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The Bureaucrat: Public Servant Or Government Servant



Russia: An Ailing Chief and An Ailing Economy

NANUBHAI AMIN

(2nd October 1919 - March 21, 1999)



Industrialist, entrepreneur, innovator and public spirited citizen par excellence Nanubhai Amin passed away in Baroda on March 21, 1999. He was 79.

He died with his boots on. He had just completed addressing a meeting and was answering questions from the audience when he was felled by a massive heart attack.

Nanubhai Amin graduated in Electrical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology followed by a Masters from Cornell University.

On returning to India, he joined Jyoti Limited as an Engineer and got to work applying the knowledge and technology he had acquired at MIT and Cornell into equipment that served agriculture.

When hardly any company in the private sector invested money in R & D, Nanubhai established a modern R& D Centre at Jyoti Limited as early as 1964. The annual expenditure on R&D varied between 2.5% and 4% of turnover – among the highest in the country.

In 1980 he was invited as an Expert Member on the Ad Hoc Committee of the World Bank to review its proposal for Research in the area of Renewable Energy.

Outstanding as he was as an entrepreneur and a manufacturer, Nanubhai's sense of social responsibility was even greater. Long before the concept of the Social Responsibilities of Business was fashioned by Jayaprakash Narayan, J.R.D.Tata and Minoo Masani, Nanubhai was already a practitioner of this concept.

The following bear eloquent testimony to this aspect of Nanubhai's life and work:

He was at various times:

Chairman of the Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad. The main objective of this Centre is to create environmental awareness among children, youth and decision-makers.

Vice President Charutar Vidya Mandal; President, Charutar Arogya Mandal; and President Charotar Gramoddhar Sahakari Mandal all in Vallabh Vidyanagar, the University town that owes its existence to another great son of Gujarat, Bhailalbhai Patel.

Nanubhai was intimately associated with the movement for the rehabilitation of the physically handicapped. Jyoti Limited was awarded thrice by the President of India as an outstanding employer of the physically handicapped. Nanubhai established a special training cell at Jyoti Limited which identifies the residual abilities of physically handicapped persons and train them for gainful employment.

Nanubhai was, for a brief period in the sixties, active in politics too. He responded to the call of Rajaji and Bhailalbhai Patel to join the Swatantra Party. He was a member of the Gujarat State Executive Committee and a member the party's General Council at the national level.

Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar awarded him the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) in recognition of his contribution to the economic development of the country through Science and Technology; He was nominated a Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering, New Delhi. Recipient of the 1985 Vishwa Gurjari Award for developing appropriate technologies and products including renewable energy for the rural population. He also received the New Energy for Mankind Award from the Global Energy Society for the Eradication of Poverty and Hunger, USA.

Such was the many-splendoured personality called Nanubhai Amin who is no more. We salute his memory.

Freedom First

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BETWEEN OURSELVES ...

In this issue we discuss the subject of civil servants. The immediate reason for choosing this subject is the recent instances of civil servants like Keshav Varma, S. R. Rao, Chandrashekar, Arun Bhatia and Subodh Kumar insisting on their right to discharge their duties as civil servants. Keshav Varma and S. R. Rao were allowed to function without hindrance by the Gujarat governments (there was more than one during their tenure) while the government in Maharashtra showed its intolerance in the case of the others. While Chandrashekar emerged unscathed, Arun Bhatia and Subodh Kumar were punished with transfers. In the case of Arun Bhatia as was the case with Chandrashekar public support was loud and clear. In Arun Bhatia's case the judiciary literally overruled an executive order. All these are relatively new phenomena – an indication, on the one hand that the patience of the public is running out and a realisation of honest officers on the other that they are no longer alone – they now have an alert citizenry on their side. Slowly, but surely our civil society is coming of age.

These and other related issues are discussed by writers who are either qualified to write on the subject or are involved in public causes which entitle them to comment on such issues.

There has been a request from some readers that they would like to contribute their views if we could inform them in advance of the subject of the cover feature in the next issue. We are delighted and respond with enthusiasm and expectation.

Our Next Cover Feature COPING WITH COALITIONS

A request: If it is possible please email your contribution on freedom@vsnl.com. If this is not possible then give it to us on a diskette(floppy) preferably on MS Word. If this is not possible then neatly typed – double spacing, broad margin. If none of these are possible then in legible handwriting. Thanks.

Last date to receive your contribution: Monday June 21, 1999

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*

Any government that includes Ms. Jayalalitha and Mr. (Subramanian) Swamy and is supported by the fractious third front is destined to self-destruct at the earliest.

Editorial in *The Times of India*, April 7

Nuclear Weapons, which are weapons of mass destruction when used, are weapons of mass destitution when not used, because their cost comes out of the mouths of the poor, the weak, the destitute.

Major General S. G. Vombatkere (retd.),
New Quest, November-December 1998

A generation of opportunists, self seekers and plain thugs has hijacked our country. Who will rid us of these pestilent priests.

T. J. S. George, *The New Indian Express*, April 11

We were treated as commodities

Ram Gopal Yadav, (Samajwadi Party) Member
of the Rajya Sabha, *India Today*, May 10

There is no connection between policy and politics.

Reserve Bank of India Governor Bimal Jalan,
India Today, May 10

The propagation of Swadeshi does not mean closing your doors but being able to compete with other countries successfully.

Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha,
Financial Express, November 22, 1998

I don't believe in the free market economy, it simply doesn't work

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh,
Businessworld, 7-21 March

Instead of worrying about conversions, why are organisations like the RSS and the VHP not using their vast armies to help clean Hinduism's most sacred city (Banaras)?

Tavleen Singh, *India Today*, April 5

Today's generation is the MTV generation. One has to adapt to this pace even in worship.

Rev. S. K. Miller, a pastor in a Shillong church,
The Sunday Times of India, April 18.

You (USA) talk about democracy, freedom, ... but in international relations, it's still the same old concept – show of force.

The Dalai Lama speaking at Miami,
The Sunday Times of India, April 18.

Time has come when our monuments need to be saved from the so-called protection of the Archaeology Survey of India.

S. Kalidas, *India Today*, April 26

The legislature's privileges have to be codified. For too long they have been left undefined. That sort of arrangement works among gentlemen – not Indian politicians.

Editorial in *India Today*, April 5

We have wasted 50 years. I want to create wealth quickly, and we need technology and innovation to do that.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu,
Businessworld, 7-21 March

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Mrs. Sonia Gandhi

It is an anachronism in this day and age to draw a distinction between citizens by birth and naturalised citizens. The 'decadent capitalist' United States Constitution is held up as a model of how to keep out naturalised citizens because it specifically bars those citizens not born in the United States from holding the office of President or Vice-President. This provision was dictated by circumstances prevailing during the US war of independence. It is no longer relevant. Instead of asking for its repeal, our super-patriotic politicians of various hues are asking for a similar provision to be included in the already much disfigured Indian Constitution.

Once a person accepts the citizenship of a country and swears to abide by its laws then he or she ought to enjoy all the rights enjoined by those laws.

The efforts of those who wish to deny Mrs. Sonia Gandhi the Prime Minister's chair should be through the ballot box and not by a reference to her birthplace. The stress should be to call for an end to any possible return to dynastic rule. This would be in the liberal democratic tradition.

Saffron Buses

There was a time, it now seems so long ago, when one took pride in the fact that he was a *Bombaywallah* and would cite a number of reasons for his preference to live in Bombay than anywhere else. One reason was the sense of security of life and property. He would often point out to the confidence with which unaccompanied women, for example, travelled alone to and from work even in the late hours of the night or the wee hours of the morning. These women were on shift duties at the Central Telegraph Office or at the Telephone Exchange or some such establishment that worked round the clock. You don't see this anymore. Women dread walking alone on the roads or journeying alone in local trains. They either seek safety in numbers by travelling in groups or are generally accompanied by a male member of the family.

Another was the city's bus service the Bombay Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking - the B.E.S.T. A British owned company before independence it was nationalised after freedom and became a Municipal undertaking. Contrary to the general experience of service levels going to seed when an efficient service in the private sector is converted into a public undertaking, service levels have been maintained. It is still the BEST city service in India. It is conspicuous by its red colour, the many double deckers; and most them do not have that ramshackle look of Delhi's DTU buses.



Now some minister in the state has come up with a hare brained proposal to paint the buses saffron - the official colour of the ruling coalition government. What's wrong with red? Unless there is some favoured paint manufacturer with a large quantity of unsold saffron paint at his disposal! At this rate the colours of our buses will keep pace with the changing colours of our politicians. Not a bad prospect that, coming to think of it.

Clean the Ganga - For What and Whose Benefit ?

"Where are our Hindu businessmen who spend fortunes on building ugly, modern temples? Why are they not concerned about spending some money on cleaning the Ganga. The first business group to show some initiative in this is ironically, Parsi. Godrej is re-launching its Ganga soap next month with an advertising campaign that promises not only that the soap is made from Ganga *jal* 'collected from the pure and pollution free heights of the Himalayas' but that, part of the profits will go towards cleaning the Ganga..." writes Tavleen Singh in her column in *India Today*.

Why should it be ironical, Ms. Tavleen Singh? Apart from the fact that the 'ugly, modern temples' betray the lack of aesthetic sense of most Hindu businessmen, there is another reason. As my friend Abe Solomon, president of the Indian Secular Society, points out Zoroastrianism is the only religion which is concerned with this worldly matters - 'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds'. So the Godrejs are doing the right thing by their religion. Whereas to the Hindu, this world is an illusion and he is constantly bribing his gods with offerings for a better life in the hereafter; the richer the Hindu the bigger the offering. To a Hindu businessman therefore building 'ugly, modern temples' is a far more worthwhile investment than helping clean the Ganga - a stupid thing to do anyway with corpses being constantly dumped into this holiest of holy rivers.

SVR

The Passing Away of Two Titans

Sheik Chinna Maulana Saheb



The world of culture is all the poorer with the passing away of Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in Madras and Sheik Chinna Maulana Saheb in Srirangam. Each represented Indian culture at its best. The Sheikh was to Carnatic Music what Bismillah is to the Hindustani school. He transported millions to the divine strains of memorable music through his *Nadaswaram* and introduced them to a new fairy land. He remained a beloved figure distinctly different from the greedy tribe of musicians eager to earn quick bucks. A devout Muslim, he had the highest reverence for the presiding deity of Srirangam, Sri Ranganatha. It was this that made him decide to settle down in that temple town. He trained a number of the younger generation and fortunately, his music is preserved in recordings.

Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar



Professor Iyengar's name is internationally known and his books widely read. From the 1930s, he wrote in innumerable journals and, as a teacher, trained hundreds of college students opening up magic casements for eager generations. He is remembered not only for his inspired teaching but, more importantly, for his inspiring life. He served with distinction as Vice Chancellor of Andhra University when the Chair was no throne but a crown of thorns and managed to steer the University through rough and choppy waters. Later, he was Vice President of the Sahitya Akademi. Retiring from public life, he preferred *vanaprastha* in the metropolis and kept aloof from all positions and official bodies. The very personification of a scholar with refined sensibilities, he continued to write, translated a book of the Valmiki *Ramayana*. When feminism and gender had not become politically correct, he retold the *Ramayana* from the perspective of Sita and appropriately called it *Sitayana*. His pioneering study of Indian writing in English is as useful now as it was when published and single-handedly he made out a convincing case for considering the legitimacy of the writings of Indians in the English language. Having written biographies and studies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, he always felt that his debts to his Maker were discharged. All who had met him for the too very brief hours in the city, would miss him.

R. Srinivasan

The Bureaucrat - Public Servant or Government Servant?

Professionalism and Commitment in the Civil Service

J. B. D'Souza

The people of India have been increasingly disenchanted with their public services, with the yawning gap between, on the one hand, the pious declarations of policy they hear from their rulers, who are always ready to translate those declarations into law, and on the other, the pace of delivery of service by the officials who administer those laws and policies, and quite often the collusion between rulers and officials to pervert the policies declared. Repeated reviews and surveys have only confirmed the dismal impression that the vast majority of our people have continued in misery; the man-in-the-street has generally stayed there. Which group – rulers or officials – does one blame for our wretched condition today? A story I heard the other day provides an analogy. A very slow train had exasperated its passengers by long stops at stations and repeated halts between stations. At one of these halts a desperate passenger protested to the guard: "Guard. can't you go any faster?" "I certainly can", came the reply, "but I have to go with the train". In the context of India's development, with which group, politicians or bureaucrats, would you identify the train, and whom does the guard represent? In his excellent history of the ICS, *The Men who Ruled India*, Philip Woodruff (pseudonym of Philip Mason, ICS) characterises civil servants as guardians, but our own history since 1947 must surely

leave the question in doubt.

Repeated reviews and surveys have only confirmed the dismal impression that the vast majority of our people have continued in misery; the man-in-the-street has generally stayed there. Which group – rulers or officials – does one blame for our wretched condition today?

Bureaucrats' Complicity

Consider agrarian reform, legislated very early, and a crucial element of development in a country whose people are so largely rural. You will have noticed the stress Amartya Sen has laid on land reform as a vital instrument of social and economic progress. As late as the 80s – there has been little forward movement since then – the noted writer David Selbourne commented: "A succession of land reforms since independence appears to have touched less than one per cent of India's total land area.

There are more than 400 million acres of arable land in India. Of the total, 60 million acres are

estimated to be recoverable as landlords' 'surplus', under ceiling legislation, which ostensibly limits the extent of private land ownership, but only a tiny proportion of it (less than 2 million acres) had been distributed up to 1975 ... with state power uninterrupted in the hands of a 'reforming', even a 'socialistic' (Congress) party. Not only have these programs of reform made very small statistical impact on concentrations of land ownership, but the cruelties of rural indebtedness among the rural poor have deepened, while landlord wealth and income have almost entirely escaped taxation."

I cannot believe, nor, I am sure, can you, that the piously declared, egalitarian, socialistic policies of the governments in India could be so patently frustrated without the complicity of a bureaucracy that prides itself on its steel frame. Where was that bureaucracy's commitment to those policies?

Real Commitment

Indira Gandhi made commitment an ugly word when she added it to her Emergency vocabulary. She shamelessly equated it to loyalty to herself, to her son, and to her oppressive regime. She demanded it from civil servants, whom she reduced to crawling flunkies, and from the

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judiciary as well. Hers was an evil kind of commitment. I write here of commitment to the people of India, to the law of the land and its institutions, and to policies adopted by the government of the day. I write also of the need for civil servants to resist orders, whether from ruling politicians or from higher officials, if those orders hurt the interests of the people.

Whistle-Blowing

There is a belief in official circles that it is enough for an officer to point out the harm to the people at large that will result from a particular decision, but to implement the decision if he is overruled. Administrators in the US can deal with this problem by resort to the protection of the law, the Whistle-Blowers Act, which prevents victimisation of persons in the hierarchy who report wrong-doing. As Arun Bhatia has found,* Indian administrators have no such protection; the Official Secrets Act and the Civil Service Conduct Rules expressly forbid disclosure of any matter that a civil servant learns in the course of his work. His only recourse would be a report to an authority still higher than the source of the improper decision, but even that report must travel through his immediate superior; it may never reach its intended destination, and even if it does, it will make possible a discreet cover-up, and reprisals in due course. What if the highest

authority, a Chief Minister perhaps, is himself involved in the impropriety? Here are two examples to suggest a possible way out of a committed official's dilemma.

When "Extra-Mural" Means are justified

A State's City Planning department had prepared a Master Plan for one of the largest towns in the State. One of the improvements it contemplated was a 60-foot road from the town's outskirts right into the central area, where vehicle and pedestrian traffic was habitually snarled. That would meet a vital need, providing quick access to the business district. Happily, the alignment chosen was vacant over its entire length, except for a single plot near the congested part and the railway station. That plot contained a nursing home owned by a close relative of the Chief Minister. The Secretariat department handling the Plan began to feel pressure to reduce the planned width of the road to 40 feet so as to save the nursing home, perhaps even to permit its expansion. A reduction would, of course, produce a permanent bottleneck in the town, which future generations would endlessly suffer. A simple recording of views, however strong, on the Department file would have provided little more than a record for posterity; the Urban Affairs Minister would find it convenient to overrule such views, on some pseudo-technical ground. So the administrator resorted to 'extra-mural' means to save the road. He invited the Mayor of the town, who belonged to an Opposition party, in accompaniment on an inspection of the site. During the inspection, the Mayor announced that he was aware of the

attempt to please the Chief Minister by reducing the road width. He added that he would himself lead a *satyagraha* to halt such an effort. The administrator duly brought all this on to the Secretariat file, stressing the importance of a 60-foot road for present and future generations, elaborating the Mayor's threat, and adding with exaggerated sanctimony that in such delicate matters, involving the Chief Minister's good name, circumspection was essential. He was not overruled. The file is preserved for posterity. The road remains 60 feet wide.

