not satisfied with ourselves and we should be doing something about it.

Fractured Verdict?

The 1998 election was an issueless election. For the voters secularism, corruption, criminalisation of politics, and the question of stability were no issues at all. They voted for criminals, crooks and corrupt candidates set up by different parties. One is reminded of what Rajaji said as far back as 1956: In a monarchy as the King so his subjects. In a democracy as the subjects so the king.

What fractured verdict are we talking about? In every state people have spoken with a very clear and very decisive voice. When these exact verdicts are totalled up

we get a fractured verdict. Why? The reason probably is that we are searching for an alternative to a dominant party system that we had.

One Night Stands

When complaining of a fractured mandate, look at what happened in Maharashtra. These election results are, in fact, a repetition of what happened in 1996. We are misguided because we are looking at the alliances which are only one-night stands. They are not permanent unions. The BJP got 161 seats in 1996, this time they got 178. The Congress 142, this time 141. The CPM 33 now 32. The only difference is with regard to the Janata Dal. And the Janata Dal was not murdered. It committed suicide.

Nagindas Sanghavi

About 97% of the popular vote has been shared by two main political groups - the Congress/RPI/Samajwadi Party and the Shiv Sena/Bharatiya Janata Party group. The BJP and the Shiv Sena polled 8 percentage points over their 1990 performance. If at all there has been an anti-incumbency wave in Maharashtra it has been against the United Front and not the ruling coalition in the state, because the

The Congress as a Lesser Evil

India is passing through a phase where the old political party system where one party dominated, has disappeared and another has not evolved. People are groping for an alternative. Years ago when one went to vote there was a Congress Party and there was a mish-mash of other parties. In those days, if you didn't vote for the Congress you felt you were throwing your vote away. That has now changed. Many now vote for the Congress only because they see it as the lesser evil. This is an important change because we now have a choice between two parties or groups of parties. Earlier, irrespective of who we voted for, invariably the Congress would get back to power. Today voters generally vote for someone who they see has a chance of winning.

Jehangir Patel

parties constituting the United Front in New Delhi got less than 3 percent of the votes and were sent out of reckoning.

Maharashtra was Different

It means voters in Maharashtra voted with a purpose. There was a kind of polarisation perhaps because some kind of an alternative was put before the people - whether it was a genuine alternative or not is another matter. Maharashtra voters did not give a fractured verdict. On the other hand what is it that led to a situation in other states where people had to exercise options in such a manner that politicians and their political parties complained that the voters did not give them a mandate. These political parties seem to be in the business of politics but don't seem to have the savvy of a corporate entity.

Moving towards Federalism

If one adds up the national result, it doesn't seem to be logical. It is what is called in logic the fallacy of composition. The parts do not add up to a consistent whole. The incumbency factor weighed in some states but not in others like West Bengal, Punjab, Tripura and Delhi. This factor therefore does not seem to have been a national phenomenon. National issues such as population control, infrastructure development, or education did not find pride of place in the priorities of political parties. Regional parties were the dominant partners in their alliance with national parties and, not surprisingly what came to the fore were regional issues. As a result, voters paid greater attention to the performance or non-performance of

state governments.

Perhaps this shift of focus is to be welcomed. Why should, for example, a street vendor in Chinchpokli (a Mumbai suburb) bother whether India should have a nuclear option or not. It does not really concern him. His voting will really reflect his real concerns and if democracy does not reflect voters' real concerns what democracy are we talking about.

We are heading towards the creation of a real federal polity from the grass roots as it were and this is bound to strengthen Indian democracy. Traditional political wisdom has it that parliamentary democracy functions best in a two-party environment. We need to rethink this proposition. It is clear that a two party system will not work in a very diverse, culturally divided country like India. Even the United States does not really have a two-party system. Any student of American politics will tell you that there are fifty Democratic Parties and fifty Republican Parties. A Democrat from New York does not share many of the views of a Democrat from the south.

'There is Nothing Really Wrong'

I don't think very much has gone wrong. The fact that they have not been able to form a government for a few days is not to say that everything has gone to pieces, that the Constitution is wrong that this or that needs to be changed. If Jayalalitha had agreed, there would have been no discussion on this issue today. And that indicates that one person has held the whole country to ransom. And yet there is no doubt that our democracy is unique. No country in the world has a democracy as large as ours. And along with that, we have distances; poor communications and so on. The BJP has given an assurance that if it comes to power, it will appoint a commission to inquire into Constitutional issues. But the basic point is that there is nothing really wrong with the way things are going insofar as our structure is concerned. There should be a large number of parties if we are in a large country. There is nothing wrong if there is a delay in forming a government and no harm in exploring all avenues to make democracy more workable.

K. F. Rustomji

A truly federal polity, which a country of the size of India needs, requires a government with a minimum programme. If one looks at the Common Minimum Programme of the United Front on the one hand and the BJP's National Agenda on the other, they have, inadvertently, agreed on a liberal form of government which means a government that governs as little as possible and leaves civil society

'Celebrate'?

I can't bear to use the word 'celebrate' when it comes to fifty years after independence. We created three Indias out of one India in fifty years. We did not control the population. If only we can control population we can control many things. The great danger is unchecked urbanisation. Even after fifty years we are still not a well-knit nation but a group of countries all the time creating new problems while trying to solve our existing problems.

S. P. Godrej

free to secure its own rights and freedoms.

'Sir, Our Votes Were Wasted'

I don't remember how many times I contested, but everytime I lost, voters would come and tell me 'Sir, our votes were wasted.' This is a very serious comment on our electoral system. This statement should therefore be interpreted as a signal coming from the voters that there is need to reform the electoral system. Perhaps we need to introduce an element of proportional representation plus first past the post as in Germany - 50% directly elected and 50 % votes cast directly for the party. Had such a system been in vogue, perhaps the composition of the present parliament would have been different.

Sadanand Varde

of those who voted in the 1998 elections to the Lok Sabha has been reflected in the composition of the present parliament.

On the other hand, the system of voting may not be the real issue but the perversion of the Constitution by the politicians. It is neither the Constitution nor the absence of a system of proportional representation or a presidential form of government. It is a question of national character and of

building up national priorities.

Proportional Representation

Mr. Minoo Masani who has been a long time campaigner for electoral reform often observed that the British system of first past the post is unsuited to India because the Indian people who have a Latin temperament (witness the multiplicity of parties) have adopted an Anglo Saxon system. What India needs is an electoral system based on proportional representation. This however does not find favour with national parties who argue that in a country like India with its high level of illiteracy, a system of PR will not work because it is too complicated ignoring the fact that PR is already being practised in the elections to the Rajya Sabha. The Congress when in power was not in favour of PR and now that the BJP sees itself in power it too may change its position on PR.

The system of first past the post results in a large percentage of votes being largely unrepresented. For instance how much of the 62%

A Calendar of Elections

In the United States there is a kind of calendar of elections laid down in their Constitution. Every four years on a particular date Presidential elections are held; he takes office on a specified day; he serves for four years; has another term of four years and that's final. Similarly elections to the US Congress are held every two years on a fixed date in the calendar. There are no mid term polls in between. That is how the richest country in the world runs its democracy. We, on the other hand, the poorest democracy in the world are holding elections every eighteen months! Should we not have a Constitution amendment whereby parliament has a five year term and a calendar of elections for each level of government and for each kind of position?

This is what Mr. P. A. Sangma, the Speaker of the 11th Lok Sabha has been saying, that Parliament must be elected for a fixed period

of five years. If there is a deadlock of governance, parliament should not be dissolved and there should not be fresh elections. If whosoever is called by the President to form the government does not get a majority he should not be required to resign and the government should continue till the President is satisfied that an alternate government is possible. This will also curb defections and political opportunism may, to some extent, be controlled. In other words, if there is a vote of no-confidence against a government it should not go out of office until the President has found an alternative.

Doesn't this place too great a burden on the President? What happens if we get a President who

Indian Democracy Not for Them

Even in the United Kingdom, which is a one language and, largely, a one religion country, till the middle of the 19th century democracy did not function in the true sense of the term. In the United States, from cab drivers to presidents and vice-presidents of large corporations are much more critical of their senators and congressmen than we are of our elected representatives. That is part of democracy. At international conferences which I attended, strong arguments were advanced by South East Asian countries, who were strongly of the view that the kind of democracy in India was not suitable for their countries. I thought there was a point in their argument that after 200 years of colonial rule preceded by centuries of feudalism it is difficult to straightaway jump that into a Westminster model of democracy.

Viren J. Shah

could play all sorts of games and tricks with Parliament if he had that authority. Would this not get us into a worse mess than we are in. It is true we have had Presidents who should never have been Presidents. It is equally true that we had people who should not have been Prime Ministers. But one cannot escape the fact that somebody has



I told you it did not matter if you were corrupt! What people want is a clean, stable government as you have promised!

COURTESY: R. K. Laxman and *The Times of India*.

to take the responsibility of shouldering the burden of finding some way of ensuring stability in politically confusing situations. The President has for far too long been co-opted. He ought to have a more definitive voice and should concern himself about stability in an uncertain situation. The fact is, having accepted the parliamentary system, parties determine, more or less, the way in which governments are formed and who forms the government. The present system is just not going to work any more in this coun-

try because what we are going to have are more fractured verdicts, more hung parliaments. So the President has to be given the responsibility. He has to be told that his is a very arduous job and no longer a cushy one where he signs on the dotted line as some Presidents did in the past.

There is a provision in the German Constitution which prevents a vote of no confidence against the Chancellor unless an alternative has been chosen but by the parliamentarians.

Stability and Growth

In countries like Belgium or Italy even during periods when there are no governments, the country functions because the bureaucracy is strong. Italy is one of the booming economies of Europe. This shows that frequent changes of government may not affect industry to that extent if industry is not shackled by government policy. During the Janata Party regime (1977-79) some very significant growth was recorded because members of the Janata Party were so busy quarreling among themselves that the bureaucrats not only kept the government going, but the economy actually recorded a growth much better than what it was under earlier 'stable' governments.

Unrealistic Proposals

The kind of reforms we are talking about including the

scope for the President to form a national government, asking parliament to elect a leader like the Pope is elected, etc. are manifestations of our frustration with the system. But no kind of long enduring reforms are possible unless the voters force politicians and political parties to change. Amendments to statutes will not come easily if fractured mandates are going to continue. Perhaps the best way is voter education. Every voter has to be told that he has to cast his vote so that the country can have a government. If this is not ingrained in a voter we will have a distorted reflection of the people's mandate in the legislatures. If we go in for amendments (our Constitution has been amended so many times that even Ambedkar would not recognise it!) or even asking the President under article 85(2) to ask the Lok Sabha to elect its leader, may be a good 'Band Aid' solution in today's situation. But what happens if tomorrow we get a crooked President; or a President who has no will of his own; or a President who has no vision. One does not change the

Indian Elections - A Non-event Overseas?

I have just returned from Africa. At a meeting of retired Generals and Air Marshals who are fighting for peace, every one of them from 26 countries, were concerned about our elections. But the coverage was minimal and I could not get information on what was happening.

The Sri Lankan representative was constantly badgering me wanting to know what was happening in India. When I asked him why he was so interested, he said he was interested because what happens in India will affect them in Sri Lanka. And this was the same refrain from the General from Pakistan. Because they realise that stability in India is going to affect the whole sub-continent.

Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza

rules of the game because we cannot play the game.

Disfranchised!

I voted in all previous elections, but this was the first time I could not vote despite having my identity card. I was asked to go from one polling booth to another, wasting nearly two hours. Many like me, had to return home without voting.

S. S. Bankeshwar

But who is not playing the game? The politicians or the people? The Indian people have played the game. They have exercised their right to vote. And successive elections in recent years have resulted in a hung parliament. It is easy to say that we must educate and discipline our politicians. How does one do it. As for amending the Constitution it cannot be said that whatever is in the Constitution is the ultimate in political wisdom. If in terms of our experience a change is needed, we should give thought to it.

A 2-Round Election Maybe?

Instead of PR why not consider a two-round election. In the first round all candidates contest. In the second round only the top two candidates will be eligible to contest. This will indirectly bring about a two-party system.

Postal Ballot

And while on the subject of electoral reform is it not a matter for surprise that the fittest organisation in India today, the Armed Forces, is not permitted to use the postal ballot. That means at least a million voters are denied their

right to vote. These million votes could well have tilted the balance. It is surprising that all these years servicemen who have been defending the country with their lives have not been given a chance to vote. They are not asking for proxy vote i.e. their vote being cast on their behalf by their families. They want to vote themselves. And the only way they can do so is through the postal ballot.

Indifference to the Voter

In one of the wards in Ghatkopar (a Mumbai suburb), some local workers called an All-party meeting. There were 23 candidates in that constituency and all the 23 who were invited, promised to speak to the gathering. The meeting was to begin at 8.30 p.m. We were there at 8.15 p.m. We waited till 10.30 p.m. when we dispersed. Not one candidate turned up for the meeting. This indicates total indifference to the voter.

Usha Mehta

Then there are around 10 million handicapped people who are unable to vote because of their handicap and are practically disfranchised. They too need the facility of a postal ballot.

Accountability

Political parties are not social service organisations. By definition they are there to capture power and enjoy the material benefits of power for themselves and others. We as citizens should take advantage of this expectation of politicians and get the elected representative to be responsive and accountable to us. It is high time we innovated the democratic process so that it delivers the goods -

the welfare of the people.

If citizens would get a commitment from candidates that they would meet them definitely, specifically and periodically, I think the work would begin. We should tell MPs and MLAs that if they don't meet us regularly we will force them to resign. For one thing political parties have no other way of getting into power. For another, other political parties would want to take advantage of the unpopularity of an incumbent not belonging to their party. We thus create a situation

Making MPs and MLAs Accountable

Some of us have started a small citizen action group in our constituency and when we call candidates (we have had two elections, one municipal and one for parliament) they are very prompt in responding. We make it clear that we are not asking for a favour nor making a request, but are demanding their response as citizens. When this happens an MP or MLA knows that the constituency he represents knows its mind and will vote based on performance. Even in a situation where the electorate is very confused, if there was an MP who did good work, people have voted for him.

Since democracy reflects society and people, how we improve the standard of morality, the standard of activism, the standard of responsibility of the citizen are important questions. We must make the constituency the basic unit of our democratic system. The answer to today's evils is activism of the right kind and involvement of the citizen.

Mary Thomas

where we compel parties and candidates to vie with each other to deliver the goods.

Maturing of Indian Democracy?

Are the results of 1996 and 1998 signs of the maturing of Indian democracy? Rajiv Gandhi came in 1984 promising clean government implying thereby that the previous government (led by his mother) was corrupt. Yet he said he would continue the legacy of Mrs. Gandhi. Sonia Gandhi has done exactly the same. She has apologised for all the misdemeanors of the Congress party but promised to continue the Nehru-Gandhi legacy! This leads to confusion in the voters' minds which expresses itself as an emotional vote. It is difficult to share the optimism of those who say that this shows maturity. What was mature in the

way both the BJP and the opposition parties in UP behaved?