"We Have Already Squeezed Them"

As Urban Affairs Secretary to the Maharashtra Government I found myself being rushed into a 99-year lease of 15 plots of land in Bombay's Backbay at throwaway rates. Supported by some of my docile colleagues, the government had already abandoned competitive procedures that could determine the true land value. Within this constraint I still found a reason to hike by about 20% the rates the Ministers had already negotiated with chosen builders. This by itself spelt crores of gain for the treasury. I sent the file with this recommendation to the Finance Secretary for his approval before submission to the Ministers. The file had barely left my office than the Lands Minister, one Vartak, sent for me; his spies had evidently been stationed outside my room. Vartak said I had 'spoilt' the case. The rate had been fixed by the Chief Minister. I submitted that this was prime land, commanding the highest prices in India, and that the beneficiaries of the Ministers' largesse, the big builders, would reap huge profits

* As Commissioner, Pune Division in Maharashtra, Arun Bhatia is being persecuted, ostensibly for releasing to the press an official communication, and a letter he himself wrote to the Chief Secretary, but really for removing illegal structures put up in Pune by powerful persons.

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out of its development. The government, I said, should squeeze them to realise a proper value. "We have already squeezed them" Vartak blurted out, in an impromptu outburst of candour and anger, before he could realise what he was saying. I wondered whom the squeeze had helped. But after my view had drawn the Finance Secretary's support, neither Vartak nor the Chief Minister V. P. Naik thought it wise to overrule me.

But even at the new rate the deal was a sell-out. So I got a friend to stimulate a court proceeding, to which MP Piloo Mody and Mrinal Gore lent their names as petitioners. They disputed the government's competence to part with public assets at prices below their market value. The court agreed. The rate was raised by about 70% over the level to which Naik and Vartak had squeezed it.

Is a civil servant right to use such extra-mural support to protect the public interest? Should commitment be so elastic?

Unorthodox Political Skills

Let me not leave you with an impression that officials are eternally busy thwarting the evil designs of venal Ministers. They have promotional duties as well, duties that at times call for unorthodox political skills. I remember a rescue operation I undertook as General Manager of the BEST Undertaking in Bombay. The organisation was deep in trouble, incurring a daily loss on its bus operations. There were bills of Rs. 80 lacs that it could not pay. (Thirty years ago Rs.80 lacs was a huge

sum.) The bus fares had to be quickly raised if the Undertaking was to survive. Earlier General Managers had offered the politicians in the Bombay Municipal Corporation, whose approval they required, a series of fare-rise proposals, none of which were drastic enough to see the BEST out of its mess. All these proposals were turned down. The corporators were less and less receptive to them as the general elections approached. Meanwhile the service deteriorated; curtailment of certain bus-routes was being contemplated. Realising that marginal measures were futile, I drafted a much larger fare-rise, nearly three times larger in yield than the last one my immediate predecessor had suggested. I then pursued my political masters with fanatical persistence, even managing to play one set of them against another. Just three months before the elections the impossible happened. My proposal got approval, and the BEST's fortunes changed. "Politicians", I wrote at the time, "have to be courted day and night before they are seduced." Is seduction too a part of a civil servant's armoury? Again, should commitment stretch so far?

No Private Agenda

There are evident dangers in encouraging civil servants to substitute their own judgement for the decisions of the people's elected representatives, dangers not only to the careers of such committed officials but also to the very fabric of a democratic society. You may land your administration with a set of irresponsible mavericks: possibly publicity seekers, answerable to no one in particular, driving in all directions according to their

individual choice. Not all these efforts may be free from a taint of personal venality, of cronyism, of commitment to an officer's own personal profit. Most senior officials would regard the risks of encouraging unorthodox commitment as too heavy to permit its toleration. Most politicians would reject it outright as abhorrent and unconstitutional.

Yet closing the door to official manipulation, even seduction, may deprive the citizen of his legitimate dues as a taxpayer and a rightful beneficiary of, on-the-whole, salutary laws and policies of our governments. So it is useful to search for limits that should properly be placed on an official's pursuit of ends he holds dear, when they depart from the decision of his political masters.

A civil servant, however deeply committed to the public interest, must be careful not to let his own ideological preferences replace the declared policies of the government of the day, much less to subvert the proper application of the law to individual cases, however inequitable or even iniquitous he thinks them. There cannot be a private agenda.

Second, he can resort to manipulation (or unorthodoxy, a less unacceptable word, perhaps) only when the public interest is unquestionably and gravely at risk, and when exposure or confrontation with a wrong-doing superior is not likely to succeed. In making his choice, here is a useful criterion: Would the decision he questions stand a test of transparency?

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Where Wisdom Dictates

Third, how great is the risk to survival, both of the policy from which his superior is trying to deviate, and of himself in the position he is occupying? It is clearly futile to lose the war for the sake of winning a battle. If manipulation is going to result in his replacement by someone more pliant or less savvy, it makes little sense to undertake it. As to policy, I recall a colleague's wisdom in handling the Maharashtra's Industries department. The government had very

reluctantly gone along with a ban on new industries in Bombay that we in the Urban Affairs department, with the Industry Secretary's support, had proposed, in an effort to limit the city's population. We suddenly noticed that a couple of exceptions had been made, so I sought the Industry Secretary's elucidation. With remarkable good sense he explained that he thought it better to allow a minor deviation or two rather than to drive the Ministers into a situation where they might scrap the location policy it-

self. That was wisdom indeed.

I have tried to present a case for a civil service far more dedicated to the public interest than we have been in the last fifty years. In the last analysis, we have to regard ourselves not only as servants rather than masters, but chiefly as public servants, and only secondarily as government servants.

MR. J. B. D'SOUZA is a distinguished civil servant, since retired. He was Chief Secretary of the Maharashtra Government.

The Making of Malleable Bureaucrats

Ashok V. Desai

Earlier, it was the norm for ministers to consult their bureaucrats, and unusual for them to overrule the bureaucrats. If political pressures conflicted with the dictates of good administration, the latter won.

I. G. Patel is the most distinguished economic bureaucrat of India. Manmohan Singh uncannily replicated IG's career up to the governorship of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Then their paths diverged; while IG went on a successful term as director of the London School of Economics, concluding with a Knighthood, Manmohan Singh became India's finance minister and first reformer.

One reason for the divergence was that when confronted with the deterioration of moral standards in the government, IG quit. Manmohan Singh, on the other hand, carried on, deeming it sufficient to keep his hands clean even

if others' were in the till. They did not face the same choices. IG served mainly in the fifties and sixties, when the colonial standards of probity and professionalism still held. Manmohan Singh served mainly in the seventies and eighties when those standards were abandoned.

To Serve is to Choose

But to serve is to choose. IG, when faced with improper demands from L. N. Mishra, Mrs Gandhi's revenue collector, left for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1972. He was brought back as the governor of the RBI by H. M. Patel who became finance minister in the Janata

government of 1977. In 1980 Mrs Gandhi returned with her henchmen, and IG's life became uncomfortable. In particular, he had been tough with the trade unions in the RBI, dismissed troublemakers and restored discipline, ignoring Congressmen's pressure to take back the troublemakers and compromise. IG also resisted loan *melas* and debt write-offs. Mrs Gandhi did not make him do anything he would not do; but as he said in his H. M. Patel Memorial lecture last year: "I have reason to think she was happy to have me out." I think this history was also behind IG's not holding any further public office in India - including that of finance minister.

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In that lecture IG described what changed between the sixties and the seventies – between the reigns of Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter.

A Change in Quality

It was not simply the degree of corruption; as IG reminded his listeners, there were people like S. K. Patil, C. B. Gupta, Pratap Singh Kairon and Ravi Shankar Shukla who were master collectors of political contributions. What changed was the quality of ministers. Earlier, it was the norm for ministers to consult their bureaucrats, and unusual for them to overrule the bureaucrats. If political pressures conflicted with the dictates of good administration, the latter won.

IG gave a number of instances. For example, just before the 1972 elections, L. N. Mishra and his cronies would ring him up frequently asking for clearances for various things which he generally had to refuse. IG got worried about how this might affect Y. B. Chavan, the finance minister. He did not want Chavan to be booted out on IG's account. So he went to Chavan and asked him if he would like to handle the files where political pressure was applied. Chavan said no; IG could go on dealing with the files exactly as he would – unless things got too hot for IG himself, in which case he could send Chavan the file with a note explaining his stand. Or he could lock the files up until the elections were over.

The BCCI Case

Later in 1980, when IG was

governor of the RBI, politicians lobbied him to give a licence to the Bank of Credit & Commerce International (BCCI), the Pakistani bank which went international in the seventies, achieved meteoric growth and finally went bankrupt in the early nineties, leaving egg all over the face of the governor of the Bank of England.

IG knew of some of BCCI's crooked ways. He knew BCCI had been involved in shady deals, and did not give it a licence. The day Mrs Gandhi pulled down Morarji Desai as prime minister and installed Charan Singh in his place, the minister of state in the finance ministry called for the file and approved the licence. Manmohan Singh rang up IG and told him. IG rushed to Delhi and asked for an appointment with Charan Singh. Charan Singh asked IG to come to his place at 5:30 in the morning, and received IG in his bedroom. When IG explained the facts, Charan Singh said that there was no question of granting a licence, and told IG to go to Manmohan Singh's home and tell him to take no action on the file. However, IG was followed as RBI governor by Manmohan Singh, who gave a licence to BCCI – and took back the delinquent trade unionists.

Breakdown of Discipline

We inherited a system in which senior civil servants trained their juniors. As a part of the training, the juniors were encouraged – rather made – to take decisions on their own without referring them to the seniors. If a decision was made further up and the junior disagreed with his senior, the senior

asked him to give his reasons and deferred to him if his reasoning was correct. As a result, there was consistency in decisions at all levels, and the decisions were taken at the lowest possible level.

What first changed was that politicians began to pressure individual bureaucrats to take colourable decisions. These pressures could be withstood as long as the ministers continued to support the bureaucrats. But by the seventies, ministers themselves started to put pressure on bureaucrats, and when the latter did not yield, to overrule them.

Breakup of Government

Later a stage came, which IG did not witness, when the bureaucrats were selected and promoted on the basis of their malleability. The consequences are still working themselves out through the system. First, consistency amongst decisions declines, and the government comes to be seen as arbitrary and susceptible to influences. Second, hierarchies cease to work, and civil service discipline breaks down. Finally, the government breaks up into a chaotic melange of mafias. This is the final stage towards which our government is going.

The consequences of selecting bureaucrats on the basis of their malleability are being felt now.

MR. ASHOK V. DESAI is consulting editor, *Business Standard*.

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A Tradition of Corruption

A. D. Moddie

This way my chosen profession from boyhood. I really thought there was no better. And yet, here I was disturbed by the shape of things to come, contemplating resignation from India's most prestigious service.

At the departmental examinations held in Patna in 1949, I witnessed massive cheating by officers of the IAS and provincial cadres, aided and abetted by official invigilators. These invigilators even cautioned the officer examinees before the arrival of the Member Board of Revenue. Here was an eye-opening example of connivance in cheating in the new regime by officers themselves, in what we now look back to as the halcyon days of Nehru. The same officers were meant to implement the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and a host of regulatory legislations to regulate the lives of the Indian public with fairness and integrity, and according to law and regulation. Here was a shocking, brazen example of the widespread Indian phenomenon, official and non-official, of cheating and ambivalence. Here were the roots of the cheating by the official fathers themselves, and of examinations of the whole educational system, now criminalised by our politics.

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En route from Muzaffarpur to Madhubani in Bihar (on transfer), I went to meet my District Magistrate, not in the IAS, but a good honest officer of the pre-1947 regime. He cautioned me that I was walking into a dangerous situation

with my new charge. My visions of "The Guardians" took a body blow when he unfolded to me how the Deputy Inspector General (DIG), CID of the state of Bihar had committed an armed dacoity with his own men on a Mahant in my subdivision; as the DIG and his son, who had been married to the Mahant's daughter were impatient to grab the lands and property of the Mahant, before his normal demise. He added that documentary evidence of it was in his office safe, to which he pointed. We have long since heard of police excesses, 'encounters', 'zulum', the blinding of Bhagalpur prisoners, and the condemning of the police by a judge as "criminals in uniform"; but the perpetration of an armed dacoity by a senior police officer of the rank of DIG, CID in 1949, in the halcyon days of the Nehru 'raj' was a loud ringing of Nostradamus' bell for a young officer assuming his first charge. It was the ringing in of the law of the lathi, of "*jis ka lathi uska bhains*" (The buffalo is his who has the stick. The Hindi version of "might is right" - *Editor's Note*). I also knew of the grabbing of lands by the most distinguished families in Bihar, aided and abetted by the police, preventing defensive action by the immediate resort to S.144 Cr.P.C., and then futile protracted proceedings in the courts was the

only option left to the weaker weaker victim's. No wonder three land reform bills in Bihar remained ineffective. No wonder Bihar is what it has since become, India's Central African state.

Soon I was transferred to the state headquarters as Textile Controller of the state. The circumstances of the transfer provide yet another insight in Nehru's days of the shape of things to come. I was trekking on holiday in the Satopanth area in Garhwal. En route to the Valley of Flowers, I received a telegram at Badrinath to report to the Supply department immediately. Despite my disappointment, I returned and reported to the Secretary, Supply who, to my surprise, asked me why I had rushed back. Only later I discovered the true reason. The previous Textile Controller was known to have been collecting large funds from the textile trade, then under controls. But the offense was not looked upon as corruption. His fault was that he was collecting money for his minister, the leader of the rival faction of Rajputs, in the same Congress government with a rival Bhumihar Chief Minister (CM). The CM insisted on his immediate removal. I was chosen as a safe substitute.

In view of the subsequent

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ballooning of corruption in the Congress party and in Indian politics, here was a top level first-hand experience that corruption in the normal and legal sense, was not considered an offense at all by the highest level of political and executive authority in the state. To prosecute my predecessor might have opened a Pandora's box, which did open up forty years later. For those forty years this deep and widespread cancer was allowed to grow, to spread into the vicious shortages, black markets, *hawala*, and criminal politics. And all in the specious name of state socialism

and development. That it started in Nehru's days was beyond doubt, only it did not surface beyond the Krishna Menon jeep scandal, and the Mundhra affair, neither arousing much indignation from Prime Minister Nehru, who threatened to hang black marketeers from lamp posts. The press was not so alive; the public was still adoring its new 'nationalist' leaders, and was still credulous. I was told then that when corruption was drawn to Nehru's attention, he is alleged to have replied, 'Find me honest men!' Surely that itself was a function of

India's first Prime Minister, the heir of Gandhi, and the darling of the masses who had full faith in him, leading the people to good government and out of poverty to the 'new temples' of development. That was perhaps the most alarming of the bells of Nostradamus; my first realisation that power was going into the hands of 'rascals, rogues, free booters'. We had no idea just how far the cancer would grow. It was in that year when we, the people of India, gave ourselves the great white hope of the future, the Constitution, our charter of public virtue in the polity.

"When the Prime Minister comes, what shall I say?"

I had to tackle three years of the Kosi's devastating floods in Madhubani, three years in which I saw our poor marginal people, men, women and children, lying helplessly on damp floors, malaria-ridden, fevered, under-nourished bodies, with little or no relief, passive remnants of life. I initiated out-board motors on country boats to carry relief faster to the stranded thousands hit by extensive floods, and spread over hundreds of square miles. It was the worst human suffering I had seen since the Bengal famine. Not a single minister of Bihar, all virtuous khadi-clad freedom fighters till yesterday, the heirs of Gandhi, cared to make a single visit in all those three years. One day I heard the Chief Minister was coming. On the flight over the Kosi flooded areas he asked me, "When the Prime Minister comes, what shall I say?" The cat was out of the bag. The real reason of his visit was revealed as clear as daylight. If it were not for the news of the Prime Minister's visit to my sub-division, the great Neta would not have interrupted his feasting on chicken and 'Sandesh', which he devoured despite diabetes and flatulence, amidst the comforts of Patna, the state's capital. I recalled that the first distinguished person to be concerned with the devastating annual Kosi floods only five years earlier, was none other than the British Viceroy Lord Wavell, from whom these same *netas* were supposed to have delivered us into freedom and a better life. Who was the better "Guardian", that British Viceroy or this Indian Chief Minister, in the context of the Kosi's victims?

When I was in the midst of Kosi relief work in Madhepur, the news broke of Sardar Patel's death. I thought the best way of paying our respects to this great and respected leader was to carry on the day's good work for those afflicted thousands. To my surprise, the local khadi-clad *netas* insisted on commemorating by a holiday and a cessation of relief work. Here I realised, was the seed of the new post-1947 Indian work ethic, every excuse, festival or death, was a good enough reason for a holiday and a cessation of work from grass roots to our august Parliament.

- A. D. Moddie

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This way my chosen profession from boyhood. I really thought there was no better. And yet, here I was disturbed by the shape of things to come, contemplating resignation from India's most prestigious service. If and when the muck surfaced, I felt I could not live with it. This was not the reason why I joined the civil service, to survive or wallow in the muck. I did not join for salary. But before I put in my resignation, I thought I should share my thoughts confidentially with four senior ICS officers of the state and get their advice. To my surprise none of them gave me a single reason why I should stay on. I wondered why they stayed on. That helped me come to the sad and hard decision to resign. I have never regretted it.

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In the 21st century the most concentrated crisis of infra-structures will be in the cities and towns of India, where half of India will

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live after 2000 A.D. India will then cross a political climactic. In the past 50 years, the majority of the electorate have been in vast dispersed rural areas. After 2000 A.D. they will be concentrated in the urban areas, a more vocal dynamic force, which will not tolerate the breakdown of infrastructure services easily. Yet, as of now:

- a quarter of the urban households are without toilet facilities, and people use street gullies, canals, rivers to defecate;
- only 18% cities have partial sewage and treatment facilities;
- upto 30% to 50% of solid waste in urban areas is uncollected;
- 25% to 50% of the population of urban areas live in slums, and their growth is on the increase;
- in middling cities and towns 56% have no access to tap water, 63% are without toilets, 68% without drainage, and 98% without access to dustbins for garbage.

The question to be asked is: Why? This is so for the same reasons as have been shown so far - politicised inefficiencies, corrupt tax collection leading to heavy losses of revenues, and incapacity to invest in municipal infrastructures, a lack of transparency and public accountability.

The answer to all such problems in cities, states, and at the Centre has been demonstrated in Ahmedabad by Sardar Patel at a political level before independence; and by Municipal Commissioner Keshav Verma at the bureaucratic level since 1994. Ahmedabad was like India, a rich city with poor

infrastructure. The municipal corporation had been in debt since 1983, with no capital works since then, and like most of India 85% of revenues went in salaries, a symptom of *Sarkari* inertia. The plague of 1994 compounded matters.

Keshav Varma

Fortunately the hour and the place found their man, Keshav Verma, an excellent example to every municipality, state and central government. He began by clearing 75,000 tons of garbage, and won performance credibility for the corporation and himself. Action spoke better than political manifesto or policy statement. In the face of the local mafia, he stopped criminal evasion at check points, and raised Rs.100,000 per day in the first three months. In the past, he said, 'there was no moral courage to stop them.' That has been at the heart of the failure of Indian politicians, the want of moral courage. Here was a highly commendable example to the rest of India in efficiency, transparency, accountability, and viability; with self reliance and no dependence on state or central governments. As to whether it will be sustainable after Verma goes, he himself said, 'whether I go, it will continue. Because of the transparency and growing professionalism of the cadres, the system is not as vulnerable now to change in commissioners.'

S. R. Rao

Similarly, in filthy, plague-infested Surat, another public servant with moral courage, S. R. Rao, Municipal Commissioner cleaned out the city's clogged drain

pipes, removed months of accumulated mounds of garbage, reduced octroi, and excise evasion, and transformed one of the dirtiest, disease-infected cities of India, into the cleanest in the country. This was declared so by the Indian National Trust for Architectural and Cultural Heritage. He did this by (a) setting a personal example, (b) getting his officers to get out of the air conditioned offices and into the streets, (c) giving them financial powers to sign cheques upto Rs.2 lakhs; and, in the process, his own daily file work came down from 450 to 80!

In the last twenty-five years, the fount of corruption has been at the top and now there is a counter-system of corruption at all levels; systematic, brazen, harassing. It is exercised by everybody from patwari to minister. From the ration card to a thousand official clearances to the price of a legislator or a public office, everything has a price. Even those who mourn a family member's death are not spared harassment for a death certificate. Every control point is regarded as a license to harass and take increasing sums of money, without discretion or principle. Sitaram Kesri, (former Congress President) admitted 'the problem that most parties face today is that partymen collect money in the name of election fund, and do not deposit it with the party'. He confesses 'Today politicians are different', a mild understatement. It would be interesting to take an inside view of corruption as conveyed in the factual report of a certain State Vigilance Commission a few years ago.

The first underlying theme is

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that, much of corruption is regarded as "traditional and generally acquiesced in by the rural population". In this connection, 'speed-money' may be exacted from individuals and from groups in a village for pumps, power, irrigation, loan, and a number of government facilities or controls, with which the villager has to deal. In the Police department, the report says, 'the pattern of misdemeanours is traditional, i.e. demanding a consideration, from interested parties before initiating lawful action, or for desisting from taking such action'. In the Public Works Department, again there is the mark of tradition in 'the acceptance of expensive gifts from contractors for favours shown', which leads to all sorts of abuses with piece-work and

muster-rolls. Even in the Medical department, the record refers to 'the traditional misdemeanours of this department' in demanding and accepting fees for treatment in government hospitals, and even for a diversion of dietary supplies and medicines for the personal use of the staff. The latest opportunity in this department is over cash disbursements for vasectomy operations. The report says, 'There were instances of decrepit old men and underaged boys beings operated on and the same person being shown as operated on more than once,' for the compensatory allowances. The traditionality of corruption seems therefore, established beyond doubt in department after department.

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If India wishes to count as a significant power, "styles of functioning" must change, for which cultures, values, and mind-sets also call for change. That is in the hands of the next generation, of the future electorate, of government, media, intellectuals, and of educationists. Politicians will remain politicians, seekers of power and opportunists, Kant's "crooked wood" given to manipulating the state apparatus for its own ends. In a democracy, the major control mechanism has to be the politician's balanced by the judiciary, and finally decided by the people for the polity and the economy.

Extracted with the permission of the author from his book, "Leaders of Straw"; Harper Collins Publications India; Paperback Rs.145.

The Men in Safari Suits

Bhagwan Thadani

We are the best kept secret in the government. We live in shadows, we work in the dark, And we dress in safari suits. We are the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Bureaucrat: the word itself conjures up an image of a stodgy, inflexible, desk-bound government employee. Our civics textbooks tell us they're the ones who actually run the country. Politicians formulate policy, they implement it, which means they write laws, maintain records, supervise construction work (whatever gets done that is), hand out licences and permits.

That's why they're made to appear for a highly specialised examination before they're even employed.

Of course, they study political science, history, public administration... Well, here's an actual question from an IAS examination paper: "What is the weight of a ping pong ball? "What is the distance between the earth and the moon?" Like it is in imminent danger of falling on our heads, and a government servant must be prepared to make contingency plans!

There are 4800 IAS officers in India. Each one of them heads a department in every district in the country. Each department needs a secretary, who needs a joint secretary, two deputy secretaries, two additional secretaries, who in turn each need a joint secretary, a deputy secretary, an additional deputy secretary... the list goes on and on till

it reaches the stage where the state of Maharashtra alone has no less than 2 million government employees. Who's paying for their salaries, their countless perks? Simple - the remaining 68 million people in this state. That's the worst part of the bureaucracy it's a self permeating nationwide employment agency.

Here's an interesting fact to chew on: 60% of the budget of the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation goes towards salaries, cars, chauffeurs and airconditioners. And who's paying? We, the tax payers.

So what's the result of all this? Let's see. If you were to kill somebody, you'd have one police inspector

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on your trail, along with a few constables. But if you want to open a factory, you'll be chased by a factory inspector, an income-tax inspector, a land inspector, a sales-tax inspector, and God knows how many more. Not to mention all those officials you have to run after to get your licence in the first place. Have I forgotten the foot-high stack of forms you'll have to fill out in triplicate? Gosh, if they recycled all the paper they waste on these forms, maybe they wouldn't need to charge any taxes at all!

To construct a building in Mumbai, you need to go through no less than 52 - yes 52 - government departments, each with its own stack of paperwork, before construction can even begin! Once it is finished, you'd need to wade through another 20 before it can be occupied. That's a grand total of 72. The moral of all

this? The unproductive, the wasteful is easy. The productive, the creative is tied up and choked in miles of red tape. I rest my case.

I haven't even begun to mention the 'C' word - corruption. It exists in every level of our society, why should the bureaucracy be exempt? Our government servants take bribes not just for illegal acts, but even to perform their duty! To process an application, to grant a licence. Large companies actually maintain separate accounting departments, just to treat a long line of inspectors to fancy dinners and bottles of Black Label. Not so they can flout laws but just to stay in business.

What about the self-serving, uncaring official who, merely to avoid a transfer, blindly obeys the orders of the minister above him, no matter

how unethical? Like those countless IAS officers involved in the fodder and housing scams, awarding licences and government contracts to unscrupulous crooks? Because he does not care? What about the lazy and the incompetent, who gather like fungus and perform the same function, simply because they can never be sacked? Who spend the government's money like water because it is not theirs? They are the worst parasites of all!

Yes, we need the bureaucracy much as I hate to admit it. But not as it exists right now, bleeding our economy to death. It needs massive revamping, overhauling spring cleaning even, only then will government servants stop serving the government and start serving the people.

MR. BHAGWAN THADANI is a free lance writer and a company executive.

The General Administration and the Police

Satish Sahney

Independence brought revolutionary changes in the political structure of government; it brought none of any consequence in the structure of police administration.

The Government and the General Administration are two sides of the same coin and the police a part of the system of administration.

The Police Act of 1861

The Indian police system is a British legacy structured on the Indian Police Act of 1861. This Act was drafted in the background of the uprising of 1857 which brought about a change in the attitude of En-

glishmen towards Indians. After 1857 the 'natives' were not only not to be trusted, they were to be ruled with a firm hand and ruthlessly, if necessary. Section 3 of the Act of 1861 made the police an executive arm of the Government:

"The superintendence of the police throughout a general police district shall vest in and shall be exercised by the State Government to which such district is subordinate".

The Police Act of 1861 also stated that Police administration was to be vested in the Inspector General of Police (IGP) at the provincial level and Superintendents at the district level. The IGP was responsible to the provincial (State) government and the Superintendent was to hold his charge "under the general control and direction" of the District Magistrate (DM). The result of this system has been a "dual control"

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over the police.

Independence brought revolutionary changes in the political structure of government; it brought none of any consequence in the structure of police administration.

The Structure

According to the Constitution of India, police is a state subject. States have exclusive power over their control and regulation. The principle of the supervision of the police by civilian administrative authority has been preserved, except in the cities which have Commissioners of Police. Under the British, the Commissioner system was confined to three presidency towns. After independence many more cities have been brought under the Commissioner system. The Commissioner communicates directly with the home department. He not only directs the internal administration of the force but bears full responsibility for law and order as well.

Political Interference

This system of supervision and control has been responsible for political interference with and misuse of the police. During British rule the police as an agency of the executive functioned primarily to safeguard the interests of the colonial ruler. After independence the colonial ruler was replaced by the political party in power. Gradually politicians in power effectively took direct control over operational matters, pertaining to both investigation as well as public order, of the police. In its second report the National Police Commission has drawn attention to various situa-

tions in which "pressure is brought to bear on the police by political, executive or other extraneous sources". These include:

1. Arrest or non-arrest of a person against whom a case is taken up for investigation.
2. Release or non-release on bail after arrest.
3. Suppression of material evidence that becomes available during searches by police.
4. Inclusion or non-inclusion in the chargesheet placed in Court on conclusion of investigation.
5. Posting or non-posting of a police force in an area where trouble is apprehended to create an effect to the advantage of one party or the other.
6. Taking persons into preventive custody to immobilise them from legitimate political activity in opposition to the party in power.
7. Foisting false criminal cases against political functionaries for achieving political ends.
8. Discretionary enforcement of the law while dealing with public order situations, with emphasis on severity and ruthlessness in regard to persons opposed to the ruling party.
9. Manoeuvring police intervention by exaggerating a non-cognizable offence or engineering a false complaint to gain advantage over another party in a situation which lies outside the domain of police action in the normal course.

Withdrawal of prosecution from Court, which is always under the direction of the government and mostly for political reasons, is another form of interference. The law

(Section 321) of the Criminal Procedure Code spells out that the public Prosecutor in charge of the case may, with the consent of the Court, withdraw the case from prosecution. It is implied that the Public Prosecutor should make his application to the Court on his own subjective satisfaction of the justness of the proposed withdrawal. In reality, however, the Public Prosecutor complies with government instructions. Police opinion, if obtained and found to be opposed to withdrawal, is either ignored or overruled. Withdrawal of cases from prosecution, particularly those involving violence, encourages lawlessness and negates the concept of the rule of law.

The threat of transfer is the most effective method used against those who resist political interference; and the result of political interference is deterioration in the quality of police performance and weakening of the chain of command.

The system of supervision and control has prevented the growth of professionalism in the police. For example, control over crime is the responsibility of the police. The success or failure of every police officer in the field, from the officer-in-charge of a police station to the Commissioner of Police, is measured by this yardstick. The professional way to control crime is through proper investigation leading to detection and certain conviction. The fact, however, is that an adequate number of investigating officers consistent with the incidence of crime is never available. Besides, the police are constantly engaged

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in law and order, and security duties. The result is concealment and minimization of crime. No one really has a correct idea of the crime situation. Statistics are manipulated to prove that crime is under control.

Of all public services, the police are most taken for granted by the government. The police are generally called upon to perform non-police duties e.g. watch and ward duty; as telephone orderlies at the bungalows of the ministers or to serve transfer orders on government servants *after* working hours! Laws are enacted and the police asked to enforce them without anyone even bothering to ascertain the feasibility of enforcement with the available police strength.

The State government has full financial control over the police but that has not led to its systematic and planned growth. The police are treated as a 'non-plan' subject. Development and Welfare activities claim first preference of scarce resources. The police are expected to be content with a minimum allocation just enough to meet the cost of establishment. Consequently whatever has happened by way of expansion has been on an *ad hoc* basis and, more often than not, as a matter of expediency.

Rural policing is in a state of neglect; manpower, both at rural and urban police stations, totally inadequate; police station buildings even in metro cities are improvised versions (gypsy huts) a woeful shortage of forensic science laboratories. Stationery not even sufficient to meet three months' requirements of an average police station. As for housing less than fifty percent of the

police force is provided housing facility.

The important question is whether a system that was devised to ruthlessly control and govern a colony is a good system for managing a democracy and for coping effectively with the basic tasks of policing viz. Prevention and detection of crime, law enforcement and maintenance of public order. The answer is in the negative notwithstanding the fact that the Indian police have served the country well and truly since independence, particularly in the control of a wide variety of agitations and disturbances. Nevertheless the nature of police accountability is not what it ought to be in a democracy. The Police are accountable to the departmental hierarchy, the magistracy, the Courts, the government and finally to the legislature, but there is no concept of accountability to the people whom the police are expected to serve. In the public perception the police do not act on behalf of the people but at the behest of the government and that

determines the relationship between the police and the public. The police are the object of public distrust and condemnation. They are constantly accused of distrust and condemnation. They are constantly accused of dishonesty, partisanship and corruption. Such a situation is indeed a matter of shame for the police put it is also a reflection on the administration of the State because the police are the most visible symbol of State authority. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to devise a system which will ensure a certain amount of direct responsibility to the people, particularly while dealing with public order situations. The National Police Commission has made specific recommendations pertaining to the accountability of the police and its freedom from political interference in operational matters. Sincere and systematic implementation of those recommendations alone can redeem the Indian Police.

MR. SATISH SAHNEY belongs to the Indian Police Service, since retired.

"I am a qualified engineer, I joined the force believing I would be of use to society. But what do I get in return? My motives are suspect, I am threatened with transfers and if I work honestly, I am considered an impediment by the government."

- A police officer belonging to the Indian Police Service cadre.

"The system humiliates us. The easiest thing today is to be corrupt. No questions are asked and the officer is also protected. The moment an officer attempts to work honestly, he is hounded out."

- A joint commissioner of police.

"We hardly get any time to spend with our families. The spouses of several families are professionals. In the changed scenario, they attach equal importance to their personal lives. They want us to spend time with them, attend school functions of the children, help them with their studies and participate in the family's affairs."

- A police officer belonging to the IPS cadre

"For spending hours and hours of our lives studying files and dossiers of criminals, all we are earning are brickbats. Every now and then there is a call either from the political bosses or senior officers. We are as responsible as they are. Yet, then are we not given a free hand in discharging our duties?"

- A deputy commissioner of police."