Rs.1,000 crores is what it costs the exchequer to conduct elections. That is not what makes politicians and political parties hesitant to go to the polls again. No politician has won his Lok Sabha election under Rs.15 lakhs. And no politician has won an election in a straightforward manner. They have been as crooked as they can be. It costs a candidate a crore and more to get elected to the Lok Sabha. That is what is holding them back. Force a few more elections on them, bleed them economically and the country would go towards a bi-polar entity.

1998 was a replica of 1996; 1996 was replica of 1989 and to some extent 1991. No decisive results in any of these elections. Perhaps

The Elusive Alternative

The Indian voter has still not found a politically viable alternative to the Congress at the Centre. In the states we are slowly settling down to a two-party system - a regional plus either the Congress or the BJP. All non-Congress governments or coalitions that we have had since 1977 have been reactions to Congress misrule, the emergency etc. but we haven't had alternatives. The day that happens probably the Indian voter will settle for a two-party or two broad groupings of parties. The Congress itself was a coalition in which an S. K. Patil and a Krishna Menon could co-exist. It was essentially a power structure. A similar kind of coalition which would be a politically viable alternative to the Congress has yet to emerge.

Arvind Deshpande

The Emergence of the Backward Castes

A majority of Indians are illiterate. These illiterate classes are largely made up of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other minorities - the last being generally converts from other communities. Until recently, these communities were not politically aware and did not realise the power of the vote. This lack of awareness generally benefited mainstream political parties.

Over a period of time, because of the spread of higher education including university qualifications, these castes entered white collar services, in managerial positions in government and public sector corporations. As a result, there has been a greater realisation of the value of the vote and their right to vote for a candidate of their choice, without fear of consequence. And in recent years, there has been the emergence of political parties and candidates with whom they can identify and call their own.

What we are witnessing is a period of transition when political power is gradually shifting from caste Hindus into the hands of the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras* (I use these words deliberately to convey the fact that the lowest in the caste hierarchy are emerging on top). As Swami Vivekananda once said, until now the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas* ruled. Now the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras* will rule.

A fractured verdict will continue for some more time. Political parties and coalitions of political parties will get increasingly polarised. Finally, there will be only two or three major political groupings, some of which will be led by the *Shudras* and *Ati-Shudras*.

Dr. Amitabh

the Indian voter feels that there is no single party or combination of parties which is fit to rule this country. And perhaps he is sending a signal - why don't you come together. Is it possible to put such an interpretation on what the voter is trying to say? Is democracy a permanent duel between the ruling party and the opposition? 'Oppose, expose, depose', is what H. V. Kamath used to say. And if from the first day a party comes to power the party in opposition starts preparations for unseating it, I do not think we are anywhere near solving our problems. Therefore the most charitable interpretation that one can put on this successive lack of decisive mandate is that perhaps the people want political parties to come together to solve their problems because this or that party no longer makes any difference to them.

Our experience of govern-

ments in the early years of independence leads us to equate stability with the domination of government by one party. The kind of stability which we had during Congress rule was, in a sense, a historic accident. The Congress was not a political party in the conventional sense. It reaped dividends from the role it played as the national movement.

Mahatma Gandhi was so right when he recommended the dissolution of the Congress party and its replacement by a new and viable system. That appears to be the direction in which politics is moving today. But there is still a long way to go. Meanwhile, the voter will continue to remain confused until groups of individuals like ourselves, the press, the intelligentsia are able to distinguish between national, state and municipal elections.

Democracy in a Country with Diversities

Why are we assuming that democracy is an ideal form of government. It is the best form of government under the circumstances, not necessarily an ideal government. An ideal government could be the rule of the wise. But the problem is : who selects the wise and how do you define the wise.

On the one hand, we say that India is a pluralist country; that India has many regions, many sects, many castes, many communities and many religions. Then why are we surprised if the election results reflect these diversities? Why should the BJP expect to have a national mandate? Why should the Congress, for that matter, expect a national mandate? It could get a national mandate during the pre-Independence period and for some years after Independence, because it had a one-point programme to which a lot of people could subscribe.

I have always wondered how the Westminster model would take roots in our country. After fifty years, we have to come to terms with the fact that we cannot expect the same principles and the same way of working as it has worked elsewhere. In these fifty years, institutions have changed, the ethos has changed, principles have changed and a whole generation of voters has changed. Their expectations and aspirations are different and we need to realise that.

V. K. Sinha

What the Constitution did not anticipate?

Dr. Granville Austin, a leading American scholar who has worked extensively on the Indian Constitution, is struck by the fact that its framers did not anticipate a situation in which no single party would have a majority in Parliament. What is more striking is that the issue did not even figure during the debate on Constitution making.

His own guess was that probably it had something to do with the "supremacy" of the Congress at that time. So overpowering and all-pervasive was its presence that it did not occur to its leaders that one day the party might not be in a majority. "If someone then had asked Nehru what happens if there is no majority party, I don't know what he would have said. I guess he would have said: We will have to work that out when it happens. In the context of the time, from 1946 to 1950, I guess it is not surprising that they did not anticipate such a situation".

He repeatedly made the point that no Constitution was perfect and his own understanding of the Indian Constitution was that conceptually it had withstood the test of time. Finally, a Constitution was as good as the people who "worked it". He seemed to be against making a Constitution too rigid. For he felt that if you lay down too many rules, you might end up curbing the role of individuals in running a democracy.

Asked how he assessed the 35 years of the Indian Constitution and democracy he was writing about, he said they were a "great success story". He rejected the view that parliamentary democracy in India had failed and said he was "not convinced" that a presidential system would be more effective. He explained at length the downside of the U.S. presidential system and said that even after 200 years, it was far from perfect.

The Hindu, March 16, 1998.

Understanding the Verdict of 1998

A Turning Point

Amit Dholakia

An analysis of the 1998 parliamentary election points to a potential turning point in the working of the Indian political system.

Elections are relatively prosaic events in the affluent and homogeneous Western societies, leading to the continuation or change of ruling establishments. In contrast, a parliamentary election is the second largest public festival after Diwali in India, involving the participation of millions of people of diverse backgrounds and interests.

An analysis of the 1998 parliamentary election points to a potential turning point in the working of the Indian political system.

The fractured mandate that gave us a fourth hung parliament in a row follows an accelerated fragmentation of the party system, and might engender conditions for another election before the turn of the millennium. The social churning of the last few years has given space to more than two score parties in the present Lok Sabha. The electorally relevant social and regional segments that have been crystallised and legitimized in the last five decades now find the so called national parties ineffective in giving them political representation and systemic identification. The erosion of the legitimacy and social basis of the mainstream national parties is a clear indication of the "representational crisis" of Indian democracy. Indeed, the Janata Dal, that gave us three Prime Ministers in the last ten years, has

practically ceased to exist, except in a few districts.

A genuine national party claiming to represent and accommodate the interests of all castes, communities and regions (like the Congress of the 1950s and 1960s) is less likely to arouse popular sentiments in future. The officially registered national parties too have been compelled to regionalize and specialise their appeal, ideology or membership. The steady trend of regionalisation and localisation of politics was visible even in the fact that the performance of governments in a large number of states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, etc. determined the voting pattern of their people in the Lok Sabha election.

Enter Realpolitik

India has truly entered an era of coalitional government and alliance politics in which regional parties hold the key to power in New Delhi. The arithmetic of power dictates the adoption of right strategies and the forging of a winning alliance with the right set of regional groupings, leaving aside doctrinal purity, past memories or cultural incompatibilities. Such alliances are likely to be loose and non-ideological. Members will be free to join and leave depending on the best bargain they can get. Defections will be glorified in the name of national interest. The queer nature of some of the marriages of

convenience arrived at by parties before and after the election proves the adage that politics is indeed the art of the possible.

Congress in Retreat

Stripped of the comforts of the one party dominance system that prevailed till 1989, the Congress party today finds itself as just one of the actors in a competitive, multi-party system. For the first time in its history, it has accepted second position to another group of parties headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in terms of the vote share. Refusing to learn lessons from the failure of its star campaigner Sonia Gandhi to convert mammoth crowds at her meetings into votes, and the deep morass in which dynastic rule and lack of intra-party democracy have landed the organisation, the conditioned reflex action of the Congress has driven it to resort to the magic of the family name to recapture its pre-eminence in Indian politics. The party has conceded its traditional vote banks to competitors, thanks to the ideological mess of its own creation and lack of political will.

BJP versus the Rest

The age old "Congress versus the rest" type of line-up of political parties has now decisively turned into "BJP versus the rest". The index of opposition unity now refers to parties opposed to the BJP. The transformation of the BJP from

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an urban, middle-class party of western and northern India to a nation-wide organisation that has made considerable inroads into the tribal, Dalit and OBC vote, and a symbolic penetration into the muslim vote, has been as dramatic as its wearing of an image of ideological moderation, consensus and inclusiveness. No matter, if this is made possible by the adoption of tactics and acts the party once denounced as "pseudo-secularist". The inevitable divergence between the ingrained ideological convictions of *Hindutva* monitored by the *Sangh Parivar* and the political compulsion of ingratiating secular allies like Ramakrishna Hegde, George Fernandes, Jayalalitha and Mamta Banerjee promises interesting political developments within the ruling alliance.

Voters' New Parameters

The fragmentation of the party system has a proverbial silver lining. It demonstrates that the Indian people have conclusively rebuffed the vicious efforts of power-hungry parties to polarise them on the non-issues of communalism and secularism. The last election did not turn into a plebiscite on either the BJP's *Hindutva* agenda or other parties' secular agenda. Both religion and secularism are ephemeral and tenuous issues to mobilise masses politically. In the act of voting, most citizens might have been influenced by determinants like caste, tribe, regional concerns, charisma and so on; but few could said to have made a clear choice between communalism and secularism. Slowly, non-ascriptive factors and assessment of the

performance of the incumbent government are tempering the voting behaviour of Indian citizens. The facility of explaining the success of specific political parties by reference to the concept of "vote banks" of dalits, muslims, tribals, backward castes, etc. has come under suspicion. There is limited uniformity in the voting behaviour of the members of these communities who vote freely for different political parties in different regions or within the same region.

The age of ideology is finally over in Indian politics. As testified by their read-alike manifestos, all leading parties share an agreement over fundamental policy issues relating to liberalisation, globalisation and social development, except for a bunch of anachronistic and incorrigible marxist ideologues.

Stability Ignored

The people appear to have given short shrift to the idea of stability of government despite the Congress and the BJP projecting stability as their main campaign issue. Overlooking a string of three weak and unstable governments in a span of twenty months in the previous Lok Sabha, the voters have produced a similarly unstable configuration of seats in the new Parliament. In an environment of rapid socio-economic changes and politicisation of the masses in a heterogeneous society, a spell of instability looks inevitable. Rather than replay the forty years' experience of stagnation, recklessness and authoritarian proclivities of

highly stable one-party governments, essentially based on skewed representation, people seem willing to risk instability for the sake of a genuinely representative and accountable government that is ready to share power with a lot of ethnic and linguistic groups. Interestingly, the much-reviled unstable governments of the last one decade achieved notable strides in politicising and democratizing hitherto dormant sections like the intermediary castes, and displayed flexibility and consensual approach in tackling serious problems relating to Kashmir, Punjab and inter-state disputes.

End of Ideology

The twelfth Lok Sabha election campaign was carried out on the strength of non-ideological slogans. The age of ideology is finally over in Indian politics. As testified by their read-alike manifestos, all leading parties share an agreement over fundamental policy issues relating to liberalisation, globalisation and social development, except for a bunch of anachronistic and incorrigible marxist ideologues. At another level, power politics, bereft of any scruples, has left limited space for goodness, honesty and moral debate in the new parliament. Some of the proven corrupt and criminal elements are back in their seats. 'Power by all means and power at any cost' is the cardinal principle motivating today's self-seeking and opportunistic political class which treats elections as a license to rule and converts official posts into money-minting shops.

Parties do not offer compet-

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ing frameworks of normative identification. They are no longer looked upon as agencies of socio-economic transformation. No one trusts the politician or takes his words and promises seriously. He says one thing before election, and quite another thing after it is over. No wonder, in the absence of the ideological or moral appeal, parties made efforts to catch the public imagination through multi-dimensional advertising hard-sell aimed at projecting a favourable *persona* and charisma of an Atal Bihari Vajpayee or a Sonia Gandhi.

TV Coverage

The advent of satellite television has significantly altered the methods and character of political communication in India. The superlative quality of marathon pre-and post-election television debates among politicians of different hues suggests that like the western democracies, TV will be an important player and determinant in future electoral games. Unlike the print media, TV makes illiteracy a redundant factor in the transmission of political messages. According to one estimate, about 90 per cent of India is covered by television sig-

nals. By the year 2000, 63 million TV sets will provide direct or indirect access to about 378 million viewers who constitute about 40 per cent of Indian households. Even if just five per cent of them watch elec-

The advent of satellite television has significantly altered the methods and character of political communication in India. The superlative quality of marathon pre-and post-election television debates among politicians of different hues suggests that like the western democracies, TV will be an important player and determinant in future electoral games.

tion-related coverage, it translates into a viewership of millions, much larger than the largest public meetings put together. No politician can afford to ignore this mammoth audience. The BJP's fortunes improved a lot owing to the deft oratorical skills displayed by its leaders, especially Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in the live telecasts of debates on three confidence motions in the previous parliament. Election-related TV broadcasts also have

a latent danger of trivialising political discourse and forcing politicians to resort to cheap theatrics to charm the viewers.

Democratic Ritual

Elections in India are increasingly ending up as grand exercises in democratic ritual. Counting of heads has become the main preoccupation of parliament. A slightly higher voter turnout in this election as compared to 1996 elections does not indicate enhanced legitimacy of parties and their postures in the minds of the people. Election outcomes do not address fundamental priorities of drinking water, healthcare, shelter, primary education and so on; nor do they give us accountable and good government. Change of governments do not improve the people's lot. Is it too much to expect that the twelfth Lok Sabha would act as a true communication link between the people and the government, and rise above rampant partisanship to tide over the critical predicaments of our nation?

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'Yet I keep on voting'

The press has regularly hailed the Indian voter for his sagacity in choosing his representatives in the legislatures. What kind of sagacity is it that brings into Parliament a bandit queen with a track record of 49 murders or dacoities? What kind of sagacity is that which is moved by sympathy waves, spurious slogans like *garibi hatao*, and fascination with the Gandhi dynasty?

And yet, once in a while, you do run across a bit of common sense. All booted and buttoned in a closed bandhgala coat a minister was campaigning in a Mumbai slum. Eventually he rounded a corner, and came upon a vast spread of rotting garbage that hadn't been cleared for weeks. With a great show of anger, he demanded to know why filth was allowed to accumulate. "Don't the scavengers come here regularly?" At the fringe of his audience an old wrinkled man chewed on his *bidi* for a moment, contemplating the question. Then, spitting out of the side of the mouth he answered: "Yes, sir, they do come; they come once in five years."

But aside from such occasional wisdom, it is a slogan I saw on a Hyderabad wall (before Seshan's regime) that best describes the governments our voters choose: Government OFF the people, BUY the people, FAR the people.

And, yet, I'll keep on voting.

J. B. D'Souza, *The Times of India*, March 1, 1998.

Understanding the Verdict of 1998

She Came, She Waved, but Failed to Conquer

V. Krishnamachari

Almost everything about her became news - the colour of the saris she wore, the way she walked briskly.

In 1977, after a year and half of her 'Emergency' rule, Mrs. Indira Gandhi ordered elections. The result, we all know, was disastrous to her and her party. If only she had the slightest inkling of her impending defeat in Rae Bareilly, her pocket borough till then, by some one by the name of Raj Narain and the wiping out of her party from the entire north, she would not have lifted the 'emergency' much against Sanjay Gandhi's 'advice' and ventured into an election, whatever her 'concern' for the opinion of the democratic West or whatever little faith in democracy she might have inherited from her illustrious father. But she under-estimated the people's intelligence and over-estimated the 'benefits' of her 'emergency rule' as she saw them and, therefore, allowed herself to be led into believing that she would win not less than 300 seats.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi of 1977 is being recalled because, two decades later, her daughter-in-law appears to have landed herself in a similar situation. After feigning initial 'reluctance' to come out of her private life and get into active politics, she finally decided to take the plunge, probably believing the calculation of her loyalists that the party would bounce back to power, if only she would lead it. Mr. Kesri, for all his faults and shortcomings, was not in a hurry to pull down the U.F. government (although more than once he went to the brink) because he knew that his party was

not yet ready for the electoral battle, but, not so the others, more especially the "Sonia loyalists" like Arjun Singh. For them, the interim report of the Jain Commission came like manna from heaven. They calculated or rather miscalculated that the most opportune time had arrived to pull down the U.F. government so that they could make an issue of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, go to the people with Mrs. Sonia Gandhi at the helm and victory would be theirs. They stalled the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament for days on end, forcing repeated adjournments. Just one signal from Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to her (and her husband's) 'loyalists' would have checked her party MPs. But, she looked on unconcerned. Probably she thought that her men were on the right track and were adopting the correct *modus operandi*.

When, ultimately, the elections came and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi announced her decision to campaign for the Congress candidate 'without any desire for power or position for herself', Congressmen became euphoric and said that their cadres were 'electrified'. In this euphoria they believed that the whole nation was 'electrified'; and it was just waiting to swing the Congress way and that all what was needed was that Mrs. Sonia Gandhi should go round the country and present herself before the charisma-starved millions. She did it. She is reported to have travelled 60000 kms. during her campaign. She received a

lot of media hype. Almost everything about her became news - the colour of the saris she wore, the way she walked briskly, leaving behind her security men or forcing them to run to catch up with her, the way she waved to the crowd (sometimes in unison with Priyanka), how the crowds 'waited' for her and surged forward to get a glimpse of her, the way she greeted in different languages in different regions - and so on. At the end of it all, the Congress tally was just 142, the same humble tally that the non-charismatic Narasimha Rao could score in 1996.

Despite such poor performance, Congress leaders are vying with each other in glorifying Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's role and her "magic". A grateful Working Committee passed a special resolution reflecting this sentiment. While one can understand the kind of reaction from Congressmen for whom a member of the dynasty is like a 'family deity', it is unfortunate that even some senior journalists and political commentators have, in their post-election analysis, talked of the 'Sonia magic'. Here are some hard facts which would demystify the so-called 'magic'.

Mrs. Sonia Gandhi campaigned in 141 constituencies. According to knowledgeable sources these were carefully chosen to include only the 52 where the Congress had won in 1996 and the remaining where, on the basis of

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1996 voting trends, the Congress had fair chances of winning. But the Congress managed to win only in 48 constituencies (as against 52 in 1996) and lost all the rest. The enormity of the defeat would be realised when we have a look at some of the key constituencies where the Congress candidates lost.

Congress Rout

Leading the list is Sriperumbudur, the place of Rajiv Gandhi's martyrdom, from where Mrs. Sonia Gandhi had commenced her campaign on an emotional note; Salem (Tamil Nadu) where she campaigned for the TNCC (I) President (a person calling himself the Tamil Nadu Rajiv Congress won from here!); Chikmagalur (Karnataka) from where Mrs. Indira Gandhi staged a comeback after the defeat in the post-emergency election (where now Veerappa Moily, former Chief Minister lost); Hoshangabad (Sonia loyalist Arjun Singh was defeated); New Delhi (R. K. Dhawan, the dynasty's own man was defeated); Amethi (Rajiv Gandhi's constituency); Rae Bareilly (Indira Gandhi's constituency), Phulpur (once Nehru's constituency), Nainital (N. D. Tiwari) and scores of other key constituencies in which the Congress lost. In Hyderabad, she addressed one of the biggest meetings. But the Hyderabad seat went to the MIM and Secunderabad to the BJP. She had concentrated her intensive campaign in U.P. and rightly so. But, while her party drew a blank, according to one report, 77 Congress candidates lost their deposit.

Mrs. Gandhi went out of her way to apologise to the people of

the Punjab for her mother-in-law's Operation Blue Star of 1982. She even took her son-in-law (son of the soil) during her campaign in the Punjab to highlight her personal links with that state. The party not only failed to win a single seat but the percentage of votes polled by it was the lowest ever in the electoral history of the Punjab.

If, in Maharashtra, the Congress won 38 out of the 48 seats and sent shock waves to the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena combine, it was entirely due to the hard work done by Mr. Sharad Pawar and the unbeatable alliance he had successfully forged with the RPI and the Samajwadi Party. In fact, in Mumbai South Central, the Congress ally, the SP lost by just 153 votes and in Mumbai North West the same party (Tushar Gandhi) lost by 19,235 votes. In both the places, the Janata Dal followed a dog-in-the-manger policy and spoiled the chances of the SP. Otherwise, the tally of the Congress combine in Maharashtra would have been 40 out of 48. It was a political miracle wrought by Sharad Pawar. Yet, his own party men are reluctant to give him the credit but try to look for a non-existent 'Sonia magic'.

In Bihar, the Congress managed to save face and registered some presence thanks to Mr. Kesri's tie-up with his friend Laloo Prasad's RJD.

During a panel discussion of election results on Star TV (Prannoy Roy, Dorab Sopariwala and Rangarajan), it came out that the Congress would have added 9 seats to its Gujarat tally by merely hav-

ing an alliance with Vaghela's RJP. But, with the coming of Sonia, some of the Congress leaders became over confident and arrogant and spurned Vaghela. This is a negative aspect of the 'Sonia factor'.

The Queen Can Do No Wrong

With Mrs. Sonia Gandhi taking over the Presidentship of the Congress and also becoming the Chairperson of the CPP, the dynastic succession is complete. But, the question is whether it is going to help the Congress. The manner in which she dealt with a major assignment as Congress chief, does not infuse confidence. Coming out of Rashtrapati Bhavan after meeting the President, she told waiting newsmen that the Congress would not stake its claim since it did not have the numbers. When inviting Mr. Vajpayee, the President, in his communique referred to Mrs. Gandhi's statement to the press. A day later, Mrs. Gandhi told the CPP that she had, in fact, informed the President that her party was in contact with others and that she would get back to him on March 17. If that was the position why a different statement to the press? Was it smartness or inexperience or ineptitude? In any case, for the Congressmen, the Queen of the dynasty could do no wrong.

That the dynasty has ceased to command general respect, much less awe, was clear by the manner in which Ms. Jayalalitha made bold to blast Mrs. Gandhi right in the capital under her very nose.

Much has been said about former Congressmen returning to

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the fold once Mrs. Sonia Gandhi came out to campaign. This was just a trickle, that too by people like Mr. Mani Shankar Iyer, for instance, who have no grassroots base. On the contrary Ms. Mamata Banerjee has chosen to stay allied with the BJP although she made a courtesy call on Mrs. Sonia Gandhi.

Immediately after the election results were known, a well known commercial hoarding (AMUL's hoarding) displayed the slogan: "So Nia yet so far" (phonetic for 'so near') - of course from power. That is where the dynasty finds itself stranded as of now.

MR. V. KRISHNAMACHARI is a retired railway official and a freelance journalist.



*I've had this weird dream
twice since Oscar night —
that we're all on the 'Titanic'*

SUDHIR DAR in
The Pioneer

Of the 271 women who contested these elections, 182 lost their deposit and only 43 were successful.

(Based on a report in *The Times of India* of April 19)

"SONIA GANDHI, INDIA'S BY ACQUISITION"

Even the The Economist can get caught in convoluted reasoning to explain a phenomenon that has a simple explanation. The following report datelined Delhi (The Economist, March 26-27), is on Sonia Gandhi's foray into electioneering. The correspondent of The Economist who filed the report takes the reader into 'Hindu tradition' 'paraya dhan' and so on. Stuff and nonsense. As is so often the case, there is a simple explanation - a member of 'The Family' is back at the hustings after a lapse of five years. Moreover she is a 'phirengi' and widow of an assassinated member of 'The Family'. This added to the curiosity which drew crowds. As for the lady's impact on the elections, Mr Krishnamachari's article speaks facts. Incidentally does one sense in the report a nostalgia for the return of the Dynasty? The Economist does not normally fantasise. Hence the surprise. Ed.

Indians are suspicious of foreigners, and still fight the ghost of the East India Company. Despite this, Italian-born Sonia Gandhi is regarded as not merely acceptable but a valuable morale-lifter by the quarter of the Indian electorate that supports the Congress party. The BJP failed in its attempt during the election campaign to create a scare about Sonia ushering in a Roman Raj.

The reason is that Hindu tradition, which usually leads to female oppression, has worked to Sonia's advantage. Girls are regarded as financial liabilities that can ruin a poor family (leading in some parts of Punjab and Tamil Nadu to female infanticide). Parents have to spend money on a girl's upbringing and pay a hefty dowry when she is married. But her work then benefits the family she marries into.

Too often, cost-benefit analysis triumphs over parental love, and so parents spend less on the education and health care of girls than boys. Male literacy in India is 65%, female literacy 38%. In most countries, females outnumber males, but in India, the ratio of females to males has fallen steadily from 97.2% at the start of the century to 92.7%, despite laws to promote women's, and girls' rights.

Hindu family tradition refers to girls as *paraya dhan*, or "somebody else's wealth". "Somebody else's property" would be a more accurate description. A bride who turns out to have a heart ailment may be abandoned by an indignant husband claiming shoddy goods have been palmed off on him. In becoming the property of the family they marry into, women also take on its caste label. It matters not what a woman's original caste or even nationality is; once she changes hands, Hindu tradition endows her with her husband's caste and status.

For this reason Sonia is not viewed by Indians as a foreigner. They see her as a Gandhi, not an Italian. Thus, ironically, the very tradition that leads to female infanticide could one day enable her to become prime minister.

COURTESY: *The Economist*, March 21, 1998

Liberty is a thing more of
the spirit and mind than
of the matter and body.



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The Middle Way Approach

The Dalai Lama



Without peace and stability on the Tibetan plateau, it is unrealistic to believe that genuine trust and confidence can be restored in the Sino-Indian relationship.

Great changes are taking place all over the world at the dawn of a new millennium. While there are instances of new conflicts breaking out, it is encouraging that we are also able to witness the emergence of a spirit of dialogue and reconciliation in many troubled parts of the world. In some ways, this twentieth century could be called a century of war and bloodshed. It is my belief that humanity in general has drawn lessons from the experiences gained during this century. As a result, I believe the human community has become more mature. There is, therefore, hope that with determination and dedication, we can make the next century a century of dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution.

Non-Violent Struggle

Today, as we commemorate the thirty-ninth anniversary of our freedom struggle, I wish to express my sincere appreciation and great respect for the resilience and pa-

tience shown by the Tibetan people in the face of tremendous odds. The current situation in Tibet and the lack of any substantive progress in resolving the Tibetan problem is no doubt causing an increasing sense of frustration among many Tibetans. I am concerned that some might feel compelled to look for avenues other than peaceful resolutions. While I understand their predicament, I wish to firmly reiterate once again the importance of abiding by the non-violent course of our freedom struggle. The path of non-violence must remain a matter of principle in our long and difficult quest for freedom. It is my firm belief that this approach is the most beneficial and practical course in the long run. Our peaceful struggle until now has gained us the sympathy and admiration of the international community. Through our non-violent freedom struggle, we are also setting an example and thus contributing to the promotion of a global political culture of non-violence and dialogue.

Encouraging Changes

The sweeping changes across the globe have also embraced China. The reforms, initiated by Deng Xiaoping, have altered not only the Chinese economy, but also the political system, making it less

ideological, less reliant on mass mobilisation, less coercive, and less stifling for the average citizen. The government is also notably far less centralised. Moreover, the post-Deng Xiaoping leadership in China seems to have become more flexible in its international policy. One indication of this is China's greater participation in international fora and cooperation with international organisations and agencies. A remarkable development and achievement has been the smooth transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty last year and Beijing's subsequent pragmatic and flexible handling of issues concerning Hong Kong. Also recent statements from Beijing on restarting cross-strait negotiations with Taiwan reflect apparent flexibility and softening of its stance. In short, there is no doubt that China today is a better place to live in than 15 or 20 years ago. These are historic changes that are commendable. However, China continues to face grave human rights problems and other formidable challenges. It is my hope that the new leadership in China, with this renewed confidence, will have the foresight and courage to provide greater freedom to the Chinese people. History teaches us that material progress and comfort alone are not the full answer to the needs

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 10th March, 1998 on the occasion of the Thirty-Ninth Anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day.

and yearnings of any human society.

Cultural Genocide in Tibet

In stark contrast to these positive aspects of the development in China proper, the situation in Tibet has sadly worsened in recent years. Of late, it has become apparent that Beijing is carrying out what amounts to a deliberate policy of cultural genocide in Tibet. The infamous "strike hard" campaign against Tibetan religion and nationalism has intensified with each passing year. This campaign of repression – initially confined to monasteries and nunneries – has now been extended to cover all parts of Tibetan society. In some spheres of life in Tibet, we are witnessing the return of an atmosphere of intimidation, coercion and fear, reminiscent of the days of the Cultural Revolution.

Human Rights Violations

In Tibet, human rights violations continue to be wide-spread. These abuses of rights have a distinct character, and are aimed at preventing Tibetans as a people from asserting their own identity and culture and their wish to preserve it. This Buddhist culture inspires the Tibetan people with values and concepts of love and compassion that are of practical benefit and relevance in daily life and hence the wish to preserve it. Thus, human rights violations in Tibet are often the result of policies of racial and cultural discrimination and are only the symptoms and consequences of a deeper problem. Therefore, despite some economic progress in Tibet, the human rights situation has not improved. It is only by addressing the fundamental issue of Tibet that the human rights problems can be overcome.