(All from a report in *The Times of India*, April 18, 1999)

Civil Service Activism

Marina Pinto

Should bureaucrats see themselves as just government servants or as public servants whose responsibilities transcend the ordinary master-servant relationship vis-a-vis the government of the day?

The popular perception is that the bureaucracy is no longer the steel frame as once described by Lloyd George. It is increasingly seen as a bamboo frame, warped and decayed, manifesting high levels of corruption and politicisation. To the common man, bureaucracy throws up images of a maze of laws, rules and regulations. A veritable jungle, enmeshed in red tape!

Role Under The British

The British steel frame administration had the accent on strong, assertive, rule-bound bureaucracy imbued with a "spirit of authoritarian paternalism". The whole tradition of civil service neutrality was writ large in the working of the ICS. Neutrality, with its accompanying features of anonymity, impartiality and loyalty was singled out as being largely responsible for the high profile and imminent success of the ICS. But then, colonial administration was regulatory in character with emphasis on tax collection, law and order and dispensation of justice. It was largely *status quoist* administration concerned with regulations, legality and precedents.

Role in Free India

With Independence, came

significant changes in governance. What was sought to be combined was 'Economics of Growth', 'Politics of Modernity' and 'Development Administration'. The civil service was faced with the challenge of building a new India, as administrators were now the prime movers and principal agents of social change and economic development. To work with elected representatives as partners for a common cause, meant that administration had to be action, people and result-oriented. However, it was believed that the ICS tradition of civil service neutrality, which was continued in the IAS, was still good enough to deliver the goods. In the Nehruvian era, all was well, as politicians showed themselves as statesmen who did not believe in political interference in administration and civil servants functioned in the classical ICS tradition.

The Decline Begins

Slowly but surely, the politico-administrative scene began to change. There was steady decline in 'ministerial timbre' and when under pressure for most election promises a minister found in his civil servant, a convenient whipping boy. By the late 1960s, Civil Ser-

vants were seen as 'stumbling blocks', to be shunted, pressurised or victimised. Increasingly, the doctrine of neutrality came under attack, with the idea of a 'committed' bureaucracy gaining ground. One had to be committed to the ruling party's ideology or you ran the risk of being omitted when the loaves and fishes were distributed. Steadily, the idea of 'commitment' got legitimised and before long, commitment turned out to be no different from opportunism of the worst kind. It brought in its wake politicisation of a high order which manifested itself in the growing number of 'Yes Men' who were compliant or suppliant, but never defiant.

Compelled Subservience

The 1970s saw the Emergency and its aftermath. The coercion of civil servants by the powers that be, exceeded all limits. As the Shah Commission's Report clearly showed in case after case, the civil servants who were merely asked to bend the rules during the Emergency, chose to crawl to ingratiate themselves with their bosses. What happened in the 1970s and the 1980s was that the idea of a politicised civil servant gained ground. In fact, according

*A hungry man is not
a free man.*

*- Adlai E. Stevenson,
September 6, 1962.*



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to a Central Minister "(civil) servants should not speak till the master permits...(you) are not to apply your mind, you are just to do what you are told." This could as well be the case of Godbole, an office-goer, who is depicted in Mario's cartoon as being told by his boss, "Godbole, when I want your opinion, I shall give it to you."

Politicisation is aided and abetted by ministers, through their power of transfers, suspension and ability to deny promotions. This results in fine networking, with corrupt ministers and corrupt civil servants building up cozy relationships and even extending these by linkages with anti-social groups. The picture gets complicated when the career development of civil servants gets affected by business tycoons and even astrologers and godmen who pull political strings.

The Transfer Weapon

Transfers, in particular, are the bane of Indian politics. It is a phenomenon that works with a vengeance at the central and state levels as well, at the time of elections and change of governments. To give one illustration, in the U.P., Mulayam Singh as Chief Minister, transferred 419 IAS and 228 IPS Officers between December 1989 and June 1991. Kalyan Singh, his successor, transferred 460 IAS and 319 IPS Officers between June 1991 and December 1992. A veritable transfer *mela*! This is also happening at the higher levels of secretaries to Government who are transferred because they are "obstructionist" in the higher echelons of the IPS, politicisation has created a serious credibility gap in police leadership

for it is seen that the highest can be influenced to circumvent the law.

Another disturbing reality is the politicians-criminals nexus. Every party has its share of this unfortunate tie-up. What is frightening is that politicians with criminal records and known 'history sheeters' have found a place in legislatures, cabinets and local bodies. Law breakers have gained respectability as law-makers!

With the growth of manipulative politics and the downslide of democracy, as also growing levels of corruption manifested through a scam-infested economy and polity, the questions raised relate to the critical role of the bureaucracy. Can the bureaucracy hold the fort and deliver the goods, particularly when politics is a dirty word and politicians have a bad name? Should bureaucrats see themselves as just government servants or as public servants whose responsibilities transcend the ordinary master-servant relationship vis-à-vis the government of the day?

The Exceptions

While there are civil servants who cozy up to the politicians in power and "manage" what the boss wants even if in the process they compromise with ethical considerations, there are a few others who refuse to be joint conspirators. They would like to shake up the system even at a personal cost because they believe in the sanctity of public office and see public service as a sacred trust. There is Mr Chatterjee, an IAS officer in Patna, who in 1992, sought voluntary retirement after exposing how the entire politico-

administrative system had been perverted in Bihar. Then there are men like Appu, Madhav Godbole, Srinivasavaradan and BS Das who took premature retirement rather than be a party to wrong-doings within the system.

The Courageous

What we see today, is action of a different kind. Civil servants who see distortions in the system and feel helpless and hopeless in upholding the public cause, do not hesitate to confront the system in responding to the call of duty. This is activism of a kind which signifies prompt action by civil servants who have courageously gone public when faced with dishonest political and administrative decisions. When politicians blatantly defy the law and no longer represent the wishes and needs of the people, bureaucrats caught in the crossfire, can no longer remain neutral or side their political masters, but seek the support of the sovereign people.

Activist civil servants have seized the public limelight. There is G. R. Khairnar, who exposed the stranglehold of criminalised politicians and politicised criminals in the building construction activity. He cried out "I am a public servant. My duty is to serve the people. I have seen so much corruption that I have no alternative but to shout against it from the rooftops." Subodh Kumar, the housing chief, was turned out less than a month after he took over, for insisting on a contractor's poor performance. T Chandrashekar, the Thane Municipal Commissioner, was sought to be removed, mainly because he

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had demolished scores of illegal structures. While the corporators, en masse, expressed no-confidence in him the citizens rallied to the defence of an honest official.

Civil Service Activism

The classic example is of Arun Bhatia who has been steadfast in his espousal of public causes even when it meant 23 transfers in 30 years! To mention some significant events in his chequered career - in 1982, as Collector of Dhule district, he exposed a multi-crore scandal in the EGS; in 1993 he was summarily shunted out as head of FDA, by the then Congress Government, after he exposed certain unethical practices indulged in by a unit of a multinational pharmaceutical company; in 1996, he unearthed huge rackets in land records and irrigation works. When appointed Commissioner in the Pune Municipal Corporation, he launched a drive to demolish illegal buildings in which some top politicians had an interest. This took an ugly turn when he was transferred within a week of his appointment, but thankfully, the Bombay High Court ordered his reinstatement.

Citizens Have Come of Age

Civil service activism is a sign of the times. It is indicative of the maturing of democracy in that it heralds the arrival of an activist citizenry. People, through grass-roots movements, signature campaigns, torch-light processions, bandhs and the like, will stop at nothing when they are convinced that honest men need their support to serve the public cause. When Thaneites saw clean roads, better

city management and other gains like octroi collection going up by 30%, property tax revenues by Rs.14 crore and water tax revenue by Rs. 8 crore, they were ready to salute the no-nonsense Commissioner who meant business. All this also reflects the role of the sovereign people who are the masters and when their elected representatives are at daggers drawn with appointed officials, they know where they stand in the great divide.

Activism can snowball in that more civil servants can be inspired to follow the leaders. An Arun Bhatia did a Rao in Pune and now Collector Sanjay Chahande vows to do a Bhatia in Mumbai! It also speaks volumes for a citizenry that has come of age.

The need of the hour is for a bold, fearless and independent civil servant. An administrator must have the moral character and strength of conviction to actively pursue the common good, particularly when his perception is at variance with that of his political master. His obligation to the state and the values and principles manifest in the Constitution must override his loyalty to the government of the day. To make this possible, some institutional mechanisms are called for. There should be a Civil Service Board entrusted with all responsibilities pertaining to the Civil Service especially matters of transfer, promotion and disciplinary action. Service organizations which are weak and fragmented, need to be alert and active and back up right officials who are ill-treated or politically maligned. Secrecy laws deny people vital information and thereby erode

the base for correct decision-making. People have a right to know. A Freedom of Information Act is a must. Open and transparent government, with bureaucrats more responsive and accountable can have a tonic effect on the weakening politico-administrative system.

Electoral Reforms

Attention must also be paid to the political executive. We need to have a better political class and to make this happen, our first-past-the-post electoral system needs to accommodate to some extent, some form of proportional representation. No person should be considered elected unless he or she wins 50% of the votes. Voters should have the right to reject all candidates and recall already elected ones. Once in office, floor-crossing should be declared illegal and perhaps like the Germans a vote of no-confidence should carry the assurance of an alternative government.

In the over-arching Parliamentary, federal democracy that we have, the bureaucracy has a critical role to play. A civil servant has to be professional, skilled and committed to public service. Together with the political executive, he has to uphold the rule of law. In the process, he may have high visibility and therefore be seen, known and heard. This may make a dent in the traditional doctrine of civil service neutrality. It is not that the doctrine is defunct today. It needs to be defined anew or modified to accommodate a civil servant who is activist enough to be described as a questioning neutral.

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We Want Honesty, We Also Want To Know

Dilip D'Souza

Public support for honest officials is fine, and given how few of our officials are honest, it certainly is required.

Two days before I began writing this, I attended a so-called "public hearing" about the proposed Sewri-Nhava bridge over Bombay's harbour; or, to give it its full name, the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Sea Link (MTHSL) Project. The hearing, and I use the word with some circumspection that I will explain, is a requirement under the Environmental Protection Act. Conducted by an "independent" panel of officials and citizens, it is an opportunity for concerned citizens to raise whatever objections they have to the project. After discussion, the panel will submit a report to the Government.

The panel was headed by the Collector of Bombay, Dr. Sanjay Chahande. It had officials from Government bodies like CIDCO, MSRDC, MPCB, the state Ministry of Environment, as well as representatives from the Uran Municipality, the area which will be affected by the bridge. Also on the panel were two former sheriffs of Bombay. Perhaps 200 citizens from Bombay and Raigad district were in the audience.

A Mock Hearing?

The hearing was a disaster. As soon as it began, citizens and environmental activists were on their feet, pointing out that the Government had given them no substantial information about the project. "We should at least know

what we are supposed to object to!" exclaimed Kisan Mehta of the Save Bombay Committee. Dr Chahande responded to this by claiming that all the documents requested by these people "had been made available" two days earlier.

Indeed, the Government had made a pretence of releasing some information two days before: at a meeting at the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) office. But officials had refused to allow journalists into that meeting on the grounds that only NGOs were invited. Worse, they had also refused to let those who attended make copies of any documents, even though the NGO representatives offered to pay all copying charges. Not even the map showing the alignment of the bridge was made available.

Extracting Commitments

At the "hearing", all that was on offer was a two-page glossy leaflet from the MSRDC, extolling the virtues of the proposed bridge. As one citizen told me, it was no different from the leaflet a builder might hand out to tout his latest housing project. This was the sum total of the knowledge Maharashtra's Government expected citizens to use to base their objections to - or indeed, their support for - the Sewri-Nhava bridge on.

Naturally, there was much

hostility to this ham-handed attempt at secrecy by the Government. After loud demands, Chahande was forced to commit to make the environment impact assessment, the disaster management plan and viability and feasibility reports all available for public perusal. He also had to commit to postpone the hearing - a real hearing, not the farce enacted this day - to a time after citizens could read and react to these documents.

But well before those commitments were extracted, there was a short exchange that captured to a nicety the bureaucratic mindset on display that day. Chahande tried to claim that Government regulations permitted citizens to examine only the so-called Executive Summary (ES) of the project. There were objections to this narrow interpretation of the regulations. But of the ES too, Chahande said: "We have given it to you." A loud "No!" went up from the audience. "It was shown to you at the MPCB office." "No!" again.

"OK," said the Collector of Bombay, "it may or may not have been shown to you."

Sometimes, you see, Government efforts to avoid transparency are transparent.

Growing Public Awareness

I have related the happenings

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at this "hearing" at some length to make a point about a phenomenon that might just be growing: public awareness and involvement in Government dealings. Had citizens not been present, or had they not been vocal about their right to information about this project, Chahande would have simply handed out the slick leaflets, held the smooth MSRDC presentation that was also on the agenda, and reported to the Government. A public hearing had been conducted. Nobody had objected. Thus the project could go ahead as planned. Who knows how many times just this has happened before?

It is unarguably in the public interest that a Rs.6600 crore project be discussed by the people who will be spending that money; that they find out more about it than a glossy two pages will tell them. Yet the public interest is too often ignored because of public indifference; if it is observed, it is too often only after the occasional public agitation. At this "hearing", it was only a determined audience that forced officials to be honest to that always abused phrase: the public interest.

It seems to me that public interest demands public involvement. Without it, dishonesty is easy. That is exactly the connection that we need to see in what happened recently to Arun Bhatia.

Now many columnists – myself included – mourn the collapse of values in India, the sinking of morals into a morass that sucks us all in. It is hard to fight that pessimism, because there are times when it seems the morass spreads without break in every direction

you look. The judiciary, the political class, the bureaucracy, our institutions, the police, even the shopkeeper who asks if you want a receipt with whatever it is you are buying – sleaze, cheats, thieves and con artists are simply everywhere.

Messiahs of Hope

The cynic would say that we Indians are so willing to tolerate dishonesty wherever we find it only because we are all ourselves dishonest – we are all corrupt cheats. But that view does not fit easily with what I can only describe as a yearning that crops up every now and then. Some unusual public servant makes the news because he is trying to do his job but is being penalized for it by the administration. Immediately, this man becomes the great new hope of the people, the messiah who will lead us out of our miasma of corruption. Huge public meetings affirm faith in him; his words and deeds are splashed all over the newspapers. Clearly, there is a deeply felt disgust with the way things are, a fervent wish that they might get better. And as these occasional men become heroes for a span, they fit right into that yearning.

In just the last five years, we have seen this happen with G. R. Khairnar, T. N. Seshan, K. J. Alphons, Sanjay Pandey, Anna Hazare. Each has been cast in the role of that saviour we long for; then forgotten because he could not live up to that kind of public expectation. Khairnar never did produce that famous "truckload of evidence" he kept blustering about, and finally people could not take him seriously. Seshan cleaned up our elections, certainly. But after he

retired we saw him for the grasper he really was: when he chased Bal Thackeray for a Shiv Sena election ticket. Sanjay Pandey eventually did get transferred into oblivion, which is what the Maharashtra Government had been trying to accomplish all along anyway. Like Khairnar, Hazare was also unable to produce the evidence he claimed he had against Minister for Social Welfare Babanrao Gholap, and was sentenced to jail for defamation for those empty hands. (But nearly six months later, the police is now acting against Gholap for taking a Rs.40 lakh bribe. Or at least the police says it is acting).

With Arun Bhatia, things took a slightly different turn; and I believe it is because they did that, that his case holds some promise for the future.

Arun Bhatia

For one thing, there was the way the Government treated Bhatia. He was transferred from his post as Divisional Commissioner, where he had stepped on some vengeful toes, to be Pune's Municipal Commissioner – actually, a demotion. Just six days later, the Government decided to transfer him again, this time to the State Archives in Bombay. The malice in these moves was clear to anyone who cared to look.

For another, there was the obvious crime Bhatia had committed: as Municipal Commissioner, he had energetically begun demolishing illegal structures belonging to Pune's rich and famous and politically connected. For too long, Pune citizens have had to suffer such illegalities because no previous

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official showed an interest in preventing them. Bhatia's actions met with widespread applause; just as widespread was the anger when the Government stepped in to transfer him.

For a third, there was the reaction of the Courts. Pune citizens filed six petitions in the Bombay High Court questioning Bhatia's transfer. The Court reinstated Bhatia, paying little respect to the Government's flimsy arguments. "It is difficult to accept the proposition of the CM," the Justices observed, "that there was no nexus between the transfer and the demolitions." In the arcane language of judicial verdicts, that's as close as you get to a statement that the CM was lying, period. The Supreme Court concurred, refusing to give the time of day to the Government's ludicrous plea that Bhatia was "urgently required" at the State Archives.