It is an obvious fact that the sad state of affairs in Tibet is of no

benefit at all either to Tibet or to China. To continue along the present path does nothing to alleviate the suffering of the Tibetan people, nor does it bring stability and unity to China, which are of overriding importance to the leadership in Beijing. Also, one of the main concerns of the Chinese leadership has been to improve its international image and standing. However, its inability to resolve the Tibetan problem peacefully has been tarnishing the international image and reputation of China. I believe a solution to the Tibetan issue would have far-reaching positive implications for China's image in the world, including in its dealings with Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Self Rule Not Independence

With regard to a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of Tibet, my position is very straightforward. I am not seeking independence. As I have said many times before, what I am seeking is for the Tibetan people to be given the opportunity to have genuine self-rule in order to preserve their civilisation and for the unique Tibetan culture, religion, language and way of life to grow and thrive. My main concern is to ensure the survival of the Tibetan people with their own unique Buddhist cultural heritage. For this, it is essential, as the past decades have shown clearly, that the Tibetans be able to handle all their domestic affairs and to freely determine their social, economic and cultural development. I do not believe that the Chinese leadership would have any fundamental objections to this. Successive Chinese leadership have always assured that the Chinese presence in Tibet is to work for the welfare of the Tibetans and to "help develop" Tibet. Therefore, given a political will, there is no reason why the Chinese leadership cannot start addressing

the issue of Tibet by entering into a dialogue with us. This is the only proper way to ensure stability and unity, which the Chinese leadership asserts are their primary concern.

I take this opportunity to once again urge the Chinese leadership to give serious and substantive considerations to my suggestions. It is my firm belief that dialogue and a willingness to look with honesty and clarity at the reality of Tibet can lead us to a viable solution. It is time for all of us to "seek truth from facts" and to learn lessons derived from a calm and objective study of the past and to act with courage, vision and wisdom.

The Principal Issues

The negotiations must aim to establish a relationship between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples based on friendship and mutual benefit; to ensure stability and unity; and to empower the Tibetan people to exercise genuine self-rule with freedom and democracy, thus allowing them to preserve and cultivate their unique culture as well as to protect the delicate environment of the Tibetan plateau. These are the principal issues. However, the Chinese government is making consistent efforts to confuse the real issues at stake. They allege that our efforts are aimed at the restoration of Tibet's old social system and the status and the privileges of the Dalai Lama. As far as the institution of the Dalai Lama is concerned, I stated publicly as early as 1969 that it is for the people of Tibet to decide whether this institution is to continue or not. In my own case, I made it clear in a formal public statement in 1992 that when we return to Tibet, I will hold no positions in any future Tibetan government. Moreover, no Tibetan, whether in exile or within Tibet, has a desire of restoring Tibet's old social order. It is, therefore, disap-

pointing that the Chinese government continues to indulge in such baseless and distorted propaganda. This is not helpful in creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue, and I hope that Beijing will refrain from making such allegations.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the many governments, parliaments, non-governmental organisations, Tibetan support groups and individuals, who continue to be deeply concerned with the repression in Tibet and urge to resolve the question of Tibet through peaceful negotiations. The United States has set a precedent by appointing a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs in order to facilitate dialogue between us, Tibetans and the Chinese governments. The European and Australian parliaments have recommended similar initiatives. Last December, the International Commission of Jurists issued its third report on Tibet, entitled *Tibet : Human Rights and the Rule of Law*. These are timely initiatives and most encouraging developments.

India's Role

Furthermore, on this occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, I wish to express, on behalf of the Tibetan people, our heart-felt congratulations and reiterate our immense appreciation and gratitude to the people and government of India, which has become a second home to the majority of the Tibetans in exile. India represents not only a safe haven for us Tibetan refugees, but is also for us a country whose ancient philosophy of *Ahimsa* and deep-rooted democratic tradition have inspired and shaped our values and aspirations. Moreover, I believe India can and should play a constructive and influential role in resolving the Tibetan problem peacefully. My

"Middle-Way Approach" is in line with the basic Indian policy vis-à-vis Tibet and China. There is no reason why India should not be actively engaged in encouraging and promoting dialogue between Tibetans and the Chinese government. It is clear that without peace and stability on the Tibetan plateau, it is unrealistic to believe that genuine trust and confidence can be restored in the Sino-Indian relationship.

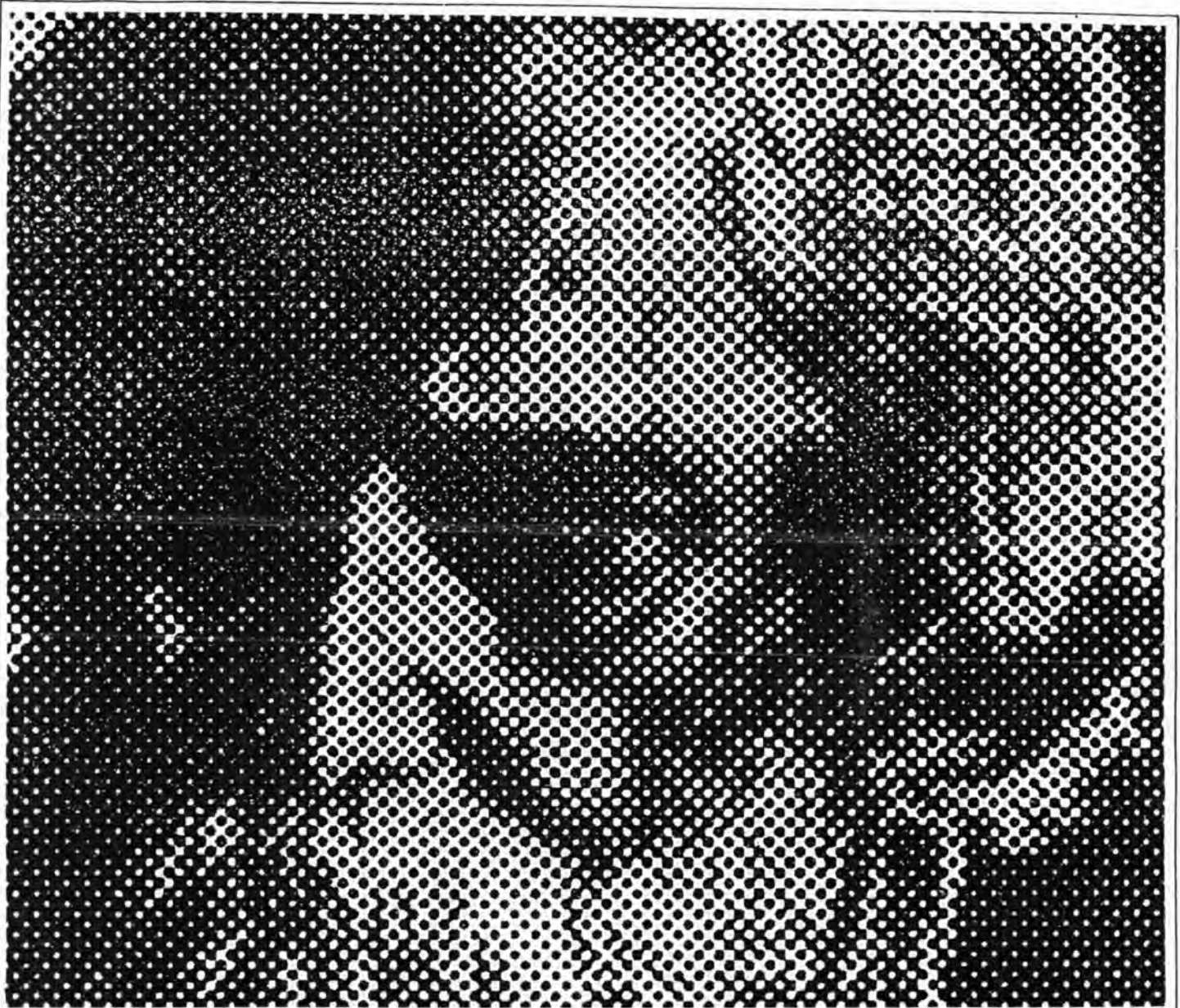
Last year, we conducted an opinion poll of the Tibetans in exile and collected suggestions from Tibet wherever possible on the proposed referendum, by which the Tibetan people were to determine the future course of our freedom struggle to their full satisfaction. Based on the outcome of this poll and suggestions from Tibet, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, our parliament in exile, passed a resolution empowering me to continue to use my discretion on the matter without seeking recourse to a referendum. I wish to thank the people of Tibet for the tremendous trust, confidence and hope they place in me. I continue to believe that my "Middle-Way Approach" is the most realistic and pragmatic course to resolve the issue of Tibet peacefully. This approach meets the vital needs of the Tibetan people while ensuring the unity and stability of the People's Republic of China. I will, therefore, continue to pursue this course of approach with full commitment and make earnest efforts to reach out to the Chinese leadership.

With my homage to the brave men and women of Tibet, who have died for the cause of our freedom, I pray for an early end to the suffering of our people and for peace and welfare of all sentient beings.

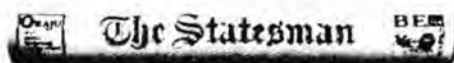
Sardar Patel's Warning China's Ambitions

Throughout history, we have seldom been worried about our North East Frontier. The Himalayas have been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered us about our frontiers. In 1940, we entered into a convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationships. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all stipulations which Tibet has entered into in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century. China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas and in the north east, we have on our side of the frontier a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongolian. The undefined state of the frontiers and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and that the communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambition in this respect not only covers the Himalayan slopes on our side but also includes important parts of Assam.

(An extract from Sardar Patel's letter to Pandit Nehru, dated November 7, 1950.)



*If there is anything that could overshadow
the close association we had with the great thinkers
of our time, it could only be the close association
they had with us.*



Why settle for anything less?

Profiles of Indian Liberals

M. Venkata Krishniah - The Mysore Liberal

(1844-1933)

B. Leela



M. Venkata Krishniah was born on 20th August 1844 in the village Magge, in Mysore. Born in an orthodox Telugu Brahmin family, his father Subbiah educated his son and taught him Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada. But at the age of ten Venkata Krishniah lost his father and his mother migrated to Mysore to earn a living. Although Mysore was ruled by Commissioners Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar the King despite his deposition, lent a helping hand to many and Venkata Krishniah was one of the beneficiaries. Venkata Krishniah's thirst for knowledge compelled him to approach an influential scholar, who took interest in the young lad and got him admitted in the "Raja's Free School". When English education was the privilege of the few, Venkata Krishniah then fourteen years of age by his hardwork, became a favourite of Mr. Hardy, his headmaster. Others such as Hudson and Dunning too evinced interest in the young lad. He had a burning desire to learn and very soon, he

As C. R. Reddy one-time opponent of M. Venkata Krishniah aptly remarked "If only M. Venkata Krishniah had worked and fought in British India, he would have become immortal like his contemporary, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. His sterling qualities could be understood only if one sits in the opposition bench."

read and mastered Herbert Spencer, Bacon and Huxley. Thus he was able to think rationally and when he became a teacher, he encouraged the same rationalist temper in his students. Prior to becoming a teacher, Venkata Krishniah came under the influence of C. Rangacharlu, the first Dewan of Mysore State (1881-83). On completing his Matriculation, Venkata Krishniah found that he could not pursue college education due to poverty and domestic circumstances. However the young teacher could speak to his pupils authoritatively on the Bible, Voltaire, Burke, Locke, Hume and others.

He became the first headmaster of Marimallappa High School, Mysore and devoted his entire life to the progress of the school. He taught his students and inculcated in them, a true Indian culture and made them think for themselves. He always advocated translations of great works from English into Kannada. Thus his school became famous for imparting knowledge. He took care to start a library in his school where students had the opportunity to widen their knowledge. Marimallappa

School then had an excellent magazine and book collection. T.P. Kailasam, the father of modern Kannada Theatre was a student of Venkata Krishniah. It is but natural Marimallappa School is even now identified with M. Venkata Krishniah.

The multifaceted career of M. Venkata Krishniah can be divided into four broad streams although he played many roles and dominated the political scene in Mysore for more than seven decades.

Critic of Government

Gatiah or the grand old man (as he was affectionately called) fought and lived for the cause of the middle class. Influenced by the liberal ideas of the West, he remained a relentless critic of government, throughout his life.

The struggle for the freedom of the Press goes back to the days of Raja Rammohun Roy. Throughout the struggle, the leaders who championed the cause of the freedom of the Press showed remarkable courage and among those who championed the cause were editors of the native press. Through his vernacular newspapers, he cham-

pioned the cause of the common man and his paper was a terror not only to the bureaucrats and officials including the Dewans who were autocratic but also to the British, as Mysore was directly under their control. The Press enjoyed very little freedom. The Mysore government was very much aware that the vernacular press was influencing the natives. But M. Venkata Krishniah was "adamantine" in his attitude and the same unyielding spirit¹ and wrote according to his conviction, unmindful of the consequences. Perhaps the earliest newspaper M. Venkata Krishniah edited was *Hitabodhini* which was started in October 1893 by M. B. Srinivasa Iyengar and M. S. Puttanna. Although the newspaper was started keeping in view the needs of women, it carried both views and news, and the news coverage included political topics too. When M. Venkata Krishniah took over the editorship of the newspaper for a brief while, the paper achieved great popularity, awakened the middle class and substantially contributed towards the formation of public opinion.

'*Vrittanta Chintamani*' was another paper started by him which projected the views of the Mysore Party of which he was a strong champion. The Mysore Party stood for opportunities in the public services for Mysoreans. Even though M. Venkata Krishniah did not occupy an important position in government, his championing of popular causes, and his advocacy of the rights of the natives in general made the newspaper, an embodiment of a criti-

cal democratic spirit, very much on the lines of the liberals of the West. But the editor had to pay severely for his independent spirit. His paper, ceased publication under the Mysore Newspaper Regulation Act of 1908. After the relaxation of the Mysore Newspaper Regulation Act, M. Venkata Krishniah started a group of publications and his continuous struggle with the government resulted in the stoppage of his pension². The private letters written by M. Venkata Krishniah to Mirza Ismail, Dewan of Mysore reflect the degree and the intensity of pain the great grand old man faced against heavy ordeals. The "enlightened" Mysore government never allowed him full freedom and his last attempt to start a newspaper pertaining to nature cure was short lived. Thereafter M. Venkata Krishniah never revived his papers.

Women's Liberation

Even though M. Venkata Krishniah was religious and tradition oriented, he did not hesitate to assimilate new forces and practised what he preached. It is interesting to note that his wife Puttalakshmma who joined a school after her marriage became well versed in Sanskrit, Kannada and English. She worked as Assistant Mistress of Balika Pathasala and even delivered a speech on July 1890, at the Town Hall, Mysore on 'Female Education'. The meeting was presided by Centsal Rao, the Maharaja's Council Member. Many children who had encountered difficulties in pursuing education were inspired by Venkata Krishniah's wife, Puttalakshmma's entry to the school facilitated several high caste married girls taking to education seriously even after marriage. Venkata Krishniah also founded a women's home and took a lead in women's education. He often argued on the floor of the Representative Assembly (of which he was a member,) that widows

should be educated and be trained as school mistresses, nurses and midwives to enable them to develop self-confidence and help them to become economically independent. He championed the cause of *panchamas* (Harijans) and of their education too.

Social Reformer

Venkata Krishniah spent his life for the cause of humanity. The destitute home known as 'Anathalaya' which he founded and nurtured has shaped the destiny of many students. The Mysore Literary Union of which he was the Secretary, is even now active and continues to be a platform for free expression and manages a big library and reading room. The Marimallappa School, with which he was associated till the end of his life drew the attention of all communities. Perhaps the greatest blow which the great grand old man faced was the stopping of all his newspapers during the reign of Mirza Ismail, Dewan of Mysore in 1929.

As C. R. Reddy one-time opponent of M. Venkata Krishniah aptly remarked "If only M. Venkata Krishniah had worked and fought in British India, he would have become immortal like his contemporary, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. His sterling qualities could be understood only if one sits in the opposition bench."

Even though M. Venkata Krishniah was offered many positions in the government, because of his high ideals, he refused to accept them and preferred poverty to positions. He was indeed a liberal humanist and was respected and loved by Mysoreans.

DR. B. LEELA retired as Librarian of the SIIS College in Mumbai. She has written extensively on modern Mysore.

1. K. Subba Rao, *Revived Memories*, p.399.

2. Private Letters from M. Venkata Krishniah to Dewan Mirza, M. Ismail, 14.7.1926 (Palace Records of the Karnataka Archives, Bangalore), requesting Mr. Mirza Ismail to apprise the Maharaja of the true facts in his case.

The Three Sacred 'R's

V. C. Viswanathan

**If there is one principle that should govern all our action, it is this:
"Treat others, subordinates, bosses, colleagues, customers, suppliers,
shareholders and other stakeholders, the way you like to be treated -
with honesty, integrity and a sense of total responsibility.**

If reading, writing and arithmetic are the three 'R's of learning, the three 'R's of managing are : respect, relationships and responsibility. All the three are inter-related and inter-dependent. You can't have one without the other.

For example, you can't expect others to respect you if you don't respect them. Nor can you build a relationship of trust without mutual respect and acceptance of responsibility.

Respect: Every individual - be he a peon or president, a clerk or chief executive - is entitled to be treated with respect. Learning to respect others' views, values, feelings and self-esteem is the very basic requirement to be an effective manager.

No two human beings are alike. Each one is endowed with unique qualities, abilities and a mind that can think and a heart that can feel. The power to think, emote and see self-fulfillment is what makes human beings so uniquely different from other animal species. Our failure to understand this and translate its relevance to the work situation is what has led most management practices to be so ineffective, wasteful and counter-productive.

All schools of management emphasize the need for better

communication between people for organizational effectiveness. But it is a paradox of our modern society that although the technology of communication has reached phenomenal heights, real communication between people is rarely achieved. People generally tend to think of communication as a mechanical process - a matter of improved writing or speaking. It is not so. Real communication is a result, rather than a process. Effective communication between two or more people can happen even without any mechanical transmission of the spoken or written word. Often absolute silence prevails at the heart of the most effective communication.

Although there are certain skills that can be learned to improve communication, effective communication, cannot happen without an underlying foundation of basic trust and mutual confidence. A good communicator is one who understands people and is also one whom people understand and believe. Although some skills can be learned, communication is really a way of life that needs to be learned, acquired and nurtured always. It is not something you can learn in a two-day workshop.

A skilled speaker who is knowledgeable, who has conviction and is also sincere, is a powerful

communicator and an effective leader. A skilled speaker who lacks knowledge, conviction and sincerity is a mere rabble-rouser who can do a lot of harm. Of knowledge, conviction and sincerity, sincerity has the greatest power to impact listeners. The great power and influence Mahatma Gandhi had on people in India and across the world came from his integrity and transparent sincerity of purpose.

Relationships: The challenge to managerial leadership is how to bring out the best in everyone and knit people in the organization into highly effective teams. Managing, in this context, is essentially a matter of managing relationships. Building enduring relationship with employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders and other stakeholders is the only way companies can create long term sustainable competitive advantage and survive in today's turbulent times.

An enduring relationship can be built only on the foundation of trust, openness and fairness. The other side of trust is being trustworthy, which is the fruit of honest relationships. Where trust is absent people avoid taking initiatives. Mutual trust, confidence and teamwork are an essential condition for creativity, innovation and vitality in an organization. Open communication and sharing of informa-

tion encourage people to think and express their ideas without fear of being snubbed or punished. It is the most effective way to enlist everyone in the organization. In the colourful words of Jack Welch, productivity - real and limitless productivity - comes from challenged, empowered, excited, rewarded teams of people. It comes from engaging every single mind in the organization.

Responsibility: Stephen Covey gives a beautiful definition of responsibility. He says it is 'response-ability', the ability to respond. It means accepting total responsibility for oneself without giving excuses or passing the buck or blame to somebody else. The higher the position one occupies in an organization the greater is the obligation to behave responsibly with others. A weak manager will take credit when things go well and shift blame when things go wrong. A strong, self-confident manager will do the reverse - accept blame when things go wrong and give credit to others when things go right.

It's a pity that sometimes people thoughtlessly use words like 'tough-talking', 'mean', 'ruthless', 'no-nonsense type', to describe a manager who is considered efficient.

A 'strong' person is thought to be someone who uses power to coerce and intimidate people. The mindset persists despite ample evidence of its futility and the harm it does. It reminds me of an anecdote. On being promoted to the position of a general manager, a man took his son along to show him his new office. The youngster, duly impressed and wanting a demonstration of his father's newly acquired power said, "Dad", call someone over and fire him in my presence!"

A truly effective manager is

a *karma-yogi*, one who has achieved mastery over oneself and has a selfless attitude towards, the people he leads. People feel empowered and respond enthusiastically when they are led by such a person. This calls for concentrated dedication, perseverance, skills, a positive attitude of high expectations, a genuine love for people and, if I am add, a prayerful heart.

In the words of Swami Ranganathananda, an ideal manager should be a *rajarishi*, one "who combines the heroism of a *raja* and the saintliness of a *rishi*."

If there is one principle that should govern all our action, it is this: "Treat others, subordinates, bosses, colleagues, customers, suppliers, shareholders and other stakeholders, the way you like to be treated - with honesty, integrity and a sense of total responsibility."

MR. V. C. VISWANATHAN is Advisor, Marketing, J. K. Industries Ltd.

"The most elegant forms of managerial decision involve problems that never have to be solved because they are prevented from happening. Oddly, there is a greater appreciation for a manager who can step in and cope with a problem after it happens, than one who can make it not happen. Coping is visible and dramatic."

Prevention is unpopular, because it usually means changing something that is not yet failing; it is thankless, because the only testimony of its effectiveness is a non-event. Even so, the deliberate non-catastrophe is one of the most impressive contributions a manager can make."

James Martin

ACC

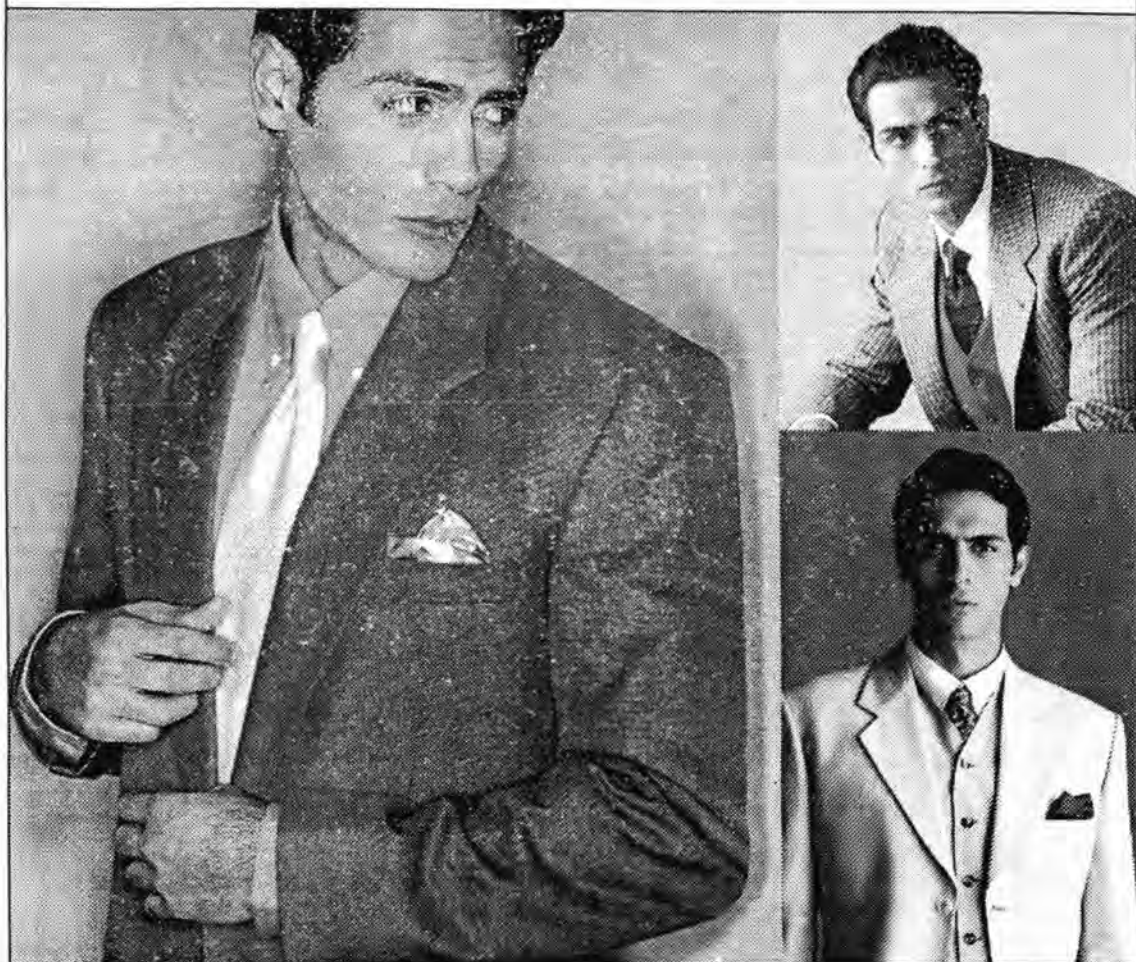
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OLYMPUS

Child Labour - Taking a Contrary View

Kusum Chopra

It is one thing to spout human and children's rights in air-conditioned seminar halls; but how many of the participants have actually picked up a vagrant kid and taken him or her home to feed, clothe or educate, even if not to love as one's own?

Gujarat has shown how easy it is to take the world for a ride. A massive publicity blitzkrieg accompanied the official child labour survey, which turned up 300 odd working kids at Surat, where an earlier survey had listed 1851 in the diamond units, 1700 odd in the textile industry and 1388 in miscellaneous other jobs.

The convenient three-digit figure may now serve to assuage the guilty conscience of innumerable importers. The kids had been chased out of the factories for a few short weeks while the survey was being conducted. When taken back, a lot more conditions were imposed, by employers, protecting their rearguard against any backlash.

Net losers from the entire exercise were neither the exporting nor the importing lobbies, nor the Doing-good Bleeding Hearts of the World. It was the State exchequer and those labelled 'Child Labour'.

It may be pertinent to point out that when slogans are raised against the exploitation of child labour, it is not only employers who exploit them, but also the sloganeers who mint money in the name of child labour, without giving concrete thought to what is being done.

Developed Countries' Concern

Consider first, where has the child labour become an issue?

In Third World developing

countries, where no one is proud of putting a child to work, it goes so much against the grain that until recently, even census figures were unaware of the contribution of women and children to the family kitty.

Why has child labour not become an issue in the homeland of enterprise, the U.S.A., where youngsters routinely take part-time or full-time jobs at tender ages, usually not acceptable to any self-respecting oriental family?

The economies of the developed countries have been through the throes that our economies are now passing through; and when they were passing through those throes, child labour was rampant there. That was practically what the Industrial Revolution was all about.

Like the "cheap labour" bogey, child labour may just be one more tool of the so-called developed countries to keep competition down. I use the term "so-called developed" not because their economies have come up on the backs of child labour, but because the extent of their under-development, of poverty stricken families without homes and social handicaps is neither well recorded nor publicised.

Unfortunately, India's poverty is very photogenic, and now highly media exploited. Therefore, it is very visible across the globe and excellent target practice. No

developed country has succeeded in totally eliminating poverty; only in sweeping upto even thirty per cent of the population reckoned poor under the proverbial carpet. Yet we follow the paths they prescribe: "do away with child labour", they proclaim, and we scramble to implement the dictat.

The Uncensored Child Labour

Under the globalisation programmes, a number of enterprises, both public and private, have been either revamped or axed. But elaborate provision is made for the labour which is to be hived off, in the form of retraining, re-employment, gratuities, provident funds, etc. When enterprises are asked to hive off child labour, what are the procedures that are followed? What guideline has the almighty World Bank offered? What alternate is being offered to households against the stoppage of the wages earned by the child, sent to work, obviously because total family income falls short of need.

No one has to date offered any break-up of percentage of child labour, that is that of minor-headed households - orphans fending for themselves or for their siblings. Or what percent of child labour is the offspring of a galloping new phenomena, that of female-headed households in regions where the men have either migrated or deserted.

A 1974-75 Rural Labour Enquiry had revealed that in the estimated 25 million rural labour households, women provided 40 percent of the work force and children seven percent. Those figures have undoubtedly scaled new heights with recent trends in large-scale agriculture fostering rural labour migration from poorer states to the green revolution areas of high yields, leaving behind more and more female-headed households.

On the other hand, a 1995 study of municipal school dropouts in Ahmedabad indicated a majority did so out of choice ... not because of any economic necessity or inability to cope with studies. These are the youngsters who end up at the *chai ki kitti* or neighbourhood small factory. The parents' argument is "it keeps him off the streets, out of mischief and earns a little".

That is a good deal of urban child labour for you. If they don't get sent to work by parental pressure, they end up in petty crime and smuggling, pawns of the burgeoning urban and rural mafias. How many more of those does India have the capacity to absorb after the bitter experiences of Punjab, Kashmir and the North East?

While tremendous *brouhaha* has been made over children employed by various manufacturing or commercial establishments, which can be pressurized to pay up to avoid anti-publicity, the eternal Bleeding Hearts are blissfully ignorant of the existence of child-entrepreneurs who go out to sell anything from Poppins to purses, and services from shoe-shine to singing ... all make that same elusive living that the child workers of the factories or the tea stalls do.

Adult Responsibility

How many of the child-labour do-gooders have met and spoken in any depth to grown-up children

is an open question. What has the years of work and experience done for them? What about those who are to cross that magic cut-off line of 14 years shortly and escape the child labour classification? Should they now be employed by the same hazardous industries that shunted them out a short while ago?