Fourth, and perhaps most telling, was the shape the whole agitation took. Besides the petitions, citizens also held meetings and demonstrations, signed letters and canvassed widely for support for Bhatia. But they also made it clear that their agitation was about something far bigger than just one bureaucrat back in the job they wanted him doing. "This is not a short term agenda for Arun Bhatia's benefit," wrote Sujit Patwardhan of the Pune group Parisar, in a letter he circulated. "[We] have indeed woken up and nothing less than [the] right to self-determination in [our] civic affairs and the right to know will appease [us] this time."

To that end, there were moves to educate Pune's citizens

about their rights, about how to fight widespread indifference and corruption in the administration – all as part of the campaign to reinstate Bhatia.

Educating the People

For one example, the Centre for Development Studies and Activity (CDSA) held a seminar on April 4 on the traffic situation on Ferguson College Road in Pune. The focus was several magnificent trees the Municipality had cut down, ostensibly to improve the traffic flow on this road. This was done even though citizen's groups had urged the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to consider the overall traffic picture, in particular how illegal parking and encroachments were the real reasons for chaotic traffic. They had even presented the PMC an alternate plan showing how traffic could be regulated without cutting down the trees. Ignoring all this, and violating court orders as well, the PMC removed the trees. Traffic, needless to say, remains just as bad. The parking and encroachments remain too, illegal as ever.

"This is Government Policy at work," says a letter about this seminar. "Decisions are made and development undertaken without taking the citizens in confidence. Official documents, plans and policy intentions are not shown even to those willing to give time and expertise for public cause. ... If this agitation [to reinstate Bhatia] is to ultimately lead to restricting the rampant misuse of power by corrupt and nepotistic officials, we must understand the urban issues in their wider perspective. We must recognize how illegalities and vio-

lations of building laws lead to destruction of our environment, we must understand how lack of information helps the corrupt officials and their political godfathers to fleece us the taxpayers. Our money goes into fancy and expensive projects with potential for fat kick-backs instead of the necessary development activity needed by the city. Development Plans are used not for improving the city but for providing political patronage and enriching the few who are corrupt and closely connected to the decision makers."

The Right to Know

This seems to be the difference between earlier euphorias over Khairnar and Seshan, and this agitation about Arun Bhatia. There is a purpose this time, a determination to reach some wider goals. As at the "hearing" I attended, there is a definite sense that the usual glossy handouts and glib words will no longer do. People want only what has been quietly taken away from them over the years: the right to know what is happening to them.

Public support for honest officials is fine, and given how few of our officials are honest, it certainly is required. But a public determination to take an interest in public affairs is something else altogether. If it can be sustained – a big if, no doubt – it certainly has the potential to make vast changes in the way Governments function.

Place honesty in the context of the people's right to know, and it takes on an edge of steel. I suspect that it could shake a lot of things to the roots.

MR. DILIP D'SOUZA is a software engineer and a freelance journalist.

If the Salt Loseth its Savour, Wherewith shall it be Salted?

Louella Lobo Prabhu

The transfer of Arun Bhatia, within 6 days of his taking over as Municipal Commissioner of Pune, was both a saddening and gladdening event. Saddening because it confirmed our already murky ideas of governance in practice; gladdening, because the heartwarming response of the public, showed how much a good administrator is appreciated when he does the right thing. Where governance is working well, doing the right thing should be the rule, not the exception. When governance is working badly, then the precious Arun Bhatias^{*} of the world become folk-heroes. Sadly, an Arun Bhatia, in service today, is the exception, not the rule. But it is because of him, and a small band like him, that the Central Services are saved from utter and total inefficiency, and inertia, lesser adjuncts of an all-pervasive corruption.

Why this Deterioration

The numbers who enter the Central Services today, the prized IAS/IPS in particular (the IFS having lost its glamour), are indeed legion. Entry to the ICS was much smaller, one reason why it was considered so prestigious. The fact of the examination being held in England, also tended to keep the Service exclusive and elite. The last two, are dirty words today, but at

their best, signify some sort of *noblesse oblige*. People wealthy enough to buy a passage to England, and intelligent enough to pass the examination at an early age, did not look to corruption on the job, for supplementary income.

Watering Down of Standards

Today, there has been a continuous watering down of standards on all fronts. The age limit goes upto 28; there is a relaxation on the number of times one can take the examination, the examination can be written in the regional languages, and the notion of "moderating" such papers, *vis-à-vis* those answered in English, leaves the vernacular medium students with a great advantage.

Training

An ICS officer, English or Indian, was attached to a senior Collector on his first posting and learned by absorbing what he saw on the job. This is still done – but only nominally. This was the core of ICS training.

From the 1930s onwards, when Indians began to man the political executive, the latter certainly had a different objective from the civil administration – particularly with Indian members of the Service. However, in those days, and upto the time of the first post-Independence Cabinet, Indian politicians were also drawn from a genteel part of society; were well-educated, and reasonably well off. Thus despite a

fundamental hiatus in approach the equation of officers and politicians remained polite and even productive. For Indian officers, it must have eased the tremendous embarrassment of providing governance writ by a foreign power.

Down the Road

The calibre of the Service began to decline when populism entered into the dilution of standards, first by way of language. Galloping decline, when Mrs. Gandhi the concept of 'committed' bureaucracy the commitment being not to the country, and the Constitution, but committed to her. The Emergency was another blow, as bureaucrats, for the most part, went with her, and were duly rewarded; or opposed her and were appropriately shunted to backwaters, for their temerity. The rise of casteism, regionalism; the appearance of coalitions at the Centre, hastened the attacks on the steel frame, which gradually fell down, piece by piece. But of all things that delivered the last death blows were the use of transfers and sacking in public such as the treatment Venkateswaran and Bhagwat received. These leave few uncorrupted, save the Arun Bhatias of the service. May their tribe increase.

LOUELLA LOBO PRABHU is associate editor of *Insight*. She writes from a position of vantage. Her husband was the late T. M. Lobo Prabhu, an ICS officer and a Swatantra Party member of the Lok Sabha.

* The ICS is larger than the word-fixer. Administrators are the guardians of the Republic. If they become predators, what is there for the people?

“21... I think... er... see... when India was formed... in... nineteen... umm... nineteen... umm... when it was formed... they had less states than they have now... er... we have more states... now... I think they added one more... we.... we added one more... no, two more... recently... it was in the papers... not all of them... some... so 21 plus 2... that is 23... 23 states... without including Goa... and... Delhi... Delhi is actually seen as the capital... not a state in the true sense of the word... constitutionally, it is 21... but then when you say states... it is 23... yes... no!... sorry... there is Andaman... and Pondicherry...”

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Russia :

An Ailing Chief and An Ailing Economy

Vasundhara Mohan

The Russian economy is in as bad a shape as Yeltsin's health.

Although Russia set in motion a liberalization program, the technological backwardness of the Russian economy, the inability of most of the enterprises to adapt themselves to operate under conditions of liberalization, lack of sufficiently tough credit and financial policy have not helped Russia in stabilizing its economy. There was no sincere effort to reduce government expenditure. Further, Russian tax laws had to be drafted from scratch at the end of 1991, affecting the quality of the legislation.

This period coincided with the drastic overhaul of the society, creating various interest groups both in the population and government. As a result, instead of streamlining the tax laws there was a tug-of-war between various groups; if the people's sole intention was to avail tax breaks, the politicians wanted to ensure the reduction of the overall tax burden, since populist declarations attract votes. Faulty framing of the laws left many loopholes, which the tax payers used, to their advantage. While the taxpayers learnt the tricks, the government did not know, for instance, how to stop money laundering. As the *Moscow Times* observed, "as a result, international financial circles come up with constant accusations against Russia and impose restrictions on

contacts with Russian entrepreneurs. The problem is made worse by the liberal attitude taken by investigators and courts who consider tax violation cases. The Tax Police, an agency created in 1992, to boost revenues and bring tax evaders to book, could not cope up with the situation. For instance, of the total 5,000 people arrested on tax evasion charges during 1997 only 429 actually came to court and only a few dozen actually served time.

Ultimately, the worsening economic and financial situation plunged the Russian economy into a deep crisis. Left with no option, the Russian government effectively devalued the rouble on August 17, 1998, clamped a 90-day moratorium on foreign debt and announced a forced restructuring of rouble debt. Predictions were rife that Russian banks were about to collapse. Inflation once again started sweeping Russia making people's meagre savings worthless, while the looming winter started sending chills much ahead of the winter. According to government's figures published in September, 1998 wage arrears in Russia totaled US \$ 5.25 billion (at current rates), apart from \$ 16 billion owed to the military. ~~International agencies warned on~~ present situation to "mindlessly applying others' experience to Russia", in the field of reforms.

In August 1998 the credit rating agency, Fitch-IBCA, downgraded its long-term foreign currency rating for five Russian regions and put seven more regions on watch for a possible further downgrade. Another agency, Thomson Bankwatch announced in Moscow that it was downgrading its Russia debt rating to "CCC" from "B-minus" and also downgrading its rating of 32 Russian banks. Fitch-IBCA warned in August 1998 that there was a possibility that Russia will default on more than \$140 billion in foreign debt payments.

Japan had agreed to extend a loan of \$1,500 million to Russia over a two year period, out of which \$400 million was released in July 1998. With a worsening economic situation, the Russian Prime Minister Kiriyenko, who was installed in position by Yeltsin with hopes of improving the economy, asked Japan to accelerate the disbursement of the balance amount of the loan during 1998 itself – partly in August and the rest later in 1998. Suffering from an economic crisis of its own, Japan could not accommodate Kiriyenko. Germany expressed its inability to come to Russia's rescue. The Russian rouble was just about 40 percent against the German mark in European trading by the end of August

1998. Russia's Central Bank said that it could no longer afford to intervene to support it." Dollar-seeking Russians found that the dollar was no longer available in the banks and exchange points. Foreign investors were reported to have suffered losses exceeding \$33 billion.

Enter Chernomyridin

Under such worsening economic situation, the 5-month old government of Kiriyenko, a technocrat, who had come under heavy fire by the Duma for not being able to solve the economic crisis, was sacked by Yeltsin. Realizing that an experienced man was required to tackle Russia's burgeoning crisis and restore political and economic stability Yeltsin recalled Chernomyridin. Yeltsin even declared that Chernomyridin may be the best candidate to succeed him after his term expired in 2000. "Decency, honesty and thoroughness" were the qualities in Chernomyridin, which would make him the best candidate in the elections", Yeltsin said.

But, neither the Duma nor the striking miners were amused. "The changes in the government will not make the slightest difference in the situation of Russia's miners, since what we are going through now is the direct result of the work of Chernomyridin and his team", said Viktor Semyonov, a leader of the striking miners.

A conservative and political heavyweight, Viktor Chernomyridin, who belonged to the "Our Home is Russia" faction, had earlier served as prime minister for five years replacing Yegor Gaidar in December 1992, whom Yeltsin sacrificed to placate the Communists. Chernomyridin was

a Communist Party apparatchik and served as an instructor in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He once promised to end the 'romanticism' of market reforms. It was only in October 1994, when the ruble collapsed, that Chernomyridin turned a reformist".

Knowing Chernomyridin's background, the world economic powers, including US, Germany and France urged Russia to push through economic reforms saying that international help would become useful only when the reforms were implemented decisively. The IMF wanted that Chernomyridin should not roll-back on reforms and insisted on seeing a sound economic program and signs that it has been implemented, before releasing any more of the \$22.6 billion aid package.

Chernomyridin was not acceptable to a majority in the Duma. He tried to persuade Zyuganov, Alexander Lebed and other political leaders to form a coalition government. The Communist Party chief, Zyuganov, said that his party would never accept Chernomyridin. Incidentally, even Gorbachev did not approve of Chernomyridin, saying that both Yeltsin and Chernomyridin were responsible for the economic crisis. The Duma rejected his nomination as prime minister on August 23 and again on 24 when Yeltsin re-nominated Chernomyridin.

If the Duma rejected Chernomyridin's nomination a third time, Yeltsin would have been compelled to dissolve the Duma and call for fresh elections within weeks. The parliament threatened to impeach Yeltsin if he proposed Chernomyridin a third time. Hold-

ing that Yeltsin had lost his credibility and trust, the Duma Chairman Gennady Seleznyov advised Yeltsin to heed the Duma's recommendation and relinquish office. The Duma, which had become something of a "spirited debating club", wanted the President to shed his powers. Coming under tremendous pressure, Yeltsin agreed to a power sharing proposal and conceded that "Russia's basic-law was not ideal in its current form". The tussle between the parliament dominated by Communists and the President is nothing new. But over the last five years (since Yeltsin shelled the Parliament building in October 1993), parliament has acquired much more muscle, compared to Yeltsin, who is weighed down by economic problems. But, under the Constitution the Russian President had excessive powers and the government was dependent too much on the whims of the President. Such excessive powers of the President also made parliament ineffective. Under the circumstances, parliament wanted pruning down of presidential powers and enhancement of the powers of the parliament, if it could not oust Yeltsin.

New government

With a view to defusing the situation, Yeltsin gave upon Chernomyridin and picked up the acting foreign minister Yevgenny Primakov, who turned out to be the compromise candidate. The Duma approved Primakov's candidature on 11 September 1998 by 315 to 63 votes, with 15 abstentions.

Primakov, an intellectual and a specialist in foreign affairs was a member of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party. During the Gulf crisis, he was deputed by Gorbachev to negotiate with Saddam Hussain. Under

Yeltsin, he replaced Andrei Kosyrev, who was following a pro-west line. Primakov restored autonomy to Russia's foreign policy with a more balanced orientation. He was also a strong opponent of NATO's eastward expansion.

While admitting that he had no ready answer to the country's economic crisis, Primakov proposed continued reforms with more state control, increased involvement of Russia's powerful regional leaders, improving government's own discipline and using the financial system to boost Russia's economy as well as fill the state's coffers. He said: "Let nobody doubt this. Russia is not a country to declare itself bankrupt and never will be. The new government will see to that and is already working along these lines". Primakov appointed communists to key economic posts but said that Russia would not revert to a Soviet-style command economy.

Primakov sought \$1.5 billion in EU food and humanitarian aid shipments. According to an estimate of the US Department of Agriculture, Russia harvested only 52 million tons of wheat and other food grains in 1998 as compared to 88 million tones in 1997.

While the EU was willing to provide food aid to Russia, it was reluctant to provide any cash. Instead, Russia was advised to tackle the tax collection issue, the long standing problem in that country. Primakov declared that Russia would not beg for international aid to feed its citizens this winter but would accept it if it was offered. At this forum Primakov once again stressed the need to curb NATO's expansion, and the use of air power against Belgrade over the Kosovo issue. He threatened that Russia

would use its veto power if the UN Security council authorized NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia.

Having received the brief to set right the economy but with no aid forthcoming from those who merely prompted Russia not to roll back on the reforms, Primakov had no alternative but to fall back on the Soviet style of managing the economy. He proposed introduction of price controls on some products and envisaged the revival of Russia's depressed industries apart from settlement of the back-wages of state employees.

Clinton's visit to Russia

Clinton's visit to Russia, from 1 to 3 September 1998, came about at a time when Russia was passing through a deep economic and political crisis. Clinton, like his predecessor, George Bush, placed US relations with Russia and Ukraine, the two nuclear powers of the region, on a high agenda.

Clinton tried to advise Russia not to help India in its nuclear program or with defence supplies. But he was naive to think that the world had forgotten the unilateral US actions including the bombing of six sites in Afghanistan and Khartoum, Sudan on August 30, 1998 (in retaliation for the bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998) which was condemned, among others, by the Russian President himself. Clinton could not expect Russia to follow his advice. The rebuff that Clinton received is clear from a Kremlin official's statement that "any question of stopping defence cooperation with India has to be discussed in the context of the US military-technical cooperation with Israel, Saudi Arabia and its NATO allies in the close vicinity of the Russian borders". Admitting

that the US had pressurized it to reduce the level of defence cooperation with India, Russia reaffirmed its commitment to maintain defence supplies to India. *Voice of Russia* attributed US pressure in this regard as a ruse to see that Russia was pushed out of the Asian market so that American weapon manufacturers could fill the vacuum. The radio also confirmed that the Kremlin would go ahead with an agreement regarding the supply of new SU-10 fighter planes, new generation submarines and high tech missiles to India. It also announced Russia's willingness to assist India in the production of anti-missile weaponry.

Where does all these leave Russia? With the deteriorating economy on the one hand and food shortages on the other, people can no longer repose confidence in the reforms. No lending agency has come to the aid of Russia except mouthing unwanted advice to expedite reforms and not to turn back on the process of democratization. Such advice does not fill the stomachs of unpaid workers, armed forces and their families. The defence personnel could as well be tempted to sell weapons, as they did in the Chechen war, for hard currency. There is no dearth of takers for such armaments not only outside Russia but within Russia itself. Under the present circumstances, the stealing and sale of even nuclear weapons is the biggest risk that should worry the world.

Note: As this goes to press, comes the news that Primakov has been sacked and replaced by Sergei Stepashin, described as a Yeltsin loyalist.

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Narmada *Bachao* by Restoring the Fundamental Right to Property!

Manuwant Choudhary

A few years ago when I was a reporter with the *Afternoon Despatch & Courier* in Bombay I recall sitting at a small restaurant at Churchgate talking with a few persons from the media on the movement in Narmada as a Gandhi vs Nehru phenomenon with Medha Patkar as the Gandhian. A man overheard our conversation and asked me whether I was from the 'media business'. I was new to my profession and had become a reporter because of certain 'ideals' and not because it was a business. Though taken aback I heard him. He told me he was from the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) and how Medha Patkar has been arrested etc.

I reported the arrest of Medha Patkar but the conversation with the NBA activist was difficult to forget. I wanted to meet Medha Patkar. And meet her I did when she sat protesting at Churchgate.

My first question to her, "Are you a Gandhian?". Medha Patkar replied, "No, I am a Marxist". My second question to her, "Do you believe in the right to property as a fundamental right?". Medha Patkar replied, "No". My interview was over. I never met her again though I did follow the Narmada reports in the newspapers and how the affected people kept losing their battles in court. In a recent issue of the weekly magazine *Outlook* I had read with interest Arundhati Roy's critique of the Narmada Valley Project. It was written in a refreshing, readable style but I thought Arundhati had missed an important point in her critique. She wrote: "At issue is the very nature of our democracy. Who owns this land? Who owns its rivers? Its forests? Its fish?"

But she answered this important question only in passing when she

talked about the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (amended in 1984) according to which the government is not legally bound to provide a displaced person anything but cash compensation. The problem is, most tribal people do not have any formal title to their land and hence they cannot legally claim any compensation. Most tribal people, or let's say, most small farmers, have as much use for money as a Supreme Court judge has for a bag of fertiliser.

The crux of the matter is that in India the right to property is no longer a fundamental right. When this right was removed few protested because the move was meant to be against the zamindars rich landlords and the rich farmers who were exploiting the landless.

Most did not understand that the right to property is the very centre of fundamental rights. (Among those who did was C. Rajagopalachari, and who publicly protested). Without the fundamental right to property other fundamental rights mean nothing. And when you were punishing the rich farmers in India you forgot that everybody would, by the same token, be punished. Fundamental rights do not differentiate between a rich farmer and a small farmer, a city person and a villager, between one caste and another.

The marxist will argue, 'what about the tribals who don't have formal ownership of land.' I would ask them to look at the American constitution where the lands of the American Indians called 'Reservation land' have been protected from even the American Federal government. Only the tribals have been left with their land.

Had we the right to property as

a fundamental right or right to livelihood as a fundamental right one farmer and a single tribal filing a writ in the Supreme Court would have been sufficient to bring the Narmada Dam project to a halt and the mighty state machinery on its knees. We would not need a Medha Patkar to carry on an endless losing struggle.

This comment was provoked by Arundhati Roy's article in the *Outlook*. She too has fallen into a trap set by the marxists for she writes: "Jalud, in the Nimad plains of Madhya Pradesh, is the first of the 60 villages that will be submerged by the reservoir of the Maheshwar dam. Jalud is not a tribal village, and is therefore riven with shameful caste divisions that are the scourge of every ordinary Hindu village. A majority of the land-owning farmers are Rajputs. They farm some of the most fertile soil in India. Their houses are piled with sacks of wheat and *daal* and rice. They boast so much about the things they grow on their land that if it weren't so tragic, it could get on your nerves...their houses have already begun to crack with the impact of dynamiting on the dam site..."

Surely, I expected the author of the '*God of Small Things*' to be a little less casteist....at least not on an issue such as the Narmada. If the Rajputs did boast they did it because they farm some of the most fertile soil in the country all the more reason why the government should not take away their farms.

I think despite all the vested interest, politics, costs etc. the dam must be stopped. The cost in human terms

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Liberalism Workshops – A Report

Anjali Kirtane

The whole purpose of this painstaking exercise was to arrive at common positions on basic liberal values in crucial areas.

It is true we are passing through a recessionary period, not merely in industry and trade but also in the realm of thought. We are therefore going through a period of "intellectual recession" as well. The lack of enthusiasm for serious discussions is a conspicuous feature of this recession. But even in this intellectually dull atmosphere, there are some organisations who try to promote intellectual activities. The Project for Economic Education, founded by Minoo Masani is one of them. In association with the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, *Freedom First* and the Indian Liberal Group, it organised a national workshop on "Liberalism" in Mangalore, in March 1999. Participants came from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan took part in this workshop.

The national workshop was a culmination of three regional workshops held earlier in Ahmedabad, Coimbatore and Rewari. These regional workshops, discussed the position of liberals on such issues as social justice, liberal economy, freedom of expression, the right to know and active citizenship. Papers drafted by them were then taken up for discussion at Mangalore. The whole purpose of this painstaking exercise was to arrive at common positions on basic liberal values in these fields.

All political parties seek to cash in on concepts like social justice, secularism and democratic rights. No wonder, these concepts have become devalued. Hence active citizens have to shoulder the responsibility of studying these concepts from a non-party point of view. That was another purpose behind this workshop. In spite of tall talk about national integrity, Indian society is disintegrating and dividing itself on issues like caste and creed, religion and language. This has led to violence and unrest. If one really wants to take remedial measures against them, there is not alternative to "liberalism".

At the Mangalore workshop, Dr. Ashok Desai, the well-known economist spoke on the Social Market Economy. He recalled the grave economic situation in Germany after the Second World War and how the then German Minister Ludwig Erhard often referred to as the father of the German Economic Miracle cancelled the currency to stop inflation. "Of course, India does not need such a strong reform", he said. But government expenditure and borrowings have to be brought under control. The session on Technology and Human Development was introduced by the former Chairman of the Videsh Sanchar Nigam, Mr. T. J. Chowdhary. He painted an optimistic picture of a knowledge-oriented, technology-

based world in the 21st century "which would be", he emphasised, "the expression of reverence for life and creation." He covered many significant topics such as the formation of new towns, importance of trade and R&D, the protection of intellectual rights and the benefits from an exchange of knowledge. The introductory lecture of the well-known consumer activist Mr. M. R. Pai on "Active Citizenship" was listened to with rapt attention. He pointed out that in India law-makers were themselves law-breakers hence ordinary law-abiding people live in hope and die in misery. The criminalisation of politics is such a grave problem that citizens have to be conscious of their rights, their social conditions and their own problems. If criminals are becoming indispensable in politics, we must remember that we as "intellectuals" have failed", he said.

The liberal position that emerged from these workshops concluded that forty years of socialist planning had failed to solve the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. Since the smallest minority on earth is the individual, the central theme of liberalism is the protection of individual freedom and his or her right to live in dignity. For this, objective rational laws that would protect individual freedom, are needed.

DR. ANJALI KIRTANE is a freelance journalist and short-film maker.

Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari

A 'Free and Truly Liberated' Gandhian

Arvind Deshpande

Shri Shankar Trimbak Dharmadhikari, better known as Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari was verily the Mahatma Vidura of our times. Those familiar with the epic character in the *Mahabharata* will recall that Mahatma Vidura did not have power, wielded no authority, possessed no wealth. Yet every powerful person felt humble before him and bowed to him and sought his advice. So too Dada never coveted power or office, shunned wealth, office, titles and his only asset was 'human kindness and goodness. And yet, the tallest in the land, Vinoba, Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan sought his views when they faced real dilemmas, personal or in public life.

Not that he withdrew from activism to lead a seer's life. He headed the C. P. Provincial Congress Committee, was a member of the Legislative Assembly and later the Constituent Assembly and President of the Sarvodaya Conference. Yet no public figure rejected honorary degrees, titles like Padma Bhushan and the chief ministerial chair as Dada did.

Born on June 18, 1899 at Multapi, District Baitul, Madhya Pradesh, Dada's family was known for its learning and scholarship as also for the study of the Vedanta. His father, Shri T. D. Dharmadhikari, was a District and Sessions Judge, known for his integrity and probity.

Dada studied at the Indore

Christian College and later at the Morris College in Nagpur. He left his studies half way to join the freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi. He however spent a year in studying the vedantic works of Adi Shankaracharya.

Dada had always claimed that the six great persons who influenced him in his life were Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, K. Mashruwala Jammalal Bajaj, J. Krishnamurthy and Rajaji. Dada imbibed the vision, thinking, principles and conduct from all these six. Like Rajaji, his was a razor-sharp intellect, fiercely independent, capable of going to the root or core of a problem in a straight shaft of light. Like his ideal, Adi Shankara, he combined intellect and discrimination with '*bhakti*', Gandhian wisdom, insights and the revolutionary spirit.

His life long passions were not fame, name or power, but human relationships, enlightenment of youth, women and total transformation of society. He lectured every section of society on the Gandhian concepts of truth, love, non-violence and trusteeship. In him Jayaprakash Narayan found an outstanding commentator and crusader for his vision of total revolution.

Human relations, human resource development are the 'in' concepts in today's computer age. Yet Dada anticipated today's 'experts' decades ago.



He married Dharmayantibai early in life. She was his companion in the Quit India movement and in jail too. Those who have seen them together, testify that it was one of those rare cases of togetherness and union of heart and mind which is barely comprehensible to our generation living in today's chaotic and morally unstable times.

Dada's greatest contributions are not only his books and talks but the 'pure' human touch. Anyone who came in contact with him or his writings, concedes that his was an extraordinary civilising influence.

He passed away in Sevagram, Wardha on December 1, 1985.

His life was indeed his message.

MR. ARVIND DESHPANDE is Honorary Secretary of the Leslie Sawhney Programme.

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Debate

The Case of Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat

Divine Retribution?...

S. S. Bankeshwar

In order to maintain discipline among our defence forces, drastic action was called for to deal with Bhagwat's gross indiscipline and misdemeanours. Indiscipline among defence forces cannot be tolerated or condoned. In any other country, a person like Bhagwat would have been court martialled.

It was civil authority, (which had patronised him all along in the past) that saved him from dismissal and even promoted him. This sordid drama of political interference and administrative manipulation at last ended with poetic justice and rightly so. This is what is called Divine Retribution!

Prof. Iqbal Hussain, a popular professor of the Government Law College in Bangalore in the fifties, used to regale students with many court jokes. In his very first lecture in 1953, he regaled us, aspiring lawyers, with the following court joke: "If you have the facts on your side, hammer them to impress the jury. If you have the law on your side, hammer it to convince the judge."

Since Bhagwat had neither the facts nor the law on his side, he decided to hammer 'communal forces', to impress and convince the public. He blamed the civil authority as well (of which he was the sole beneficiary earlier) to fool a gullible public.

Neither our 'secular' parties nor our 'secular' press opposed to the BJP-led coalition government, even bothered to verify and check the facts to arrive at the truth; they swallowed Bhagwat's version of the story, lock, stock and barrel!

For any 'investigating exercise' one has to take a lot of pains and devote much time. Our 'secular' parties and 'secular' press neither took any pains nor did they devote any time to arrive at the truth and our government to arrive at the truth.

What are the facts?

1. Bhagwat was charged with making copies of two confidential documents from a file kept in the office of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (West), who was away in Delhi at that time.
2. Bhagwat was served with a notice seeking explanation for his intemperate remarks against his senior officers in the Ministry of Defence.
3. Naval Headquarters considered his filing a writ petition in the Bombay High Court seeking his appointment as the Commander of the Western Fleet as an act of gross indiscipline and misdemeanour.
4. The then Admiral Nadkarni had issued Bhagwat a 'Letter of Severe Displeasure' for the latter's misdemeanours.
5. Admiral J. G. Nadkarni, Chief of the Naval Staff wrote: 'I recommend that the services of Bhagwat be immediately terminated under Section 15(1) of the Navy Act.'
6. Admiral L. Ramdas: 'Members of the Promotion Board expressed serious concern over the manner in which the Flag Officer had filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court. The Flag Officer had not displayed the requisite degree of maturity, judgement and leadership qualities commensurate with his high rank. Under these circumstances, the Board was of the opinion that his acceptability in the higher ranks within the services was very low. The Board unanimously decided that he should not be selected for promotion to the rank of Vice-Admiral Grade R.'
7. Admiral Ramdas informed the Defence Secretary, N. N. Vohra, that he had admonished Bhagwat at a meeting of all senior officials about the manner in which he had conducted himself in the past.
8. Shri Bhagwat Dadasaheb Pawar became Education Minister. He was fully aware of the antecedents of Bhagwat. Shri Pawar expressed his displeasure over Bhagwat's behaviour, but decided to drop action

against Bhagwat when he was told by both Shri Vohra and Admiral Ramdas that Bhagwat would mend his ways.

But, did Bhagwat mend his ways after that? Not at all, according to Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes!

In the light of what I have said above, the question arises whether the action taken by our government in all good faith to maintain discipline among the defence forces should have been politicised at all.

MR. S. S. BANKESHWAR is a member of the Advisory Board of *Freedom First*.

... or A "Bumbling Bureaucratic Blunder"

G. L. Bakshi

While Vishnu Bhagwat, as an individual does not matter, his sacking as the Naval Chief and the manner of doing so, has had a humiliating impact on a vast majority of Defence Forces personnel, both past and present. Most of them neither know Vishnu Bhagwat personally nor do they see it as an action taken against 'Vishnu Bhagwat as an individual', but they see it as a 'body blow' delivered by the bureaucracy through their somewhat naive political masters, to the institution called the Defence Forces. This perception flows from the well known historical fact that the Defence Forces have always resented the manner the bureaucracy has been treating them over the years, with or without support from the political establishment.

This episode has hurt them. They feel betrayed, more so when the nation owes so much to them in terms of how this institution has stood by the nation and performed in all kinds of situations ever since India became independent. It will be no exaggeration to say that the Defence Forces are, possibly, the only institution, to have, so far, relatively, remained an 'island apart' in an ocean characterized by widely prevalent degradation, corruption, inefficiency, casteism, religious and linguistic parochialism, and indiscipline that has become so much a part of our society today.

In this context it is doubtful if the Defence Services would agree with the Defence Minister's perception that 'discipline has been enforced and chaos avoided'. He appears to have overlooked the fact that firstly, discipline at the intellectual and conceptual levels - the levels at which the sacked Chief functioned - does not have the same nuances as applicable to the soldiers of the line. More importantly discipline can be enforced by persuasion and logical discussion and not by the arrogant application of feudal authority.

The case of the sacking of General MacArthur

by President Truman of the USA, is quoted in support of the argument that it is not the first time that a Chief of Defence Forces has been sacked by a democratic government. General MacArthur's sacking was related to his insistence on nuclear bombing China which would have resulted in a third world war. Did the sacked Naval Chief constitute any such threat, or for that matter a threat to national security of a comparable magnitude?

If such was not the case, then at worst, may be Vishnu Bhagwat had become defiant, brash, arrogant, opinionated, high strung, inflexible and so on, and therefore, too difficult to handle by the bureaucracy and by the political leadership. Even if such was the case, could the situation not have been handled with greater sensitivity and finesse by the Government?

For instance during the Second World War, the British sacked four Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff - Lord Gort, Ironside, Dill, and 'Jumbo' Wilson. Also Wavell and Auchinleck were removed from command. But none of them was humiliated; each one of them was accommodated in less significant appointments and some were even decorated and elevated.

In contrast, let us have a look at what our Government did. Unknown to the Chief, it got in touch with a subordinate (the then Vice Admiral Sushil Kumar) and ordered him to leave for Delhi. They, in a way, encouraged defiance of military discipline which requires that no subordinate, leave his place of duty without the permission of his immediate superior and, secondly, if forced to do so under very exceptional circumstances, do so only after informing his superior officer. Sushil Kumar did none of this. Instead the Government sent the ARC (R&AW) plane to Kochi to fetch Admiral Sushil Kumar, which clearly indicates that it did not trust its own Air Force Chief. They did not

allow even a whiff of what they were doing to reach the sacked Naval Chief till the 'letter of sack' was handed over to him. They did this very surreptitiously in a well planned operation against its own Chief. The fact that the sacked Chief was not given an opportunity to meet the Prime Minister even when he requested for such a meeting, is a clear indication that none thought it fit to sit across and discuss the issues.