And what after the No-child-labour dictat?

It is difficult to envisage a scenario in which adult male labour will take over the work being done by children, whether rural or urban. The question again is: Why not?

Is it that the adult males are too addicted to drink and gambling to put in a full day's work? Or is there enough alternative lucrative employment available to them? If so, then why were the children sent out to work in such abhorrent conditions, in the first place?

If child labour is not to be displaced by adult males, then it is most likely to place an even greater burden on the woman, already staggering under double workloads at home and in the workplace and in rural areas, with duties of fuel and water collection as well.

India does not have the resources to look after its children, not even just those who are orphans. That is an unpalatable truth we have to accept. Hundreds are regularly sent abroad for foreign adoptions. The conditions in our orphanages and remand homes are appalling enough.

How are we going to provide for the lakhs to be thrown out of the work force by nascent anti-child labour laws? When social pressures ensure that a young one is thrown out by the household they work in, employers quickly find an older replacement. What replacements are offered to the now out-of-work "little workers"? Food, clothing, shelter,

money to send home to the waiting family? What verbal and philosophic balms to assuage the young worker's guilt over the hunger of younger siblings, waiting for money back home? It is one thing to spout human and children's rights in air-conditioned seminar halls; but how many of the participants have actually picked up a vagrant kid and taken him or her home to feed, clothe or educate, even if not to love as one's own?

Importance of Education

The Child Labour Act has provided for some education at the workplace, with the concurrence of the employers. But education is no panacea. Is the education that is on offer, palatable to the work-abused young minds? Is it relevant to their situations, immediate or prospective?

Most of its unpalatability boils down to its lack of relevance to the work-a-day worlds of India's children, labour or otherwise. The system has little to offer by way of specifics of coping with poor or deteriorated lands, poor housing, hygiene in slums, low cost nutrition, minor repairs, filling in of the various forms that life forces on one, or any other information of some practical value. Why only child labour, even other children, those of India's middle classes no longer learn how to repair, nail, paint, sing, knit or sew at school, only how to cheat in exams and bootlick their way up.

Perhaps, if the curriculum were to include some particle which would improve their skills in their chosen profession, instead of the liberal arts curriculum, employers may be persuaded to reduce their hostility to the new look at child labour.

Nor does the curriculum do very much to provide the young minds with adequate mooring in

their traditional "culture and heritage". Our standard texts continue to adopt the norms laid by the colonists who colonized not only the land but also the minds, and disparaged every basic tenet that has kept our culture alive as "uncivilised".

The Government's Role

The National Policy on Education supports a specific non-formal segment for "school drop-outs, working children and those from habitations without schools, and girls who cannot attend whole day school". On paper, the scheme is excellent, with hundred per cent assistance from the Union Government to volunteer agencies running Non-Formal Education (NFE) centres in slums, hilly and tribal areas and for working children. In 1988-

89, there were 241,000 NFE centres. In 1989-90, these went up to 2.6 lakhs, enrolling 6.5 million students.

But on the ground and in actual fact, how many such facilities are actually functional? And what curriculum has been prepared keeping child labour specifically in mind?

What is needed is an education package palatable to the children and employers alike. For teaboy, basics of hygiene and serving; for girls family nutrition, food processing, weaving, sewing and agricultural skills; in industry, chemistry for dyes and chemicals, metals for diamonds and mining; basic physics and repairs for those in garages and workshops, etc.

MS. KUSUM CHOPRA is a free-lance journalist.

Educate the Electorate



So long as the foundations of our parliamentary democracy rest on an ignorant electorate, political parties face a conflict between two aims. Each party must ask itself the question, shall we work for power, or shall we educate the electorate, leaving power as a comparatively worthless objective? Or shall we stand equally pulled on either side and like the donkey between two hay-stacks stand still?

As far as the Swatantra Party is concerned and so far as I am concerned, I would definitely seek and advise the party to work to educate the electorate rather than run after the immediate pleasures of transient political power. The economy of this great big nation is a complicated affair and it has been further complicated and made into what must be called a mess by the megalomania of the leaders of our political freedom struggle who took over the administration of the country. The foundation of our independence and self-respect has to be improved. The foundation is sound education of all sections of our population, nothing less.

C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, June 1, 1968.

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Time for Good Citizenship

Now that the elections are over, the public can expect the political parties to turn their backs on them. Issues which vitally touch the life of the common people such as primary education, good roads and other infrastructure facilities, water supply, public health services, a responsive and honest administration, efficient public distribution system for weaker sections, were mostly ignored by political parties during the election, and may once again get low priority in their pursuit of power.

The lack of vision and corruption, as also incompetence of politicians, ably supported by an equally venal and tardy bureaucracy have earned the country the rank of the eighth most corrupt nation of the world, while it remains as one of the poorest.

Instead of looking up to politicians and bureaucrats, it is time to try another solution - from the end of citizens, particularly the educated ones with the advantage of a full stomach. Every citizen can strive as a *producer* to give one's best, whatever be one's avocation or profession, as a *consumer* fight for one's right of choice, value for money and above all accountability of vendor of goods, and services; and, as a *social being*, give a part of one's money, talent and time for enhancing the quality of life for the less privileged through innumerable avenues of public service.

The salvation for the country can only be through service and sacrifice. There is no substitute for good citizenship.

M. R. Pai

The East Asian Economic Crisis

Why Hong Kong Was Spared ...

Milton Friedman

The economic turmoil in the Far East is demonstrating which values are virtues - and which are vices.

Economists and social scientists complain that we are at a disadvantage compared to physical and biological scientists because we cannot conduct controlled experiments. However, the experiments that nature throws up can be every bit as instructive as deliberately contrived experiments. Take the fifty-year experiment in economic policy provided by Hong Kong between the end of World War II and this past July, when Hong Kong reverted to China.

In this experiment, Hong Kong represents the experimental treatment; Britain, Israel, and the U.S. serve as controls. Immediately after World War II, Hong Kong had a population of about 600,000. A colony of Britain, it did not receive its freedom after the war as most other colonies did.

The reason was obvious: China was next door. If Hong Kong had been set free, it almost surely would have been taken over by China. Instead, Britain retained Hong Kong as a crown colony. After the Communists took control of Mainland China, a flood of refugees came to Hong Kong. Over the next fifty years, the population exploded. Today it is more than six million.

I take Britain as one control because Britain, a benevolent dictator, imposed different policies on

Hong Kong from the ones it pursued at home. I take Israel as another control because, like Hong Kong, Israel had a small population at the end of the war and then was inundated by refugees. In both, the population increased by roughly tenfold. In both, the refugees came



from races, Chinese and Jewish - that were reputed to be intelligent and commercially able. And those two countries, alike in key respects, adopted very different economic policies. I take the U.S. as a third control because it is the richest country in the world and reputedly the exemplar of free markets.

Hong Kong and Britain

The difference in the economic policies followed by Hong Kong and Britain was a pure accident. The

colonial office in Britain happened to send John Cowperthwaite to Hong Kong "to serve as its financial secretary. Cowperthwaite was a Scotsman and very much a disciple of Adam Smith. At the time, while Britain was moving to a socialist and welfare state, Cowperthwaite insisted that Hong Kong practice *laissez-faire*. He refused to impose any tariffs. He insisted on keeping taxes down.

I first visited Hong Kong in 1955 shortly after the initial inflow of refugees. It was a miserable place for most of its inhabitants. The temporary dwellings that the government had thrown up to house the refugees were one-room cells in a multi-story building that was open in the front; one family, one room. The fact that people would accept such miserable living quarters testified to the intensity of their desire to leave Red China.

I met Cowperthwaite in 1963 on my next visit to Hong Kong. I remember asking him about the paucity of statistics. He answered, "If I let them compute those statistics, they'll want to use them for planning." How wise!

Nonetheless, there are some statistics and in 1960, the earliest date for which I have been able to get them, the average per-capita income in Hong Kong was 28 per

cent of that in Great Britain; by 1996, it had risen to 137 per cent of that in Britain. In short, from 1960 to 1996, Hong Kong's per capita income rose from one-quarter of Britain's to more than a third larger than Britain's. It's easy to state these figures. It is more difficult to realize the significance. Compare Britain – the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, the nineteenth-century economic superpower on whose empire the sun never set – with Hong Kong – a spit of land, overcrowded, with no resource except for a great harbor. Yet within four decades the residents of this spit of overcrowded land had achieved for themselves a level of income one-third higher than that enjoyed by the residents of its mother country.

I believe that the only plausible explanation for the different rates of growth is socialism in Britain, free enterprise and free markets in Hong Kong. Has anybody got a better explanation? I'd be grateful for any suggestions.

Hong Kong and Israel

The comparison with Israel is in some ways even more interesting than that with Britain. Israel had one major disadvantage and several major advantages compared to Hong Kong. Its major disadvantage was that it had to maintain strong armed forces to meet the threat from the enemies that surrounded it, with whom it fought several wars.

On the other hand, Israel had what would be widely regarded as a major advantage, although I don't regard it as such. Israel received much foreign aid from the U.S. government and other governments around the world, and also from Jews living outside Israel – notably, America, South Africa and British Jews. According to data that I analyzed during a visit to Israel in

1977, the bulk of its defense costs was being financed by such contributions. In an economist's way of looking at things, military defense is an export industry for Israel. I estimated that the net cost of defense to Israel was something like 10 per cent of its national income. That's a substantial amount. But it's not an intolerable amount.

Beyond this, Israel has a much larger land area – its population density is 1/25th that of Hong Kong – and far richer natural resources. Corresponding to Hong Kong's great port, it has a Mediterranean port and a southern port at Eilat. And yet from 1960 to 1996, its average per-capita income went from 60 per cent more than Hong Kong's to 40 per cent less.

Again, the most plausible explanation is that Israel followed a socialist policy and Hong Kong a free-market policy. Government spending in Hong Kong was, at its maximum, about 15 per cent of national income. Government spending in Israel was at times close to 100 per cent of national income. (That may seem an impossibility, but it isn't because of the mysteries of national-income accounting.) The socialist policy was Israel's folly, though it did less harm than the corresponding policy did in Britain, partly, in my opinion, because the British were much more law-abiding.

When I returned from my first visit to Israel in 1962, I summarized my impression by saying that two traditions were at war in Israel: a hundred-year old tradition of belief in paternalistic socialist government and of rejection of capitalism and free markets, and a two-thousand-year old tradition, developed out of the necessities of the Diaspora, of self-reliance and voluntary cooperation, of getting around government controls, of

using every ounce of Jewish ingenuity to take advantage of such opportunities as escaped the clumsy grasp of government officials. I concluded that, fortunately for Israel, the older tradition was proving the stronger. Unfortunately for Israel, the older tradition has since lost strength, while the newer tradition has gained. Maybe, Mr. Netanyahu can reverse the process, as he appears to want to do.

Hong Kong and the United States

According to the latest figures I have, per capita income in Hong Kong is almost identical with that in the United States.

That is close to incredible. Here we are – a country of 260 million people that stretches from sea to shining sea, with enormous resources, and a two hundred-year background of more or less steady growth, supposedly the strongest and richest country in the world, and yet six million people living on a tiny spit of land with negligible resources manage to produce as high a per-capita income. How come?

The explanation is the same as for Britain and Israel. Direct government spending is less than 15 per cent of national income in Hong Kong, more than 40 per cent in the United States. Indirect government spending via regulations and mandates is negligible in Hong Kong but accounts for about 10 per cent of national income in the United States. In both respects, the U.S. differs from Hong Kong less than either Britain or Israel, both of which have even higher government spending as a fraction of national income, and even more intrusive and extensive regulations and mandates, which is presumably why per-capita income in the U.S. is more than a third higher than that in the UK and nearly 80 per cent higher than that in Israel.

We are more productive than Hong Kong. But we have chosen, or been led by the vagaries of politics, to devote roughly half of our resources to activities to which Hong Kong devotes 15 or 20 per cent. Our higher productivity means that we can produce with 50 per cent of our resources the same per capita income as Hong Kong can produce with 80 to 85 per cent of its resources.

The real lesson of Hong Kong for the U.S. is that we're using our resources inefficiently. Our government is spending our money to subsidize tobacco and to penalize smoking; to subsidize child-bearing and to discourage child-bearing; to build new housing and to tear down housing; to subsidize agriculture and to penalize agriculture; and on and on. Not to mention converting square miles of forests

into billions of paper forms, and spending many man-years of labor filing them out and then filing them.

In the process, government tends to neglect its basic function: "To protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow citizens; to preserve law and order, to enforce private contracts, to foster competitive markets"

.... and South Korea Went Bust

William McGurn

As an imperfect but believing member of a church that is itself founded upon miracles, I can claim to believe in them. And as a holder of a number of Asian stocks and mutual funds, moreover, on occasion I find myself praying for them. But when the word "miracle" is invoked to explain the economic performance of a country, I feel myself inwardly recoiling, like a freemason who has inexplicably found himself at Lourdes.

As applied to this part of the world, "miracles" first gained currency three years ago in a remarkable book published by the World Bank. Called *The East Asian Miracle*, its topic was the relationship between governments, the private sector, and the market. And no doubt about it, the growth *had* been phenomenal: since 1960 the eight countries in question – Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan – had collectively experienced more than twice as much growth as the rest of East Asia, roughly three times as much as Latin America and South Asia, and five times as much as Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the course of 387 pages the

Bank argued that this success was not as magical as it might appear, and in fact "in large measure" it was achieved by "getting the basics right." Unfortunately for Asia, what struck in people's minds was not the straightforward explanation about fundamentals but the word "miracle." This in turn led to all manner of extravagant claims about "Asian values" and the idea that Western concepts such as competition really didn't apply. Today, with regional stock markets and currencies having shed a third of their value since summer, the haughtiness is gone. In its place is a pessimism that is arguably as unjustified as the excessive enthusiasm that preceded it.

Without doubt South Korea's success in picking itself up from a devastating civil war to become the world's 11th-largest trading nation is a powerful story. But whenever one countered with the equally compelling story of Hong Kong, the word was not miracle but aberration. In my experience everyone wanted to hear about Korea, even though its income per capita was the lowest of the four tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South

Korea); at \$ 8,260, it still remains less than half that of Hong Kong. Yet whenever Hong Kong is cited as a model the objection is raised that it is unique: because it was a colony, because it is near China, because it had no defense to speak of, etc.

My own guess is that the bias is entirely understandable. In Hong Kong, bureaucrats and planners had almost no role. But the Korean model operates on a completely different set of principles. It dates from 1961, when Park Chung Hee came to power in a military coup determined to raise his country from the ashes. Like most technocrats, Park associated wealth with heavy industry: steel factories, auto works, etc., and he marshaled the country's resources in that direction. There would be none of this trusting the marketplace to sort out winners and losers. The government knew what industries were needed, and those that were favoured received credit while those that were deemed frivolous withered on the vine.

Like the Japanese model, the Korean model rested on three pillars. First a bias toward the bigness the bureaucrats thought would guarantee economies of scale. Second,

the idea that banks would rather serve as policy arms of the government. Third, that growth would be paid for by the public, by suppressing consumption. "Guided capitalism," they called it, and though stubborn market types like me might in our tiresome way point out that it came with huge opportunity costs, it did work in the sense the countries based on this model did develop.

So what accounted for the success of this planning as opposed to the socialist varieties? The answer is simple. In contrast to other planned economies, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, *et al.*, required that the companies supported be competitive in overseas markets. Instead of trying to preserve the foreign-exchange balance by curbing imports, the tiger economies like Korea did so by boosting exports, hence ensuring that their companies were more competitive.

The result was fabulous growth in exports plus a gleaming array of new factories. It was hard to argue against. In Hong Kong the typical entrepreneur has a 5 to 10 man trading company in a grotty concrete building in Mongkok. In Korea, however, the visible signs of development were all modern-looking: gleaming factories, modern skyscrapers, roads full of new cars, etc. If it was more attractive to foreign theorists, this was in good part because it literally looked more attractive.

In theory it worked like clockwork. As long as the consumer did not revolt, countries like Japan and Korea were able to create internationally competitive economies on the back of suppressed earnings. But as the world economy became more complicated and the running of these economies more cumbersome, the system itself became a threat to competitiveness. On pa-

per the advantage of cheap capital was that it could be channeled to companies where it was needed; in practice this meant that capital was often steered to the politically connected rather than the economically meritorious. As the world is now discovering, financial institutions that never used traditional criteria such as risk analysis found themselves saddled with an ever-greater number of non-performing loans.

We still don't know the real extent of this indebtedness. Indeed, global markets that winked at this system so long as the returns were coming in are now asking the tough questions, and forcing the issue in a Japan that once thought itself immune from outside pressure. When Yamaichi Securities went bust last month, for example, it was largely because Moody's had lowered its rating, which in turn made it impossible for Yamaichi to get the short-term credit that is the lifeblood of any financial institution.

Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan have largely been spared those problems, because they have not put all their eggs in the planning basket. The relative openness of the trading systems has brought a welcome discipline. It has also

ensured gains in overall market efficiency. Indeed, although Taiwan started out in the Korean path and still competes in many of the same export markets, it has not allowed itself to become dominated by a few huge conglomerates. To the contrary, as Taiwan continues to liberalize, small and medium-sized firms are becoming ever more significant players in the overall economy.

In the end, it may be too harsh to say, as MIT's Paul Krugman did *before* this year's meltdown – that the Asian miracle was at bottom the result only of increased inputs into the system, little different from the early spectacular gains of Soviet industry. There were virtues to the Asian way of doing things, primarily to a belief in hard work and enterprise supported by public structures that had little concern for individual welfare, a virtue well worth keeping. It's just time they applied it to companies as well as consumers.

Mr. Milton Friedman is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. This article is based on the George J. Stigler Memorial Lecture at the University of Chicago, May 14, 1997.

Mr. William McCurn is a senior editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Courtesy: *National Review*.

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I, J. R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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J. R. Patel
Publisher.

Playing with Words

A. K. R. Hemmady

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. So for a change, let's have a breather and play with words.

Shakespeare Game

Shakespeare is held to be the most popular of all authors. According to one research scholar, the titles of his plays revolved around romance and told the tale of married life. Guess the play for each of the following questions:

1. Who were the lovers?
2. What was their courtship like?
3. What did she answer to his proposal?
4. What time of month were they married?
5. Of whom did he buy the ring?
6. Who were the best man and maid of honour?
7. Who were the ushers?
8. In what kind of place did they live?
9. What was her disposition like?
10. What was his chief occupation?
11. What caused their first quarrel?
12. What did their courtship prove to be?
13. What did their married life resemble?
14. What did they give one another?
15. What did their friends say?

Anagrams

Transposition of letters of word or phrase to form new word or phrase is called an anagram. Some anagrams are laboured ones, almost silly. For instance, 'I swear he's like a lamp' (William Shakespeare). Some are better such as 'We all make his praise' (William Shakespeare) or 'Governs a nice, quiet land' (Victoria, England's Queen). Most interesting are those which emerge as a witty, telling phrase. Sometimes anagrams are said to have been used with serious intent. When Pilate, in the Bible (John XVIII, 38) asks "What is truth?", the question in Latin is *Quid est veritas?*. And the Christians answer with an anagram: *Est Vir qui adest*: "It's the man who's here", namely Jesus. *Honor est a Nilo* (His glory's from the Nile) was how Horatio Nelson's victory at Nile was hailed in Latin and that also was an anagram of his name. To come back to the present, "Insane Anglo Warlord" was coined by someone who obviously didn't like 'Ronald Wilson Reagan'. Indeed, it must have been a sharp mathematical as also a literary, two in one, mind which coined "two plus eleven" out of "one plus twelve" which

not only gives the same result but uses the same letters.

Some famous anagrams are:

Western Union = no wire unsent

circumstantial evidence = can ruin a selected victim

a stitch in time saves nine = this is meant as incentive

William Shakespeare = I am a weakish speller (or) I like Mr. W. H. as a pal, see?

funeral = real fun

The Morse Code = Here come dots

parishioners = I hire parsons

intoxicate = excitation

schoolmaster = the classroom

mother-in-law = woman Hitler

I am sure that all men leading a happy married life will readily agree that this last bit about the mother-in-law is in very bad taste!

Try to coin anagrams out of the following. Except clue 5, the answers to others is just one word:

1. love to ruin
2. got as a clue
3. inner coil
4. I mean to rend it
5. violence fun forth (2 words)
6. all great sins
7. Is pity love?
8. made moral
9. Spare him not
10. I hire parsons
11. nine thumps
12. In bountiful air, bath is idiotic

You may wonder whether 27 letters in clue 12 really constitute one single word in the English language? Strangely, such a word has been used by none other than Shakespeare in "Love's Labour Lost".

(for answers, please see page 44)

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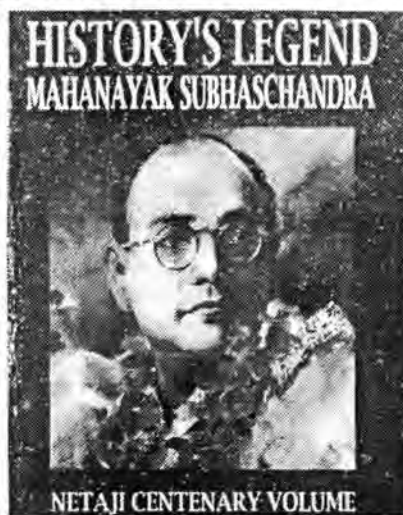


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BOOK REVIEWS

HISTORY'S LEGEND - MAHANAYAK SUBHAS CHANDRA: NETAJI CENTENARY VOLUME edited by Shalil Ghosh; The Netaji Subhas Centenary Celebrations Committee, Maharashtra, Bang Bhavan, Road No.5, Hindu Colony, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014; 1997; pp.100; Rs.200.



**Reviewed by
Dr. D. Anjaneyulu**

The 'Ifs' of history are interesting to speculate upon. But can they 'right' the wrongs of man and society, situation and circumstance? G. M. Trevelyan tried to imagine what would have happened if Napoleon had won the battle of Waterloo, and Clio chosen to act otherwise in other cases. Likewise, we can continue the series and think of the shape of things to come, had Lincoln and Kennedy not been assassinated; and Hitler and Mussolini eliminated early enough. Also if Lenin and Stalin were not born and Kerensky allowed to rule on the basis of his majority in the Russian Parliament (The Duma).

In the Indian context, how I wish that Netaji had not disappeared mysteriously in 1945! His escape

from India in 1941 was the stuff of deep mystery and high adventure. In the classical tradition, inspiring and memorable. But personally I, for one, would seem to think that it would have been better for him if he had chosen to stay on in India, after Ramgarh and other developments and fought the battles at home rather than abroad, wandering from Russia to Germany and Japan, before organising the Indian National Army. It was no doubt a great and unprecedented achievement, the end result of which was frustrated by adverse circumstances. Historians, as well as the makers of modern history, were grossly unfair to him.

Small wonder, therefore, that the national Press, which tends to lionise the current immortals, who had done well for themselves and their idols, have little or no use for Netaji Bose. As Mr. M. R. Pai says in his foreword to the present volume:

"When an editor was approached to publish some tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during the centenary celebrations, he replied that today's readers were not interested in it. Though it was unpleasant to hear such an assessment which the editor-friend had given in his professional capacity, it is not surprising, considering how the country has neglected Netaji in all these fifty years of Independence".

Netaji has been neglected at the Governmental level too, perhaps deliberately in Nehru's time, and ignorantly, and absent-mindedly later. Similar must be the case of the private sector too - in the publishing business, of books and newspapers.

It was, therefore, quite appropriate that the Netaji Centenary Celebrations Committee (Maharashtra) had chosen to produce a Birth Centenary volume, rather different from the usual bunch of formal tributes. Mr. Shalil Ghosh, the editor and publisher, has taken care to bring together a number of informative articles, some of which are quite rare for their insight. They include reminiscences and assessments by Rabindranath Tagore, Nathalal D. Parikh, Prof. Suniti Kumar Ghosh, Prof. Satyabrata Ghosh, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Dr. Amit Ganguly, Dr. P. C. Alexander, Mr. P. N. Oak, and Shalil Ghosh himself.

Overjoyed by the victory of Subhas Bose, on his election to the Tripura Congress, in January 1939, Gurudev Tagore hailed him as "*Desha Nayak*" Subhas, and greeted him: "I welcome you to be the leader of this country". He added: "you have made allies out of your troubles and obstacles have proved to be so many steps in the ladder of your success. That you could do so was owing to your refusal to accept defeat. We, in Bengal, need to emulate this strength of character more than anything else".

It was on 21st January 1939 that Shantiniketan played host at a function in which Subhas was felicitated, when this stirring speech was made by Gurudev Tagore. It was also planned to stage a play in Calcutta on February 4, when Bose would be publicly felicitated in Tagore's presence.

All this was changed after a visit by Sudhir Ghosh, emissary of Gandhi, followed by one by Nehru, to Shantiniketan. Later still, when Tagore pleaded with Gandhi to settle the differences with Bose, Gandhi

was unyielding in his stand and replied: "Subhas is the spoilt child of the family. He must be taught a lesson".

The deep-seated political differences between Gandhi and Bose, which assumed the overtones of personal hostility on the part of the former, were responsible for his vindictive attitude and determination to teach the latter a lesson. During the lifetime and the brief political career of C. R. Das, nothing could be done, though Gandhi was not quite happy. After the death of Das, he was able to place his own nominees in positions of leadership in Bengal. J. M. Sen Gupta was chosen for the triple crown - civic, political and legislative. Notable among the other confidants were: Dr. B. C. Roy, Kiron Shankar Roy, N. R. Sarkar and Tulsi C. Goswami.

After the resignation of Subhas from the Congress Presidency in 1939, many hurdles were placed in his way. He was not allowed to continue as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. And when a majority of its members stood by him, the committee itself was suspended. An official committee was set up instead, approved by the High Command. Thus it was that the party in Bengal was vertically split, deliberately breaking its backbone and shattering it permanently.

In his article titled, "The Tussle of the Top Two", Prof. Satyabrata Ghosh traces the roots of the spirit of rivalry between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose. Going back to 1927. He says:

"After Madras (1927), the Congress session came to Calcutta and finally to Lahore. The younger Nehru was the President. He succeeded his father. Was it the beginning of the 'dynastic rule'? Very few thought it so then. Even though

Nehru was in the Chair, Gandhiji stole the show when he moved the resolution for complete Independence as promised in Calcutta. By this time, Subhas was behind the bars. He had no part to play in this changing drama of India's freedom struggle.

It was at the father's instance that the son was crowned at Lahore by Mahatma Gandhi. On the eve of Independence, Nehru was not really sorry that Bose was nowhere to be seen. He was, in fact, relieved that the coast was clear. After assuming office, he was half-hearted in his motions to order a search for his whereabouts. So was his daughter, when she appointed the Khosla Commission, which produced nothing worthwhile.

Suniti Kumar Ghosh, in his article titled, "The Patriot of Patriots", probes the origin of Gandhi's opposition to Bose, which he identifies as the latter's straightforwardness and unwillingness to compromise on matters of principle. Gandhi was virtually a dictator ("a vegetarian dictator", as Nirad C. Chaudhari would have it), who would brook no dissent or deviation.

This was openly declared at the plenary session of the Tripura Congress in January 1939. In the course of his welcome address, Seth Govind Das, Chairman of the Reception Committee, affirmed:

"Our Congress organisation can be compared and is similar to the Fascist Party of Italy, the Nazi (party) of Germany. Mahatma Gandhi occupies the same position among Congressmen as that held by Mussolini among Fascists, Hitler among Nazis".

It was Pandit G. B. Pant, who moved the resolution (at the AICC) obliging the President to nominate the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.

As the resolution was clearly *ultra vires* of the Congress constitution, and repugnant to all democratic principles, it was severely criticised by some in the debate that followed. Replying to the debate, Pandit Pant declared:

"Wherever nations had progressed, they had done so under the leadership of one man. Germany had relied on Herr Hitler. Whether they agreed with Herr Hitler's methods or not, there was no gainsaying the fact that Germany had progressed under Herr Hitler".

There is no record of what Pandit Nehru, the intrepid democrat and ardent socialist, had to say on these declarations.

In some ways, the most vivid and touching portrait of Subhas Bose is given in his 'Reminiscences' by his admirer, friend and host, Nathalal D. Parikh, who was in the diamond business. He had first met him in October 1933. He writes:

"What struck me most at our first meeting was Subhas's remarkable forehead which remained lustrous and fascinating in spite of the long illness through which he was passing. He seemed inspired by an idealism which made him indifferent to his own sickness and suffering, trials and tribulations".

Bose was close to Vithalbhai Patel, who was then ailing in Europe. The latter had great hopes for him, and before his death, left all his monies (more than a lakh or so) to Bose for foreign propaganda. Patel said:

"In him, I see a great fighter with an incomparable determination to carry on India's struggle without any kind of compromise. In him I see service and sacrifice incarnate ... where can you find such a man?"

As it happened, after the death of Vithalbhai, his will was chal-

lenged in a court of law in Bombay, and the case was decided in favour of his younger brother, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Subhas was thus denied the legacy of his benefactor.

At the Haripura session in 1938, his friends and admirers were so deeply impressed by the personality and performance of Subhas that they suggested it was time he got married. To all of them, he had only one stock reply: "I have I got the time to marry? How can I have divided love? I have dedicated my life to my country, India. But one never knows".

"He lived and died so that India may be great".

In recalling "History's Legend", Shalil Ghosh describes Netaji Subhas as the most tragic figure of a world statesman who gave his all at the prime age of 48. Comparing him with Chhatrapati Shivaji, he says: "To me, Netaji Subhas was the incarnation of Shivaji Maharaj in the twentieth century and the greatest 'hero' of our time".