There is something seriously amiss in our understanding of the Defence Services. They constitute the only segment of our society, which, by law, cannot claim their fundamental rights. Therefore, the personnel in the Forces cannot agitate or protest openly, not as individuals and not as a group, to make themselves heard in case they perceive an injustice being done to them personally or as a Service, even if it adversely affects morale and motivation. When resolution of matters which relate to their welfare and well being get delayed inordinately and even when decided, do not adequately redress their legitimate needs and aspirations, the only option they have is to articulate their feelings to their seniors. Thus, the onus of projecting these feelings with appropriate clarity and firmness and conviction falls upon the senior officers. Likewise, is the case in respect of many service issues which have considerable impact on morale and fighting efficiency. Decision making on such issues is almost entirely the monopoly of the bureaucratic and political set-up, with little or no participation of the senior hierarchy of the Armed Forces.

This situation places a very serious and important responsibility on the senior hierarchy in the Defence Services who then take up such issues and pursue them towards timely decision making, if they are to continue to enjoy the confidence of the men and officers who depend on them.

Viewed in this context, the sacking of the Naval Chief, who in the eyes of most Defence Services personnel was only articulating, wrongly or rightly, unpalatable issues in a forthright manner at various forums is seen by them as an anti-Defence Services action by the political and bureaucratic set up. It would be naïve to assume that such acts will not affect the morale and confidence of the Services.

It needs deep reflection on the part of all those in the national hierarchical outlook on the manner the military establishment has been viewed since independence. This mindset of fear, suspicion, lack of

confidence in an apolitical Armed Forces has led the Government to appoint a bureaucrat to a key position in the National Security Council. It does not allow it to accept the Service heads to be direct advisors to the Ministers and the Cabinet. Yet, the Chairman of the Railway Board is a professional and not a bureaucrat! It is quite on the cards that this very mindset which accepts a situation wherein files containing the Services viewpoints are held back in the Ministry of Defence allowing the political masters to give decisions on professional Services issues, based on the notings of non-professional bureaucrats. What better illustration can there be of the total isolation of the Services from the decision making process on vital matters pertaining to national security.

If we do not wish this institution also to go the way many others have gone or are going in our country, something meaningful needs to be done and done quickly.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL G. L. BAKSHI (retd.) PVSM; erstwhile Director-General National Cadet Corps.

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BOOK REVIEWS

**THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN;
THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE**
by Brigadier Dr Noor-ul-Haq, Reliance Publishing House, 3026/7H, Shiv Chowk, Ramji Nagar, New Delhi 110008; 1997; pp.332; Rs.295.

Making of Pakistan:

The Military Perspective

Dr. Noor-ul-Haq

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

It is common knowledge that today, Indo-Pak relations are a very live subject as a consequence of the nuclear tests. The vexing and apparently irresolvable issue which has bedeviled Indo Pak relations for over 50 years, is Kashmir. The very act of accession of the State is being questioned by even the very power Great Britain which was party to it.

There are attempts to internationalize it. Even the late Minoo Masani was of the view that India had no business to accept the accession which was otherwise legally justified. Brigadier Dr Noor-ul-Haq, in this very well researched book, really his thesis for a doctorate, perhaps throws light on why it may never be resolved because of the all powerful Pakistan Army who, until recently, called the shots.

Most historians and students of Indo-Pakistan relations have the

mind-set that the partition of India was a political issue or perhaps based on religion. The author thinks otherwise and sets out to prove so with impeccable statistics that there is one major omission and that is the military perspective. He sets out to prove that the making of Pakistan had a pronounced military slant and it was because of the fact that the British rulers began to lose faith in the then pre-partitioned Indian armed forces that forced their hand to agree to partition. The release of this 'thesis' which it is really, on the 50th anniversary of the independence of both countries, is perhaps well timed.

One message emerges loud and clear and that is the Muslim element that went to Pakistan was substantial and may well explain why Pakistan politics today are dominated by the Army. Interestingly, Noor-ul-Haq explains why the future of Indian Independence waxed and waned according to whether the Allied Forces were on the retreat or in the ascendant. It was only after Germany and Japan were defeated that the British took the stance it did regarding the granting of independence because it felt that the 2.5 million Indian troops who till then were loyal could call the shots. However, the mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay and Karachi, and the discontent in the Royal Indian Air Force and to a very marginal extent in the much larger Indian Army, convinced the British Rulers that the writing was on the wall that they could no longer depend on the pre-partition Indian Army to assert their will.

Throughout the 'thesis' the Author's pro-Pakistani slant is evident and natural. For instance the

author states that the Pakistan Army did not enter the State of Jammu & Kashmir until India flew in troops. Which is obviously not true if one reads Prem Shankar Jha's excellent book *Kashmir 1947* where he examines in pathological detail how Maharaja Hari Singh, ably prompted by Sheikh Abdullah, signed the instrument of accession. Nor does Noor-ul-Haq explain how the thousands of tribesmen were able to invade Kashmir if the Pakistan Army had not given safe passage to them. It is on record that when the Baramulla Convent was ravaged, Pakistan Army Officers were present.

The Author covers all aspects leading to the formation of Pakistan - political, religious and military and the reactions of the British Government, Roosevelt and the Americans, Stalin and the USSR and even Chiang Kai Shek and the Chinese. This makes for interesting reading.

Yet another influence on the granting of independence to the sub-continent, was the formation of 60,000 INA and JIFS, the intelligence organization, founded by Subhas Chandra Bose, and the fateful trial of three INA individuals a Hindu, a Sikh and a Muslim. Though awarded life imprisonment, the British got cold feet at the sharp reaction and changed the punishment to dismissal from service. The reviewer was privy to this incident being in service; every Indian Commissioned Officer was required to give his reaction to this famous trial. It is a fact that most of us gave vague answers not wishing to cause any problems within the Army in view of the granting of Independence; or to compromise on certain conventions of loyalty; it was im-

portant to inherit a 'running' Army. The Author dwells on this issue.

From the trend of events as presented by Brigadier Haq, one can now understand the hard line attitude of the Pakistan Armed Forces to India, the control it has always exercised on Pakistani policies and its politicization. It is common knowledge that to this day that Generals like Karamat call the shots. And though the author has not said so, Pakistan has been ruled by three Presidents from the Pakistan Army - Field Marshal Ayub, General Yahya Khan, and General Zia. That the Indian Armed Forces till today have remained apolitical and have distanced themselves from political maneuvers, is a tribute to them and for this we need to be grateful to the pre-war mixed composition of the Armed Forces, mainly the Army, which continues to be secular.

By and large, Brigadier Dr. Noor-ul-Haq's thesis, though biased towards Pakistan, does contain useful material on the Partition and the division of the main spoils - the Armed Forces.

In this context perhaps the last paragraph in the main text is revealing: "Though Pakistan suffered in the division of the provinces and the accession of states, the field where it was better placed came to be the Armed Forces. Although the population of Pakistan was about 25% of the Indian Sub-continent, its share of the Armed Forces was about 33%. But the Pakistan Army had an initial setback that its forces were neither organized nor all of them available to Pakistan. In fact Lt. Gen. Frank Messervy, British GOC-in-C of the Northern Command, replied to the Viceroy, that out of 67 battalions available in West Pakistan, only 35 would be left there. Even these were

to be at half strength owing to the movement of Hindu and Sikh companies. No Muslim companies were available in Pakistan for any replacement. This was precisely one of the reasons that Pakistan Army could not be used in Kashmir in October 1947 against the Indian Military intervention. Later when it was better organized it prevented the Indian forces from occupying the entire state of Kashmir and forced India to seek a cease fire"!

Surely the last sentence is anything but true. This writer was privy to the situation in January 1949 while serving in the Uri Sector. Be that as it may, this 'thesis' gives the reader a very good background of the events leading to Partition, supported by well researched documentary evidence and to that extent is recommended for reading.

MAJOR GENERAL E. D'SOUZA (Retd.) is a regular contributor to *Freedom First*.



I want the officials appointed to administer laws and policies to be free from the pressures of the bosses of the ruling party, and gradually restored back to the standards of fearless honesty which they once maintained.

C. Rajagopalachari
Satyam Eva Jayate, Volume III

Issued by The Rajaji Foundation

GOOD PEOPLE, BAD TIMES : VIEWS FROM PERIPHERY by S. Ambirajan; Publishers T. R. Publications Pvt. Ltd., PMG Complex, IInd Floor, 57, South Usman Road, Chennai 600017; 1998; pp.308; Rs.260.

S. AMBIRAJAN



Reviewed by Professor R. V. Chari

This book brings together some highly interesting, informative and critical articles written by Professor S. Ambirajan, over a period of time, in various newspapers and journals like *The Economic Times*, *The Indian Express*, *The Industrial Economist*, *Freedom First*, *Business Observer*, etc. These articles have been grouped under four different categories viz. (1) political economy, (2) politics and administration, (3) Education, Science and Health, (4) Miscellaneous. On going through these articles, one gets impressed about the depth, erudition and clear-cut views of the author.

Talking about symbols as a policy, the author lampoons the actions taken by the various parties to remain entrenched in power, by doing something or other symbolically so as to satisfy the public. He narrates the instance of Madras city, which is prone to water-scarcity should the north-east monsoon fail or is delayed. Instead of the government anticipating the problem well in advance and taking im-

mediate necessary remedial steps, the *babus* wake-up quite late during April, only after angry housewives hold *dharnas* and the citizens block the traffic. To appease and mollify the ire of the citizens, the officials rush a few tanker lorries of water from Erode and Neyveli, which is distributed to a carefully assembled citizenry, under the glare of television cameras. Press photographers take shots of the VVIPs and Doordarshan takes out a footage of film to make it look like a mega occasion, and people feel "happy" about the effect of their *dharnas* and *rasta-rokos*!

In another instance, he narrates why the dalits are always downtrodden, with the various parties just paying lip-sympathy and also erecting statues of Dr. Ambedkar. In fact, the posthumous conferment of the Bharat Ratna on Dr. Ambedkar by the powers-that-be could be seen as a strategy to garner the votes of the Dalits. Dr. Ambirajan says that "the very party which once hounded him out from its fold now thinks it fit to deify him so publicly and so blatantly ...whatever it may do to boost the psyche of the unfortunate dalits, they will eventually benefit more the non-Dalit upper castes through seats in central universities, hefty income from construction contracts and so on".

Closely linked to this, is the abysmal decline in the standards of education in Tamil Nadu. He points an accusing finger at the "inferior faculty and suffocating politicisation" as the reasons for such a phenomenal fall. He poignantly cites a classic case of one of his students, who belonged to the backward class, and was about to be conferred with a Ph.D. He was not eligible for a position in the Tamil Nadu University, though

academically qualified, because of the fact that the post was reserved for an M.B.C. (Most Backward Class. Shri M. M. Rajendran, Chief Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Government, it seems commented dolefully, "that even Universities which were not known for their academic performance like those in Rajasthan, Bihar, Utkal, Lucknow and Punjab have recorded better performance compared to Universities in Tamil Nadu".

As regards the Indian Insurance Industry, he cautions the pitfalls lurking at every corner and compares it to the nascent insurance business in South Korea, which though quite obdurate in the beginning, succumbed to the pressures of the U.S. multi-million dollar business lobby. The weapon used against South Korea was the familiar Sec.301 of the U.S. Trade Act. He feels that the only way to prevent American firms gobbling up local industry is by modernising and beefing up the system through far-reaching measures and controls, thereby, making it more compact, competitive and efficient.

Elaborating on the BCCI and other similar scams, the author comments that they take place because people are flush with funds acquired through means that are not healthy and/or ethical, which they want to invest in profitable ventures. He quotes the Latin saying *Mundus vult decipi-ergo decipitur* (the world wants to be deceived, let it therefore be deceived). He observes that most financial swindles take place in times of boom. By observing the phenomenal profits made by a few, the latent and dormant element of greed in the individuals gets kindled. Then plans and preparations are made to get hold of a piece of the pie. Caution and conserva-

tion are thrown to the winds and the individual falls a prey to the sweet talk of the conman and the trickster. Things start moving at a rapid pace with Harshad Mehtas and Bhansalis appearing on the scene. However, it is very strange to observe that the authorities have practically taken no action, except to make inquiries and arresting a few persons.

The duty of the leaders – irrespective of whether we approve their policies or not – was to sense the mood and mobilize the people's support with powerful symbols. One of the symbols very successfully and effectively used is "malevolence". According to Prof. Ambirajan, Jeremy Bentham lists "malevolence" as an important pleasure and then goes on to say that "Pleasure, then, and the avoidance of pain, are the ends which the legislator has in view"! How very true it is! Only we should substitute legislator with the word "politician".

The Hindu of February 8, 1999 carried a very ably written article by P. V. Indiresan, where he says that "politicians have made it a habit to propagate religious hatred. Fifty years of democracy have increased, not decreased, religious tensions. The way our elections are organised, violence has become more and more profitable. Therefore, politicians need more and more hatred to retain the same loyalty as before. They incense the otherwise ordinary people to an orgy of hate; drive them to kill. Further as matters stand, votes lost by creating hatred are no longer critical".

The Hindu is a part of the monopoly of any one caste or community. It has nothing to do with external factors like society,

government or the environment. Even physical infirmities and defects need not stand in the way of an individual achieving excellence in his own way. Professor Ambirajan cites two instances, that of Demosthenes and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Despite heavy odds, Demosthenes became a great orator and Ambedkar a law-giver, by sheer will power and determination.

He cites qualities that could spur the seeker of excellence and they are within the reach of all.

Firstly, ambition to achieve the best is quite essential. He quotes Adam Smith, who says that "the poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition studies to distinguish himself in some laborious profession. With the most unrelenting industry, he labours night and day to acquire talents, superior to all his competitors."

The second quality is that of tenacity of purpose. He says that the excellent structures of bees, ants and coral insects are due to tenacity of purpose. Here he quotes the example of the great Sir Francis Bacon and of Robert Bruce, the Scottish Chieftain.

Self-confidence is the third quality cited by him. Here he quotes from the *Ramayana*. The fourth quality is that of industry and hard work. The familiar story of the race of the tortoise and the hare is furnished as an example.

"The heights by great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight; but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night."

H. W. Longfellow.

The last qualities mentioned by Professor Ambirajan are honesty and moral courage. The seeker of excellence, while avoiding shortcuts should possess fairness, honesty and moral courage.

We have the classic case of the life of Ludwig Von Beethoven, who, while coping with a series of life's blows, brought fulfillment and joy to countless, through his enchanting music. At the age of 16, Beethoven's mother passed away, he, thereby, losing the only person who had genuine affection for him. Beethoven's father was a man given to alcoholism and bouts of uncontrollable temper. The father often used to physically assault the son. In fact, in modern parlance, Ludwig was, in every sense of the term, a battered child. Yet it speaks highly of the will power of the genius, when he decided to "take Fate by the throat". This case of Ludwig's life is a rare combination of ambition, hard work, tenacity of purpose and self-confidence.

The Planning Commission has now become a haven to pacify friends or to keep firebrand bureaucrats at bay. Nobody knows what the planners contribute to economic growth and development of the country. There is need for an effective and honest watchdog that will oversee the implementation of the policies of government, without in any way getting sabotaged or derailed by a dishonest, inefficient bureaucracy. The annual exercise indulged in by the CAG (Comptroller and Accountant General) is just a post mortem, which does not prove to be effective nor does it curb future wasteful public expenditure. The author cites the example of a project of the Central Government, funded by UNDP as well as by the Government, known as Sustainable Urban Development for



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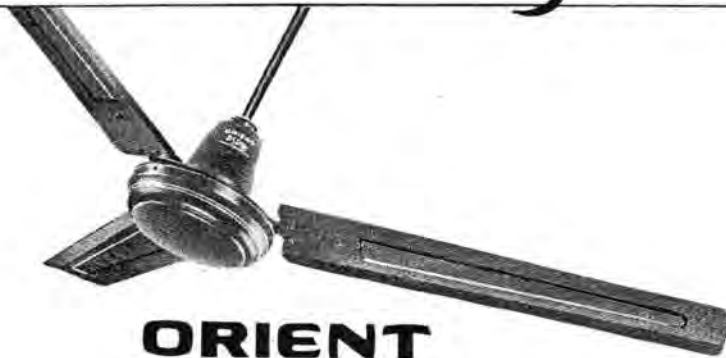


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Madras, with UNDP contributing \$605,200 and the Government funding an amount of Rs.45,70,000/-. A scrutiny of the Project Document of July 1994, shows how little thought has gone into the basic issues and how much it is *padded* to build a bureaucratic paradise, with state of the art office equipment and junkets abroad camouflaged as "study tours" for senior bureaucrats.

The publishers deserve all praise for bringing out this excellent collection of articles, which are very informative and enlightening.

MR. R. V. CHARI is a freelance writer. He is a retired professor of Management and Commerce.

MEDICINE AND THE RAJ: BRITISH MEDICAL POLICY IN INDIA, 1835-1911 by Anil Kumar; Sage Publications India Private Limited, M-32 Market, Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi 110048; 1998; pp.246; Rs.395.



**Reviewed by
Dr. Mridula Ramanna**

Colonial medical history has been extensively researched in the past decade. With the British came modern science and western medicine, which were used both to further imperial interests, and subdue traditional systems. The book under review examines the political linkages and sociological

interaction between Western medicine and the British Empire, focussing on the period 1835 to 1911, 1835 being the date of Macaulay's Minute and 1911 marking the institutionalization of medical research.

The book explores different aspects of medical policy, beginning with medical education. All the three Presidency medical colleges and the college at Lahore had the same evolutionary processes, characterized by early struggles and financial constraints. The Calcutta Medical College established in 1835, met with warm response. The Madras Medical School founded in the same year, trained medical subordinates for the army, and admitted civil students in 1847. Grant Medical College, started in Bombay in 1845, had no Brahmin students, in contrast to Bengal, where the opposition of the orthodox had been short lived. Kumar ascribes this difference to deep rooted prejudices against an 'impure' vocation.

While some attempts were made to impart instruction in the vernacular in Bengal and Bombay, Madras used English even to train the lowest category of hospital assistants. The unique Sialkot experiment to use *hakims* to extend the medical system in the rural areas of the Punjab in the post 1857 years and their training in allopathic techniques at the Lahore Medical School were successful till the question of medical registration came up in 1882. Allopathic professionals opposed this bill, because they saw it as extending support to *Unani-tibb*, thus thwarting the development of a synthetic medical system. Medical education was provided only at Hyderabad and Indore, in the princely states. The former was unique in imparting medical instruction in Urdu till

1883, when English replaced it. Regarding women's education the author feels Bengal was more progressive than Bombay or Madras, though research has shown that the Medical Women for India Fund set up in 1882 in Bombay, succeeded in establishing full fledged medical courses for women and a hospital exclusively for women and children, the Cama Hospital.

Interestingly homeopathy arrived almost clandestinely into India and spread without state support. The contributions of Rajendralal Dutta and Mahendra Lal Sarkar, of Bengal, and of Nanabhai Haridas in Bombay and Gajapati Rao in Madras are highlighted.

Kumar draws the following conclusions about medical education; for the legitimization and consolidation of empire, the British wooed poor Brahmins, as medical students. They fostered a dual language policy, English education for the elite and vernacular for the lower classes, and made compromises with academic standards, never encouraging the teaching of practical pharmacy. Large sums were spent on training medical personnel for the army. The positive effects of colonial medical education included the opening of medical studies to women, keeping India abreast of major developments in medicine and the firm rooting of Western science and medicine in India.

In the section on hospitals, Kumar shows that though their growth in terms of number of hospitals and dispensaries was impressive, the internal arrangements at these institutions were appalling. Not only were the wards overcrowded, but patients suffering from different maladies, even highly infectious ones, were herded

together. Consequently more deaths occurred, not because of the original disease for which the patients had sought admission, but brought on by the deplorable conditions in the hospitals. The author correctly maintains that the increase in the number of people availing of these facilities was indicative of the growing importance of Western medicine in people's perceptions. The commendable work of the missionaries in promoting the hospital system and Western medicine in Kashmir, Rajputana and Mysore is discussed. Racial prejudices influenced the establishment of separate lunatic asylums for the Europeans and Indians, while a century of progress had no effect on the improvement of lock hospitals, functioning as they did in set patterns. While in the imperial perception, sex workers were vectors rather than victims of disease, the Indians responded with indifference to the issue.

An interesting sub-section traces the slow progress of pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry. The British attitude was discouraging from the outset and they hindered the emergence of drug manufacturing. Permission for the indigenous production of even spirit-based preparations was granted as late as 1908. The Indian drug market depended on imports. The government did not take interest in the production of any drug, excepting morphine, for which raw material was available in plenty, and cinchona febrifuge, whose demand was large. Yet whatever beginning was made was the contribution of Acharya P. C. Ray, who started his own concern in 1892, later merging with Dr. Kartic Chandra Bose and Dr. Amulyacharan Bose to form Bengal Chemicals. Other well known names included Alembic Chemical Works, Baroda, Frank Ross and Co.,

Calcutta, Spencer, and Wilfred Pereira, Madras.

The chapter on the Colonial Medical Services, traces the evolution of the Indian Medical Service [IMS], outlines their professional and non professional work, and evaluates their contributions to botany, geology and zoology. The organizational structure of medical administration, its predominantly military character, and extensive domination by the IMS even in non-medical fields like forestry, sanitation, posts and telegraph were questioned by both professional experts and native subordinates. The separation of the civil from the military service, so that fields for medical and scientific work could be thrown open to the best available talent, including Indians was another issue; and this was taken up by the Indian National Congress. The writer does not mention the efforts of Dr. K. N. Bahadurji, who as the representative of the Indian medical fraternity made a submission before the Welby Commission, on this question. He does mention the attempts of scholars like P. N. Bose, J. C. Bose, and P. C. Ray to fight for adequate reward and respect to the scientific community and of Bahadurji and Atmaram Pandurang to focus on the disparities in the salaries between medical men and their counterparts in the civil, revenue and judicial fields. He concludes that the policy towards the colonial medical services was to maintain the status quo and to subordinate efficiency, availability and economy to racial vanity.

Smallpox, cholera, malaria and plague were the diseases which the British encountered in epidemic form in the nineteenth century. Lack of political will and overpowering commercial interests prevented the rulers from organizing medical science to effectively

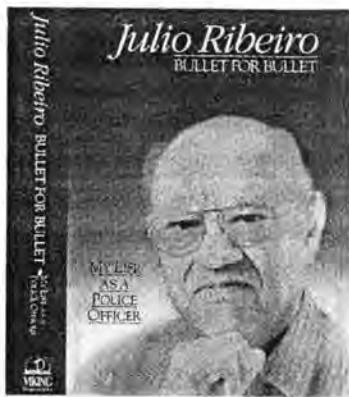
answer the critical questions raised by the repeated outbreaks. Kumar contends correctly that because the British mismanaged epidemic disease situations, much of the sheen of the paternalistic Raj faded away and contributed potentially to the emergence of anti-colonial movements in the early decades of the twentieth century. He holds that vaccination measures failed to immunise and to popularise state medicine: As for cholera, where it had led to thorough sanitation of every city and village in England, here, in India, it only swelled the statistical figures of its victims. Regarding malaria, Kumar refers to the theory of Digamber Mitter explained in the *Hindu Patriot*, which showed that fevers had been traced to impeded village drainage caused by railway feeders. But this view was ignored by government, who held villagers responsible for their own troubles. Debates raged throughout the nineteenth century till the discovery of the mosquito malarial theory by Ronald Ross in 1897. Plague showed western medicine's crisis of confidence. It had no answer to its cause, treatment or prevention. The failure of western medicine in combating plague led to the government reversing its stand, and employing *vaid*s and *hakims* for the supervision of public and private hospitals and camps. Kumar does not agree that anti-plague drives facilitated medical research, invariably self interest and imperial expediencies dictated the final shape of health policies in opposition to the actual needs of the people. Policy making was a one way affair.

The conclusion this study draws is that British medical policy originated from and remained subservient to the needs of the Empire. The rulers were only concerned with the health of their civil and military population. Though they

condemned the climate and air of India, the British led healthier lives with increased life expectancies. Colonial medicine meant uncanny imperialism *par excellence*, but could achieve nothing for masses. Another distressing outcome of colonial medicine was that it added to the complexity of the already heterogeneous medical culture of the country. The book concentrates heavily on the Bengal experience, the encounters everywhere in colonial India were not the same. It is a worthwhile addition to this field of historical investigation, and makes apparent the need for more regional level studies.

DR. MRIDULA RAMANNA is Professor of History, S.J.E.S. College, Mumbai.

BULLET FOR BULLET : MY LIFE AS A POLICE OFFICER by Julio Ribeiro; Viking; 1998; pp.397; Rs.395.



**Reviewed by
Mr. K. P. Medhekar**

I must confess the nostalgia with which I read and enjoyed my friend and esteemed colleague in the Maharashtra cadre of the Indian Police Service, Julio Francis Ribeiro's (1953 IPS, retd.) autobiography. Julio has had varied and interesting experiences as a journalist, uniformed police officer, senior civilian adviser to the Governor of Punjab, and as Ambas-

sador to Romania. At present, he is a social worker engaged in promoting communal harmony in Mumbai. He is a much sought after consultant in matters relating to security and investigation to a few corporate bodies. He is a good social mixer be it in high society or among slum dwellers.

His book needs to be read and studied, not only by police officers, but also by other bureaucrats and the wise men in the judiciary. Politicians too, if they have the time to read, will find it useful. If they care to learn a lesson or two and to appreciate the advice of a well meaning and objective professional, while administering the country, they will not only become more efficient, and more importantly, *just*, but also gain true popularity which will stand them in good stead in their career. What people want and crave for is strict and impartial enforcement of the Rule of Law and fair play of the principles of natural justice in their individual and collective lives.

The observant author of the book has drawn useful lessons from all types of difficult cases and also from not so challenging situations. He has summarised in very articulate and succinct language his advice for civil servants, particularly police officers and politicians. Julio's experiences are spread on a very wide canvas – from a junior police executive at the grass root level, as a superior police officer, as an adviser to a harassed Governor of a much disturbed State, as a policy-maker and even as a diplomat. As Director-General of the CRP (Central Reserve Police), the largest police force (para-military) in India, he was a top manager of men and material spread all over the country. He did not perhaps, have much experience as an intelligence officer; that's why he seems

to have depended so much on his memory rather than on well vetted and documented factual information. But about this lacuna in his narrative, a little later on.

Another good friend, whom I admire, Ved Prakash Marwah (IPS, 1956 - retd.) reviewing the book in *India Today*, January 25, 1999 has a few interesting things to say, perhaps from his experiences, and association with Julio Ribeiro. While appreciating the author's qualities and career as a supercop, Ved adds, "but even supercops can suffer from the weaknesses of ordinary mortals".

A few other officers of the IPS and also from the Maharashtra Police seem to agree with Ved. The burden of assessment of these well-meaning officers seems to be that no doubt Julio is a tall, bold and inherently sincere and sensitive man, but at many places in his books, the facts quoted by him can be contradicted. The author should have given appropriate credit to some of his seniors and colleagues, wherever it was due. An example is of K. P. S. Gill, IPS (retd., 1957), an outstanding officer of the Assam cadre, But for Gill, inspite of Julio's meritorious work in Punjab, the terrorism and unrest in that State would have lingered on.

Some of the author's experiences with certain IAS officers, and the great ego of these generalists, would be supported by almost all IPS officers, as well as experts from the technical services and educational fields of the bureaucracy. On the other hand, one also meets occasionally outstanding and fairminded IAS officers, without swollen heads and bloated ego.

The author of the book has rightly paid tributes to many brave

and highly patriotic Sikh men and women, some known, some unknown. The late Arwinder Singh Brar (IPS, 1979) shines like a very bright star, among many others in the dark gloomy sky of the Punjab! Who can ever forget the tragedies faced with great equanimity and fortitude by Sikh patriots like Dalbir Singh Mangat (IPS, 1959) and his wife? Arwinders, Mangats, and many unknown martyrs of Punjab and Delhi deserve the eternal gratitude of the nation. A lion's share of the glory should also go to K. P. S. Gill. Incidentally, I had known him as SSP, Gauhati at the height of the Assamese-Bengali riots. Grateful Assam gave him a fitting farewell when he left for the Punjab. Ved Marwah says, "one gets the impression (that) relations between the two (K.P.S. and Julio) were not as cordial as most of us believed them to be at that time. Ribeiro suspected Gill of "angling for his job". Ved describes Gill as "another (apart from Julio) talented officer of exceptional courage and convictions". One must admit here that strong likes and dislikes among people in

high places vitiates the atmosphere, and can harm a good cause.

The Congress leadership after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination seems to have consigned to the flames whatever wisdom and sagacity they might claim to have had on the poly pyre of that great leader. Rajiv Gandhi's supporters must at least now acknowledge their great guilt in creating vicious anti-Sikh feelings, after Mrs. Gandhi's most tragic end in 1984. I entirely agree with Julio that had Rajiv and his Government dealt fairly, but sternly and ruthlessly with those 'heavy weight' Congressmen squarely accused of fomenting anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984, the great state of the Punjab would have seen much better days.

The author has very aptly described in his book, the work of two excellent officers; one dead, and one alive, one from the IPS, and another from the State police respectively, viz. the late SSP, S. Arwinder Singh Brar, IPS, and ACP (retd.), Madhav Gupte of Mumbai.

Julio's charming wife Melba also needs special mention. She stood by him during those traumatic days as a great solid rock of support, like many a wife of a policeman does. I hope society and the nation will remain grateful to this tribe of men and women - the poor and much maligned police family!

Now for a few mundane comments. There are a number of factual errors in the author's tale, no doubt, unintended. The printer's devil dances naked in many pages! However, in a nutshell, I would like to say that the autobiography of supercop Julio Francis Rebeiro is eminently readable, because it is written in simple English, subtle humour and above all, narrated by a well meaning, religious police officer who speaks of his experiences sad and good, of his many successes and a few of his failures, his joys and his privations, of broken promises and disappointments.

MR. K. P. MEDHEKAR is a former Director General of Police, Maharashtra.



On Minoo Masani

Minoo was indeed one of India's remarkable personalities of this century. He was still in his thirties when I first came to know him in Bombay in the early 1940s. Already he was a marked figure intellectually and in politics. One of my joys of those youthful days (I was not yet 30 then) was the opportunity to join periodically in long conversations with him and some of his friends. For an American his friendly welcome opened a new window of understanding to late pre-independence India.

His refusal to live with popular bromides, his fiercely independent analyses and his courage in carrying an argument against public consensus were awesome. Whether as his government's ambassador, as a leader of the opposition Swatantra, or sometimes as seemingly an inhabitant of the political wilderness, he spoke out frankly and forcefully. Any nation would profit from claiming him as a citizen, even in the days of his most determined protest against various official policies.

Phillip Talbot, a US diplomat and a specialist on Asian affairs

Freedom First (No.439) contains an interview of Minoo Masani on the President's Powers, which was taken 15 years ago. Every liberal and progressive Indian will accept the views of Minoo Masani and will not allow the fundamentalists to succeed in their efforts to transform India into a theocratic state.

The appropriate tribute to the late Minoo Masani would be to assimilate his liberal ideas and act accordingly

G. Y. Dharap, Jalgaon

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If it were DHL, it would still be open.

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WE'VE BEEN RUNNING THESE ADS FOR YEARS.
WHY HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED US?

TUCKED away at the bottom of every DHL ad there's a legend.

This is what it says: DHL is the Express Division of Airfreight Ltd.

Surprised? Well, most people are.

Fact is, we at AFL pioneered express delivery in India. In association with DHL Worldwide Express.

Today, we're at the forefront in the business of movement. Be it forwarding by air or sea, express deliveries, logistics and distribution, travel or money transfer.

We've covered a lot of ground.

THE MOVEMENT SPECIALISTS: At AFL, we're fond of saying: If it can, or needs to, be moved, we'll move it.

Tall claim? You decide.

The investments we make in technology and systems are huge. Connecting over 200 centres through a captive electronic network is an instance of this.

The systems we employ are the most scientific in the business.

The organisations we've tied up with are all world leaders in their respective fields.

Which means, nobody understands movement the way we do.

OUR BEST MOVE: We pioneered air freight forwarding in India.

Next, we pioneered express and freight forwarding in 1948. DHL or we were the dominant player in the field of air freight.

In 1979, we moved into the express industry in India. We took up DHL Worldwide Express, the world leader.

We pioneered Airfreight Logistics Management in 1986. Followed by express delivery.

And in 1991, we were delivering specialised software for business solutions.

WHAT? OVER 20 YEARS? Well, DHL's commitment has never been waver.

It's the standard of moving on time, everytime that's driven us to the top.

Which is why we continue to provide the best movement solutions.

And when we look back, we'll mark the 2000 mark by 2000.

Wherever you are, we're there.

AFL
AFL LIMITED
AIRFREIGHT LOGISTICS

Where movement is a science

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS
DELIVERING PEOPLE TO ANY CORNER
every second counts

AFL CARGO

AFL LOGISTICS

AFL INDTRAVELS

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