Analysing the unique leadership qualities of Netaji Subhas, Shalil Ghosh mentions the following:

(1) A straightforward nature, free from manipulative politics and manoeuvring tactics; (2) Uncompromising attitude to British imperialism; (3) Lover of one's country, above all other allegiances, like caste and creed, sect, language, region, etc., and (4) a powerful personality based on individual resources, without infrastructural support from the political establishment and/or economic vested interests.

"I am not sure today that Gandhiji was not to blame in the Subhas affair", says Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, in a quotation from his book, "Guilty Men of India's Partition" (1960).

Although the organisation of the INA was a great adventure and

achievement, it cannot be denied that Netaji had misread the course of the war and miscalculated its outcome. Sdidi Gandhiji, but Nehru was there to correct him. We now speak with the advantage of the hindsight of history. But Netaji's personality and philosophy are valid for the present and future generations. His is one of the world's inspiring profiles in courage and character, in patriotism and purposeful action.

MR. D. ANJANEYULU is a well-known author and journalist and a frequent contributor to *Freedom First*.

AN UNFINISHED DREAM by Dr. V. Kurien, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., 4/62, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110002; 1997; pp.598; price not stated.



V KURIEN

FOREWORD BY
NORMAN BORLAUG

**Reviewed by
Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh**

While going through "An Unfinished Dream", a collection of speeches by Dr. V. Kurien delivered by him on different occasions, I had the recurring feeling that this book should be made compulsory reading for all legislators in the country. If they go through it, they would know the "what and how" of rural development. Currently, most politicians think that only distribution of state charity is rural

development. Such thinking will never succeed in alleviating rural poverty. First, because the state on account of its extravagance in other sectors, has very little to spare for agricultural and rural development. And secondly, not even half of what-ever is sent for the poor, ever reaches them. Most of the rural poor are poor, not because they are invalid or disabled, but because they have been deprived of all those opportunities, facilities and infrastructural support, which are available to others.

Rural development should be considered an "enabling process", enabling the poor to earn more for themselves and the nation. The National Dairy Development Board, which has been functioning for the last 33 years under the guidance of Dr. Kurien, has never distributed charity, but has enabled the small dairy farmers to earn by their own efforts more than Rs.3000 crores per annum. Often, it is said, "small is beautiful". But Dr. Kurien has demonstrated that "the combination of the small and the large is the most beautiful". To help the small dairy farmers, he has established one of the largest dairy processing and marketing establishments, and thereby enabled India to reach the top, amongst the milk producing countries of the world. After the successful demonstration of the combination of the small producers and vice-versa, if cotton producers had been the owners of cotton mills we would not have witnessed the ghastly suicides, committed by hundreds of cotton growers in Andhra Pradesh. Instead, India would have emerged at the top even amongst the cotton growing countries of the world, as it has in case of milk.

Agriculture is not a single-point, or single-person operation. Farmers, howsoever hard working, cannot be efficient producers, un-

less they are supported by backward and forward linkages, mostly manned by non-farmers, but who are vital parts of the farming system; and without whose help, farmers would be reduced to penury. They need scientists to evolve improved seeds and new techniques of production. They need extension workers to serve as links between the laboratory and the land. They need dependable supplies of inputs at reasonable costs. They also need credit and power to the same extent, if not more, as industry does. As most crops have to be processed and stored before being consumed, they need storage and processing facilities, within their easy reach. It is on the availability and quality of these multifarious services, that the efficiency and prosperity of farmers depend. Our policy-makers have not only neglected these, but willfully prevented creation of such facilities. During the Janata Party regime, a scheme under the name of "Grid of Rural Godowns" was launched, but it was abolished soon after the change of government.

Agricultural research also needs to be re-oriented and strengthened. It is a pity that total government expenditure on agricultural research is no more than 0.3% while most developing countries are spending upto 1% and the developed countries upto 2% of their agricultural G.D.P. on agricultural research. It is not enough, that small farmers be reached with the latest techniques of production under optimum conditions. They should be reached with technologies that they can use and which are relevant and compatible with their needs, resources and farming systems.

For the faster growth of agriculture, which is the key to poverty eradication in our country, production and marketing of agricultural crops should, as far as possible, be treated as one venture to

be managed by farmers themselves. But to create such a system, the government will have first to take three steps: remove all restrictions on the movement, processing and trade of farm products; establish a chain of rural godowns within easy reach of farmers; and recognise *Gaon Sabhas*, which are already statutory bodies, as cooperatives, and empowered to launch any collective enterprise by just passing a resolution at their meeting, without having to seek permission from any other authority.

To sum up, a new Participatory Development Strategy will have to be evolved, which aims at improving the lot of the common people, and not merely at increasing the National Income. And lastly, in the words of Dr. Kurien, "The National Agricultural Policy should recognise that our advancement in agriculture is inextricably linked to the quality of rural education, and that rural schools must be placed in the hands of those, whose communities they serve." Achievement of higher percentage of functional literacy (i.e. the ability to read write and do simple calculations) amongst the rural masses is a part of the enabling process, and essential for the evolution of the new Participatory Development Strategy.

MR. BHANU PRATAP SINGH is a farmer, a former legislator and was Union Minister for Agriculture.

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM by Nelson Mandela; Paperback edition published by Abacus (A Division of Little Brown & Company, London. Mumbai distributors: India Book Distributors (Bombay) Ltd., 1007/1008, Arcadia, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021; Reprinted 1997; pp.768; £6.25 (approx. Rs.415)



Reviewed by
Maj.Gen. (Retd.) E. D'Souza

This is Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela's autobiography. It is a scathing indictment of the degrading and inhuman practice of apartheid, a stunning portrayal of one man's all too human and all consuming desire to free his deprived countrymen of this damning curse based on the colour of one's skin.

Playing With Words : Answers

Shakespeare Game

1. Romeo and Juliet
2. A Midsummer Night's Dream
3. As You Like It
4. Twelfth Night
5. The Merchant of Venice
6. Troilus and Cressida or Antony and Cleopatra
7. The Two Gentlemen of Verona
8. Hamlet
9. The Tempest
10. The Taming of the Shrew
11. Much Ado About Nothing
12. Love's Labour Lost
13. A Comedy of Errors
14. Measure for Measure
15. All's Well that Ends Well

Anagrams

1. revolution
2. catalogues
3. crinoline
4. determination
5. French Revolution
6. gallantries
7. positively
8. melodrama
9. misanthrope
10. parishioners
11. punishment
12. honorificabilitudinitatibus

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It brought to mind an incident during World War II in Italy in December 1945 when the 8th Indian Division fought alongside the 6th South African Armoured Division. The reviewer sustained a serious injury to his right knee during a German 'stunk' (shelling) of the village square of Bagnacavallo, in the Serchio Valley near Pisa. After initial treatment at an Indian Casualty Clearing Section, he was evacuated by ambulance the same night to the nearest field hospital just outside Florence for surgery. In the dim light of the officers ward the colour of his skin was not easily visible. At the crack of dawn, when he was discovered to be non-white, there were hurried consultations after which he was quickly transferred in an ambulance to the nearest airfield to be flown south to 37 British General Hospital Arezzo; it happened to be a South African Field Hospital for whites only! This indignity suffered in a foreign country during a war, was miniscule compared to what Nelson Mandela faced for the major part of his life in his own country at the racist hands of Dutch settlers, the Boers. This important work is the story of a "moving and exhilarating experience" of a great patriot, politician and moralist to fight with all the means at his disposal, mainly non-violent, the inhuman, oppressive and repressive racial discrimination against his countrymen.

The manner our deprived classes in India were and continue to be treated at Baghpat in Bihar, pall in comparison to the bestial and inhuman indignities heaped upon the Blacks, Cape Coloureds, Indians and even sympathetic Whites by the brutal and repressive behaviour of the South African Police and other security agencies. Though Mandela relates them in a manner shorn of hate, the facts presented by him speak for themselves.

Why then did Nelson Mandela reduce his experiences of a lifetime to the written word? This is what he says during his long incarceration in the Robben Island maximum security prison: "One day Kathy (Ahmed Kathrada), Walter Sisulu and myself were talking in the courtyard, when they suggested that I ought to write my memoirs. Kathy noted that the perfect time for such a book to be published would be on my sixtieth birthday. Walter said that such a story, if told truly and fairly, would serve to remind the people of what we had fought and were still fighting for. He added that it would be a source of inspiration for young freedom fighters. The idea appealed to me, and during subsequent discussions, I agreed to go ahead". How this was achieved in the face of insurmountable security odds, and the notes smuggled out to the outside world, make for absorbing reading. It proves beyond doubt what determination, co-operation and ingenuity can achieve for a just cause. This book is proof.

This autobiography is logically structured by one who was a lawyer. It is in eleven parts beginning with the early days of Mandela's country childhood in Umtata, Johannesburg. It spells out with remarkable and unbiased balance the problems the ANC faced in reaching an amicable arrangement with the communists, Cape Coloureds, Indians and the recalcitrant Inkatha Party *et al* to make the movement a truly national one. That he was successful is a tribute to his determination, political and negotiating skills, transparency, sincerity and moderation.

Perhaps readers may find the earlier chapters not of much interest. But if one is to understand what went into making Nelson Mandela the strong character that he was and what he is today, it is essential

to go through them. The tempo picks up to a steadily rising crescendo once he joins the ANC.

The two major legal trials grip one. The handling of these two cases, the *dramatis personae*, and the flow of arguments tell you that it cannot be read in 'one sitting'. The masterful handling of the first trial by white lawyers of the calibre and dedication of Bram Fischer in proving that the defendants were not by any means rabid communists but nationalists, in which both persuasions sought equality, needs to be perused carefully to understand why the white apartheid government was forced to withdraw the case. The second treason trial where Mandela stands charged and how he defended himself is equally fascinating. Although he expectedly lost his case, it was certainly not because he was lacking in legal skills or conviction, but because of a committed white judiciary.

The two chapters on his 27 years incarceration on Robben Island make the Cellular Jail in the Andamans a cake-walk in the treatment of political prisoners. Every possible tool was employed to break Mandela and his colleagues. But nothing could quell his fight for justice. It is evident that he just could not be cowed down by an equally determined White government. Can one explain why Winnie his wife had so many impediments put in her way to write to her imprisoned husband even once in six months or why he was not permitted to attend the last rites of his mother in Transkei?

Some of the thoughts of this great and good man who was not influenced by blind hatred for the Whites, and his attempts, invariably successful, to contain the more hot headed elements who wanted armed revolution, especially the youth, are worth recalling.

- * "The greatest wealth (of Africa) is our people". Is this not a lesson to us in India with a population of 970 millions? Have we really exploited this human resource for the good of the nation?
- * "The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers fear".
- * He describes the 'glimmer of humanity' thus : "Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished". This is exemplified in his comments or certain gestures of goodness he experienced in jail at the hands of the Robben Island jail staff.
- * On his relentless pursuit to be freed from the unjust shackles of the White government he says, "I was not born with a hunger to be free, I was born free - free in every way that I could know". And in the same context he says, "freedom is indivisible".

His moral stature, selflessness and sincerity were never ever in doubt. Yet, two of his marriages failed. He was divorced from his first wife and separated from his second, Winnie. He explains why these two events which caused him so much anguish occurred. Although he had children by both, he realised that the two, his fight for freedom

and his family life could not be arranged in such a manner that both would survive. He considered his first responsibility was to his fellow Africans, and so his marriages suffered. Winnie was as fanatical as he was in his quest for freedom. She joined the freedom struggle with equal zest courting arrest, and defying the government. But the lack of communication in the 27 years he was held captive on Robben Island and his consequent inability to be a husband, wage earner, and father to his six children led him to his separation from Winnie without rancour.

Yet, the spirit of family and tribe burns strongly in him. This excellent autobiography is dedicated to his six children: Madibe and Makaziwe both no more; and to Makagatto, Makawize, Zenani and Zindzi whose support and love he treasures, and to his twenty one grandchildren and three great grandchildren. In his dedication he has not forgotten all his comrades, friends and fellow South Africans (not only blacks).

Among the many South African Indians who contributed to the cause and who suffered in doing so, from Natal and Durban, are G M Naicker, Billy Nair, Ismail and

Fatima Meer, the Naidoo's, Yusuf Cachalia, Cassim and Zubeida Patel, Ramlal Bhoolia, Ahmed Bhoola, and last but not the least Mrs T. Pillay who came to his rescue time and again with spicy Indian meals when the going was tough. In this list of *dramatis personae* are White South Africans Pik Botha, Coatssee Kobie, Daniel Malan, Viljoens, F W De Klerk and the redoubtable Jans Christian Smuts.

What is surprising is that the efforts of Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu to seek justice for the oppressed of South Africa finds very little mention in this autobiography. Equally, though due recognition is given to Mahatma Gandhi for his philosophy of non violence, it is surprising that India's steadfast support to the ANC and against apartheid finds hardly any mention and this finds credence in Mandela's post freedom visits to all Western nations, European capitals, the USA, Canada *et al*. But no attempts were made to visit New Delhi. One therefore wonders whether his autobiography is meant to reach out mainly to the Western World.

MAJ. GEN. (Retd.) E. D'SOUZA, is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.

Mr. S. S. Bankeshwar, member of our Advisory Board sends this letter with the challenge: "I wonder whether you will dare to publish this?" We 'dare'!

Editor.

Mini-Taliban in Kerala I

According to the *Astrological Magazine* of Bangalore, edited by well-known astrologer/journalist, Shri B. V. Raman (August 1997 issue), Malappuram district in Kerala has degenerated into a Mini-Taliban district. Muslim women are prevented from entering mosques, attending schools and colleges!

A 'Fatwa' from one Taliban group led to the closure of 200 video studios in Malappuram district, as Muslim women are prevented from being photographed at weddings! About 50 cinema theatres are said to have been forcibly closed down in Malappuram district!

The report in this magazine itself is based on press

reports in South Indian papers. Nobody has contradicted these reports so far, and hence must be true.

Muslim godmen in Malappuram are reported to be drawing not only mammoth crowds, but also collecting huge donations running into crores of rupees at their meetings. The tomb of one muslim godman has been converted into a pilgrim centre. Talismans, miracle oils and water, claiming to have healing powers, are being sold to the gullible public.

Where are our rationalists and secularists? Where are our human rights activists or PUCL? Not even a whimper of protest from them against the activities of this Taliban group in the Malappuram district of Kerala!

S. S. Bankeshwar

OUR MISSION

Freedom First speaks for the silent majority - the majority that wants to be left in peace to pursue its goal of improving its quality of life, but has been suffering in silence, the indignities heaped on it by insensitive governments who have abrogated to themselves the right to decide what is good for the people. In the process, the whole country has been turned into a cesspool of corruption. Public morality and character have reached an all-time low.

Freedom First affirms that much of the unrest and ferment in our society is a direct result of excessive State intervention in the day-to-day lives of our people. While the people's initiative has been stifled the economy is in shambles. The Journal believes that while India needs a strong government that ensures the rule of law what India does not need is a meddling government - the system so far that has led to impoverishment, insecurity and instability.

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